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USUALSUSPECTS
SWAPAN DASGUPTA

Beijing's creeping control over world

Over the past 30 days or so, ever since the skirmish in the Galwan Valley in Ladakh that led to the deaths of 20 Indian soldiers and a greater number of soldiers of the People's Liberation Army of China, there has been wide ranging public discussions on the threat posed by our big eastern neighbour across the Himalayas. Although some sort of disengagement has been negotiated, there is little expectation — in India at least — that "peace and tranquillity" along the Line of Actual Control will endure.

How Beijing views the situation and the larger relationship with India is still a subject of speculation because decision-making in China tends to be opaque and outside public gaze. However, read with China's larger global thrust and in view of the stated objectives of the Belt and Road programme, there is an expectation that the claims of Chinese sovereignty over areas that are perceived to be under the direct or indirect sway of the Middle Kingdom will endure. If there is an offer by China to meet India half-way, the apparent show of reasonableness will be entirely tactical. In its bid to reverse the "century of humiliation" and reclaim the Mandate of Heaven by 2049 — the centenary of the establishment of the People's Republic by Mao Zedong — China will never lose sight of its so-called lost territories.

One of the big errors that cloud public discussions in India on the challenge/threat posed by China is the disproportionate importance attached to the border question. This, in turn, focusses the debate entirely on the military dimension of the India-China equation. It inevitably also prompts the conclusion that China's acknowledged superiority in the military sphere — not to mention its indigenous capacities — means that India must proceed with an extra measure of circumspection. The history of the 1962 conflict that led to a humiliating defeat for India also hangs over the deliberations like a nightmare. In particular, the complete debacle of Jawaharlal Nehru's knee-jerk "forward policy" is held out as a reason why India should proceed with utmost caution against a superior enemy.

The assertion, frequently mouthed by those blinded by their anger against China's perfidious history, that 2020 isn't 1962 are not misplaced. India certainly is better prepared militarily to counter China. This state of readiness is also backed by political determination and an unwillingness to be deluded by China's double-speak. Nor does the present political dispensation of Narendra Modi entertain ideological hang-ups of the variety that clouded the vision of Nehru and his political circle.

Yet, one of the shortcomings of the public discussions of national security within India is that the India-China tensions are seen within a narrow South Asian perspective. An international view puts the whole subject in a slightly different perspective. What is becoming increasingly apparent is that there are growing misgivings over two issues: the extent of China's strategic control over key sectors of the developed world; and the political distortions resulting from China's bid to extend its influence.

Last week, for example, the US administration banned the use of the Tik Tok app for members of the armed forces and government employees. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo has said that the Donald Trump administration is considering a national ban on the app that is seen as a major threat of national security because of the suspected transmission of data to China. This comes in the wake of the decision in the United Kingdom to exclude the Chinese-controlled Huawei from the 5-G services in the country. Earlier it had been decided that the Chinese firm would play a big role in the upgradation of a crucial sector of British infrastructure.

These developments over the past month are indicative. They suggest that Western powers have finally got over their preoccupation with short-term economic calculations and commitment to free trade and begun to look at the larger strategic consequences of allowing Chinese companies to acquire a big foothold in Europe and US. Although the restrictions have been justified on issues that centre on the immediate — the crackdown in Hongkong is cited as a factor in the UK — the misgivings go far deeper. I believe that in the days to come, China will find that its ability to do business smoothly in the West has been drastically curtailed, particularly in public utilities and nuclear power.

The fears over data security and reverse engineering have been complemented by wariness over China's creeping control over important public institutions. The extent to which higher education in the US and the UK is dependant on the huge numbers of Chinese students is causing grave discomfiture. Last week, the Royal United Services Institute in London produced an 86-page report entitled *China's Elite Capture*. According to *The Times* (London) which has accessed this confidential report: "The report alleges that Beijing uses various influence tactics in the UK, including 'useful idiots' as well as agents of the Chinese Communist Party to develop links with politicians, business people and academics to build a presence in critical infrastructure. It claims that 'Britain's universities have been wide open to Chinese influence — partnering in research on gait recognition, cryptography and missile technology.' One of Beijing's key aims, it says, is to ensure that UK tech companies are open to acquisition."

It is unlikely that this approach has been confined to the UK. There have been similar revelations about the vulnerabilities of Australia. In this context, it is pertinent to peruse the minutely researched book, *Chinese Spies: From Chairman Mao to Xi Jinping* (2019) by Roger Falgout. The writer warns that "The word 'Guoanbu' will probably become as familiar in the 21st century as the acronyms MI6, CIA and KGB were in the 20th." The full name of *Guoanbu* is *Guojia Anquanbu* and it is the Ministry of State Security. It is the world's biggest intelligence network that spans the globe, including India.

SIT to probe Kanpur carnage, Dubey's links

To submit report to state govt by July 31

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath ordered the setting up of a three-member Special Investigation Team (SIT) to probe the criminal activities of slain ganglord Vikas Dubey, action taken against him and his aides and the role of police officers/cops in checking his unlawful operations.

Dubey was gunned down during an encounter by a STF team in Kanpur on Friday.

Speaking to media persons on Saturday evening, Additional Chief Secretary (Home) Awanish Awasthi said that the SIT would be headed by Additional Chief Secretary Sanjay Bhoosreddy while ADG Hariram Sharma and DIG J Ravindra Gaur would be the other two members.

"After probing various aspects threadbare, the SIT would submit its report to the government by July 31," he said.

Awasthi further said that the SIT would focus on the Kanpur carnage, action taken by

the police in cases registered against Dubey and his aides, assess whether police action was sufficient to get the gang members convicted and efforts made to get bails of Dubey and his aides cancelled in recent cases.

The additional chief secretary said that the SIT would examine what action was taken against complaint made against Dubey and his aides at Chaubepur police station and other officers of the district, whether move was made to invoke National Security Act, Gangsters Act, Goonda Act etc. against Dubey and, if yes, then which officer's hindered the process and why was his name not included in the list of dreaded criminals.

Directions have been given to the SIT to look into the mobile phone Call Details Record (CDR) of Dubey and his aides for the last one year and find out which officers were in constant touch with them, gather evidence of their nexus with the gangster and then submit the report to the

government recommending action needed to end the flourishing police-criminal nexus.

"The SIT would also look whether local officers were unaware of the firepower of the gang, officers responsible for providing licences to Dubey despite 60 odd cases against him, and why no move was initiated to get the arms licences cancelled," Awasthi said.

"Lastly, the SIT would probe how Dubey could amass huge wealth, list his properties, find out whether he grabbed government properties and with whose connivance, identify his benami properties and look into his financial and other business details.

The SIT has been instructed to collect and collate the inputs before submitting them to the government so that necessary action could be taken to seize these ill-gotten properties with the help of sleuths of Enforcement Directorate (ED) and Income Tax Department," Awasthi said.

BJP luring Congress MLAs to topple Govt, says Gehlot

Rajasthan Opp dares CM to prove charge or quit politics

PNS ■ JAIPUR

Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot on Saturday backed that amid the coronavirus pandemic, BJP leaders have "gone beyond humanity" and are engaged in toppling his Government, but exuded confidence that the Congress dispensation will complete its five-year term.

Gehlot and Deputy Chief Minister Sachin Pilot will record their statement before the state police's special operations group (SOG) which has issued notices to them to record their statement in connection with the alleged



attempts of the Opposition to topple their Government by offering huge sums of money to Congress MLAs.

The BJP on Saturday dared Gehlot to prove his allegation of horse-trading levelled against it or quit politics, and claimed he was targeting the Opposition party as he was unable to check the infighting in the State Congress.

Notices have been issued to the Chief Minister, the Deputy

Chief Minister and Government chief whip for recording their statement in connection with the matter," an official source told news agency Press Trust of India.

The sources told news agency PTI that nearly a dozen MLAs and others may also be issued notices soon.

The SOG on Friday registered booked two people under IPC sections 124-A (sedition) and 120-B (conspiracy), alleging that the duo also talked about the chances of earning ₹1,000-2,000 crore by toppling the Government, it stated.

The FIR stated that they were allegedly talking about the rift between Gehlot and Pilot and toppling the Congress government by poaching MLAs.

On Friday night, more than 20 Congress MLAs issued a joint statement claiming that that the BJP was trying to lure the MLAs.

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China starts pullback from Pangong

Major positive sign towards peace as stand-offs at 4 places started from Pangong lake on May 5

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Chinese have finally started to withdraw troops from the Pangong Tso (lake), one of four face-off sites at the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in Eastern Ladakh. While the other three "friction points" — the Galwan Valley, Hot Springs and Gogra — witnessed the pullback for the last five days, the thinning out of troops from Pangong on Saturday signalled a major positive sign towards peace.

Incidentally, the eight-week old stand-offs at the four places started from the Pangong lake on May 5 when the Chinese intruded into Indian territory and stopped a patrol. This led to fisticuffs between the personnel of both the armies.

Giving details of the latest pullback from the Pangong site which witnessed a brief brawl in 2017 also, sources said here the latest satellite images showed a clear and marked reduction of the Chinese soldiers. This pullback was noticed in the contested "Finger 4" area along the banks of Pangong Lake.

They also said while the

- The latest satellite images show a clear and marked reduction of the Chinese soldiers
- This pullback was noticed in the contested "Finger 4" area along the banks of Pangong lake
- The Chinese have also not removed their fast interceptor boats from a jetty in the
- perceived Indian zone in the lake
- A giant Chinese map is also put up at the jetty
- The Corps Commanders of the two armies next week will discuss this issue
- India will insist that the Chinese remove their boats as soon as possible to facilitate smooth disengagement



Chinese had also removed tents and makeshift bunkers from the Indian side, scores of tents and other infrastructure was still intact close to the LAC

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Rahul raps Govt over LAC row, Covid, says PM deceives nation

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In a meeting of party MPs chaired by Congress chief Sonia Gandhi on Saturday, Rahul Gandhi renewed his criticism of the Government over the China border row, alleging that Prime Minister Narendra Modi continued to lie and deceive the nation. He also claimed that Chinese military firms made contribution to PM Cares fund.

Rahul also attacked the Centre over its handling of the Covid-19 outbreak, claiming that States and Union Territories seeking assistance were completely ignored. "The Prime Minister con-



tinues to lie about China, saying it is not a political issue. But the Congress can't be party of anything that weakens India and we have to be firm in our stand — national security is ensuring our position and boundaries cannot be weakened," he told the MPs. Leaders flagged concerns over Chinese intrusion.

During the session, Rahul also criticised the Modi Government over external affairs matter and stated "things are in such a shambles that even our friends are turning against us", in a reference to a border dispute with Nepal. He referred to the PM CARES Fund, however, it stays outside the auditing purview of the CAG.

He also sought to know the details of fund received from Chinese firms against the backdrop of Indo china tension due to border issue.

The virtual video conferencing meeting of the Congress Parliamentarians was called to discuss the strategy to corner the Modi Government during

BJP MPs oppose PM Cares Fund scrutiny by PAC

New Delhi: The BJP MP are opposed to the examination of the PM Cares Fund by Public Accounts Committee, but PAC chairman Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury is expected to use his prerogative. On Friday's meeting attended by 17 MPs out of total current strength of 20 MPs, BJP MPs objected to any scrutiny of the PM Cares Fund by the PAC. The BJP MPs cited that the expenditure or revenue are not related to Parliament authorisation.

the Monsoon Session for its failure to handle the country on all fronts. Several MPs demanded that Rahul Gandhi should return as the party chief.

Congress Lok Sabha member K Suresh (MP from Kerala) initiated the proposal for Rahul as president. It was endorsed by other party MPs Anto Antony, Manickam Tagore, Gaurav Gogoi, Abdul Khaleque, Mohd Javed and Saptagiri Sankar Ulaka.

However, Rahul chose to maintain silence on the issue.

Rahul stepped down from the post after Congress' defeat in 2019 Lok Sabha elections.

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Amitabh tests Covid-19 +ve, hospitalised

Mumbai: Megastar Amitabh Bachchan on Saturday said he has tested positive for Covid-19 and admitted in the isolation ward of a city hospital.

The 77-year-old actor, who is at the Nanavati hospital, shared his health update on Twitter. "I have tested Covid positive. Shifted to Hospital. Hospital informing authorities, family and staff undergone tests, results awaited," Bachchan tweeted.

Covid-19 IN INDIA

TOTAL CASES: 8,49,817

DEATHS: 22,685

RECOVERED: 5,36,223

ACTIVE: 2,90,529

STATES	TOTAL CASES	DEATHS	RECOVERED
Maharashtra	2,46,600	10,116	1,36,985
Tamil Nadu	1,34,226	1,898	82,324
Delhi	1,10,921	3,334	87,692
Gujarat	41,027	2,033	28,685
Karnataka	36,216	615	14,718
Uttar Pradesh	35,092	915	22,689
Telangana	33,402	348	20,919
West Bengal	28,453	906	17,959
Andhra Pradesh	27,235	309	14,393
Rajasthan	23,748	503	17,869
Haryana	20,582	297	15,394
Madhya Pradesh	17,201	644	12,679
Assam	15,537	37	10,427
Bihar	15,039	118	10,991
Odisha	12,526	79	8,360
Jammu & Kashmir	10,156	169	5,895

2018 Tiger Census in Guinness Book of World Records

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India's 2018 Tiger Census has entered the Guinness Book of World Records for being the largest camera-trap wildlife survey yet. The fourth edition of the tiger census, in 2018-19, was the "most comprehensive" to date, "in terms of both resource and data amassed", Guinness World Records



Fourth edition of tiger census in 2018-19 was the 'most comprehensive' survey in terms of both resource and data amassed

team has said on its website.

Termining this achievement a great moment, Union Environment Minister Prakash Javadekar tweeted, "The All India Tiger Estimation is now in the Guinness World Records for being the largest camera-trap wildlife survey, a great moment indeed and a shining example of Aatmanirbhar Bharat."

He also said that under the leadership of the Prime Minister, India fulfilled its resolve to double tigers' numbers four years before the tar-

get through "Sankalp se Sidhi".

The Guinness World Records website said, "The fourth iteration of the survey — conducted in 2018-19 — was the most comprehensive to date in terms of both resources and data amassed. Camera traps (outdoor photographic devices fitted with motion sensors that start recording when an animal passes by) were placed in 26,838 locations across 141 different sites and surveyed an effective area of 121,337 square kilometres (46,848 square miles). "In total, the camera traps

captured 3,48,58,623 photographs of wildlife (76,651 of which were tigers and 51,777 were leopards; the remainder were other native fauna). From these photographs, 2,461 individual tigers (excluding cubs) were identified using stripe-pattern-recognition software."

Apart from the unprecedented camera trap usage, the 2018 "Status of Tigers in India" assessment also conducted extensive foot surveys that covered 5,22,996 km of trails and

sampled 3,17,958 habitat plots for vegetation and prey dung.

It is estimated that the total area of forest studied was 3,81,200 km² (147,181 sq mi) and cumulatively the collection and review of data equated to some 6,20,795 labour-days.

The assessment was carried out over three phases, with the various datasets then combined to be extrapolated via statistical computation, which informed the final results published in the survey report.

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CAPSULE

HARDIK PATEL WORKING PREZ OF GUJARAT CONG

New Delhi: Patidar leader Hardik Patel, 26, was appointed the new working president of the Gujarat Pradesh Congress Committee on Saturday. Patel rose to prominence when he led an agitation by the Patidar community in 2015, demanding that the community should get benefits of the quota for backward castes.

6 NSCN(IM) REBELS KILLED IN ENCOUNTER

Itanagar/New Delhi: Six NSCN (IM) rebels were killed in a gunfight with security forces in a jungle in Longding district of Arunachal Pradesh early Saturday morning, military and police officials said.

CM stresses on screening, rewing up Covid tests

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath directed officials to carry out door-to-door screening and test samples of people with coronavirus symptoms and send those infected to medical facilities for treatment.

Chairing an Unlock review meeting at his official residence here on Saturday, Yogi reiterated that prevention was the only treatment of COVID-19. "The use of masks and social distancing are a must to defeat the disease. The Covid prevention protocol should be publicised to create awareness among people by using print and electronic media, banners, posters and public address system," he said.

Emphasising on more Covid testing, the chief minister said that 30,000 tests by RT-PCR, 15,000-20,000 tests by rapid antigen method and 2,000 tests by TrueNat machines should be done every day. Asking officials to increase the number of beds in Covid hospitals, Yogi said that asymptomatic patients could be treated at Level-1 Covid healthcare facility. He stressed the need of being cautious in Kanpur Nagar, Mathura and Jhansi and issued directive that special secretary rank nodal officer and senior officers of Health and Medical Education departments should chalk out effective strategy to tackle coronavirus spread in Jhansi.



Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath pays courtesy call to Governor Anandiben Patel and apprised her about the steps government has taken to prevent spread of Covid-19. He also presented her a book.

"Proper screening should be ensured for air and train passengers. Besides, take all steps to protect police and PAC personnel from coronavirus infection," Yogi said. Urging people to make cleanliness an integral part of their daily lives, the chief minister said that hygiene and sanitation could save people from various diseases.

Directing officials to undertake sanitation, fogging and cleanliness activities in rural and urban areas, he observed that public participation had a big role to play in sanitation endeavours. Yogi said that officials should ensure that water-log-

ging does not take place anywhere during monsoons. "Chlorine tablets should be used in potable water while construction of community toilets in various gram panchayats should be expedited," he said.

The chief minister said that every gram panchayat should dig fertiliser pits compulsorily for solid waste as it would maintain hygiene in villages and produce organic fertiliser for farmers. He said that plans should be made to protect crops from locusts.

The chief minister also asked officials to follow Covid prevention protocol while making industrial units functional in the state.

Uttar Pradesh has a population of 23 crore people. Yogi said that the gross fertility rate of the country was linked with infant mortality rate. "At present, India's fertility rate is 2.2 while UP's rate is 2.7. People should understand that by controlling the population we can think of a better future of the country," he said.

Uttarakhand had also brought legislation on this line and Uttar Pradesh should follow suit. The Uttarakhand government in July last year implemented the two-child policy and fixed minimum educational qualification of class 10 for

aspiring candidates ahead of the panchayat elections by amending the Uttarakhand Panchayat Raj Act, 2016. The High Court, however, said this would not apply on candidates who had more than two children before July 25, when the notification was issued.

Big population putting stress on natural resources: Yogi

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Talking about the population stability efforts being made by the state government, the chief minister said UP was successful in bringing down the infant mortality rate and now there was a target to bring down the birth rate so that gross fertility rate could go down or become equal to the national average.

"We have launched several schemes to provide better health facilities to the infants and in every district there is a separate OPD for children. Mothers too are taken care of at hospitals while the immunisation programme is running efficiently for which the Health department deserves special praise," he said.

The chief minister said that to stabilise the infant mortality rate, 1,820 newborn care corners, 180 newborn stabilisation units and 82 sick new-born units had been set up.

"The NITI Ayog has put eight districts, where health indicators are poor, in the watch list. Regular meetings are held at the national level because Uttar Pradesh, being a big state, needs special attention," the chief minister said.

Talking about the present scenario, the chief minister said that it was a big challenge for everyone to counter coronavirus along with contagious diseases like malaria, encephalitis, dengue, kala azar and other such diseases.

The chief minister said that the 2-day restrictions imposed in the state would give a good opportunity to the local authorities for launching a massive cleanliness drive in the state to prevent the spread of contagious diseases in the rainy season.

"We have announced 2-day restrictions on the second Saturday and Sunday when almost all the government offices, banks and other places are closed so that normal functioning of offices is not disrupted," he added.

Announcing that all the 75 districts of the state would have Covid testing facilities very soon, Yogi Adityanath inaugurated RT-PCR machines used for Covid testing in the district hospitals of Aligarh, Varanasi, Gonda, Bareilly, Moradabad, Mirzapur and at Balrampur Hospital in Lucknow.

Brief lockdown brings life to a grinding halt

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The 55-hour restrictions imposed to break the coronavirus infection chain across the state that started from 10 pm on Friday brought life to a grinding halt with virtually no vehicular movement and markets and businesses closed on Saturday.

"Designated restrictions have been enforced strictly. People have voluntarily closed their business establishments and preferred to stay indoors. This is practically 'janata curfew' where people supported the call of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath," said Additional Chief Secretary (Home) Awanshi Awasthi on Saturday.

There was no report of any untoward incident from anywhere and the police were strict on unnecessary movement of people on the street. "Those with valid reasons or carrying identity cards are allowed commutation," the additional chief secretary said.

All shops, except of medicines, were closed in the state while public transport was off the road. However railways, flights, trucks on highways and industrial units along with big works were functioning normally.

Only essential services have been allowed during the two-day restriction. Government and private offices, malls and restaurants are also shut. Police barricading have come up to check the movement of people during lockdown in the state. Inter-state borders have been sealed.

The government, however, allowed roadside dhabas on

"Designated restrictions have been enforced strictly. People have voluntarily closed their business establishments and preferred to stay indoors. This is practically 'janata curfew'"

highways to open in view of movement of trucks. Petrol pumps have also been exempted from the restrictions which will remain in place till 5 am on Monday.

The government decided to impose restrictions after the number of coronavirus cases spiked and over 1,000 positive cases were being reported across the state almost every day. The government felt that citizens had become lax and were not maintaining social distancing or using masks and all these had resulted in the spike in positive cases.

Strict action would be initiated against those stepping out without face covers in public places and loitering unnecessarily. The fine for not wearing face masks has been hiked from Rs 100 to Rs 500.

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has directed officials to launch special cleanliness and sanitation campaign during this 55-hour restrictions. Besides, house-to-house surveillance is also underway to contain coronavirus and contagious diseases across the state.

'Bar people with more than 2 kids from contesting panchayat polls'

Lucknow (PNS): Union Minister of State for Animal Husbandry, Fisheries and Dairy, Dr Sanjeev Kumar Balyan, has requested Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath to bring a law to prevent people with more than two children from contesting the next panchayat elections.

In a letter to the Yogi, Balyan said that UP had a huge population due to which the benefits of government schemes are not reaching the people. "The need of the hour is to educate people about small families and how small

population of the state is beneficial for them. Therefore, the government should bring a law debarbing people with more than two children from contesting panchayat elections," he said in his letter which was released to the media on Saturday — the World Population Day.

Balyan said that UP's neighbouring state Uttarakhand had also brought legislation on this line and Uttar Pradesh should follow suit. The Uttarakhand government in July last year implemented the two-child policy and fixed minimum educational qualification of class 10 for

aspiring candidates ahead of the panchayat elections by amending the Uttarakhand Panchayat Raj Act, 2016. The High Court, however, said this would not apply on candidates who had more than two children before July 25, when the notification was issued.

ED seeks info of Vikas Dubey's assets

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has sought details of immovable and movable assets owned by gangster Vikas Dubey who was killed in an encounter with Special Task Force in Kanpur on Friday.

The ED has sought details of the properties owned by Vikas, his family members and even his accomplices.

Sources in the ED said that they would soon file a complaint under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) to probe criminal proceeds of crime that were allegedly amassed by Dubey, his associates and family members and if this money was subsequently used for creation of illegal movable and immovable properties.

They said even as Dubey was dead the provisions of the PMLA enabled the agency to continue criminal probe against accomplices of the prime accused in laundering the proceeds of crime and the properties acquired as a result of this criminal activity. Section 72 of the PMLA provides for "continuation of proceedings in the event of death or insolvency".

Sources here said on Saturday that Vikas Dubey was suspected to have as many as 11 houses and 16 flats, brought

under benami transaction in UP. The don is expected to have properties abroad as well since he visited 14 countries in the last three years.

At present, 11 houses and 16 flats that likely belong to Vikas are under scanner. They include a recent bungalow worth Rs 23 crore which Dubey had bought in Lucknow's Aryanagar. However, reports also said that Vikas' aides had purchased penthouses in the United Arab Emirates and Thailand while Vikas had visited 14 countries in the past three years.

In a letter to Kanpur police, the ED's Lucknow zonal office on July 6 had given orders to senior police officers to direct an officer attached with the team probing the Vikas Dubey case to collect details on immovable and moveable assets owned by the gangster, his family members and aides under provisions of Money Laundering Act, 2002.

The ED has also sought details of criminal cases against Dubey. An intelligence official said it was suspected that Dubey was laundering money for some influential businessmen so his assets would be probed.

Vikas Dubey, who was facing 60 criminal charges, was nabbed in Ujjain, Madhya Pradesh on Thursday, six days

after he and his associates killed eight policemen and injured six cops in the Kanpur ambush. He was then handed over to the Uttar Pradesh STF after being produced before a UP court via video conference. He was then taken to Kanpur.

On Friday morning, Vikas Dubey was killed in an encounter after he fired at cops when the STF vehicle in which he was being brought from Madhya Pradesh overturned as it reached Kanpur. As per Kanpur police, the gangster attempted to flee and snatched the weapon of a policeman, after which he was shot dead in the retaliatory firing.

FOUR AIDES HELD

Meanwhile, four more men of Dubey were arrested, two in Maharashtra and two in Madhya Pradesh.

Two aides of Dubey were arrested by Maharashtra ATS from Thane on Saturday. They were identified as Guddan Trivedi and Sonu Tewari. Both were involved in the killing of eight police personnel in Bikru ambush on July 2 night. The UP government had announced a reward of Rs.50,000 on Guddan Trivedi.

On a tip-off, the Maharashtra ATS Juhu unit raided a place in Coalshed Road and arrested Arvind alias Guddan Ramvilas Trivedi and

his driver Sonu Tewari.

They confessed their involvement in the killing of eight cops in Bikru ambush on July 2 night and the murder of BJP leader having cabinet minister rank, Santosh Shukla, in 2001.

Guddan Trivedi was a close aide of slain Vikas Dubey and named in the list of most wanted criminals. After the killing of eight police personnel in Bikru ambush, he was at large. Since then, police had raided his hideouts, including his residence in Kudhwa village of Rura town of Kanpur Dehat.

On Saturday, the ATS of Maharashtra informed UP Police about the arrest of two wanted criminals of Vikas Dubey gang from Thane. Guddan Trivedi is the zila panchayat member from Gudhwa village of Rura while his wife Kanchan is the gram pradhan of Kudhwa village.

He had been involved in several illegal activities with Vikas Dubey. In 2001, he was one of the accused involved in the murder of Santosh Shukla. Later, in the absence of evidence, he was acquitted by court along with Vikas Dubey. Since the Bikru ambush, Guddan was absconding from his house. So far, police and STF had raided his house and shot twice but failed to nab him.

Apart from Rura police station, there is no FIR against him with the Sheoli (Kanpur Dehat) police station. Guddan would earlier accompany Vikas Dubey as his gunner. Gradually, he created his dominance in the village and became zila panchayat member.

The Chaubepur police also arrested two persons in Gwalior on Saturday on charges of providing shelter to the accomplices of the slain criminal. They had provided shelter to criminals involved in Bikru ambush on July 2 night in their house.

Identified as Om Prakash Pandey, son of Chhotelal Pandey, and Anil Pandey, son of Chandra Prakash Pandey, both the accused are residents of Gwalior in Madhya Pradesh.

A team of Chaubepur police which visited Gwalior, arrested them on Saturday. An FIR was also lodged against them with the Chaubepur police.

Both had provided shelter to wanted criminals Shashi Kant Pandey alias Sonu, son of Prem Prakash alias Rajaram alias Prem Kumar, and Shivam Dubey, son of Bal Govind Dubey, residents of Bikru (Chaubepur) involved in Bikru ambush in which eight police personnel were killed. The police team was led by Sub-Inspector Azhar Israt of Chaubepur police station.

UP mills struggling to cope with unsold sugar stock

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The Uttar Pradesh sugar industry is struggling to cope with the huge unsold stock of sugar.

The industry achieved an all-time high sugar production of 1.26 crore MT, which is 45 per cent of the country's total output. However, it has not been able to liquidate the excessive stock to clear the dues, for which it blames the Central government's discriminatory sales quota policy. The industry feels that the record production should have been a badge of honour for Uttar Pradesh but they are saddled with record arrears of cane dues to the tune of Rs 14,000 crore.

The sugar mills have repeatedly told the state government as well as the Centre that the quota for sale of sugar is not in sync with its production.

In a representation to the state government recently, the UP Sugar Mills Association alleged inequity and pointed out that UP had produced 1.26 crore MT of sugar against Maharashtra's a little over 61 lakh MT.

"It becomes obvious that sugar sales

quota of UP should be double of Maharashtra, keeping in view the higher stock availability in UP," the UPSMA said, adding that this had not been adhered to by the Union Ministry of Food and Civil Supplies, thereby causing serious problems towards cane price obligations as well as making of sugar.

Drawing a comparison, the UPSMA said that while in 2018-19 season Maharashtra was allocated a quota of 102.18 lakh tonne against the production of 107.20 lakh tonne, UP was allocated a quota of 98.94 MT against the production of 1.19 crore MT of sugar in same year. Similarly, it said, in the ongoing 2019-20 season, Maharashtra had been allocated a quota of 55.94 lakh tonne against a production of 61.61 lakh tonne, while UP had been allocated 70.59 lakh tonne quota against a production of 1.22 crore MT.

Earlier in May, the UPSMA had also represented to the secretary, food and public distribution, that the monthly quota allocation to the UP sugar mills had been consistently less in comparison to Maharashtra in terms of sugar produced in the current year.

"This has resulted in huge unsold inventory with the mills in the state," it had written, adding that the department was yet to take cognisance that sugar mills in UP had been instrumental in export of sugar in a big way, and therefore, they should be encouraged to sell more sugar as compared to other states, in sync with the government policy.

The letter to the Union Food Ministry stated: "UP's sugar production exceeds the sugar produced in Maharashtra and Karnataka combined. It is imperative that sugar stocks are liquidated in the same ratio as that of production."

As a remedy, the UPSMA had requested that the monthly sales quota allocation should be made strictly as per production of sugar in the state. It said, "In this respect, quota for sale by UP mills should be double that of the mills in Maharashtra... This way, mills in UP would not be discriminated against and it would also somewhat reduce the burden of the huge stock build-up."

It added that there would be a huge carryover stock of unsold sugar if the quota was not increased.

Akhilesh slams govt over education anarchy

Lucknow (PNS): Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav alleged that anarchy was spreading in the education system due to myopic policies of the Bharatiya Janata Party government in Uttar Pradesh.

In a statement issued in Lucknow on Saturday, Akhilesh Yadav said that schools and colleges were closed due to coronavirus pandemic while the system of online studies was yet to stabilise due to poor internet network. He said that children from poor families did not have smartphones and in rural areas, internet connectivity was a big issue. The SP chief said that the poor were being discriminated against as online classes benefited only a small section of affluent class, leaving the poor to the "divine mercy".

He said that the BJP government was particularly insensitive towards the interests of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled

Tribes students. "The state government closed down schools and colleges but did nothing about the livelihood of teachers and non-teaching staff. School managements were forced to not charge fees for lockdown period. In such a situation, parents who can afford to pay fees are also not paying it. As a result, over 10 lakh teachers of private

colleges are on the verge of starvation as they have not been paid salaries for several months now," the SP chief said. Akhilesh said that the situation was such that some private schools paid salaries of March-April, but did not give further salaries, while teachers of some other schools were not even paid salaries for March.

NATIONAL JUTE MANUFACTURES CORPORATION LTD. (A Govt. of India Undertaking) CIN U17232WB1980G01032768

NJMC Ltd. invites applications for recruitment for the post of one Deputy General Manager / General Manager (Finance), and one Deputy General Manager / General Manager on deputation basis. Details may be viewed in website www.njmc.org.in. Last date of submission of application is 03.08.2020. davp 41120 / 11 / 0001 / 2021

NORTH EASTERN RAILWAY

E-Tendering Tender Notice No. 14/2020

Divisional Railway Manager (Engg.) N.E. Railway Itanagar for and behalf of President of India invite "OPEN" e-tender through on Line (E-Tendering) for the following work:

SN.1. Description of work: Supplying & stacking of 65 mm size machine crushed track stone ballast (30000 Cum) as per latest RDSO's ballast specification with up to date correction slips and loading of the same in to all type of Railway wagons at Mendu station. (Under sanctioned work Kasganj-Mathura TBR- 73 Km.)

Approx. Value: ₹ 3,04,43,400.00. **EMD Money:** ₹ 3,02,200.00. **Cost of Tender form:** ₹ 10,000.00. **Completion time/period from the date of issue of acceptance letter:** 06 Months. **SN.2. Description of work:** Civil work in connection with TBR in KSI/MRT section in the jurisdiction of ADE/N MRT under the sanctioned work of Kasganj - Mathura TBR-73 Kms. **Approx Value:** ₹ 3,83,96,527.38. **EMD:** ₹ 3,42,000.00. **Cost of Tender form:** 10,000.00. **Completion time/period from the date of issue of acceptance letter:** 12 Months.

1. Online e-tender can be submitted up to 15.00 hrs. of dated 04.08.2020. 2. For full details and submission of bid please see the Indian Railways IREPS website www.ireps.gov.in.

Divisional Railway Manager (Engg.) CPRO/W-59 Itanagar

About any passenger amenity complaint SMS on Mob. No.: 9979484595 Do not travel with inflammable article in train

NORTH EASTERN RAILWAY

E-Tender Notice

Sr. DSTE/N.E. Railway, Lucknow for and on behalf of President of India, invites sealed "OPEN" tender for the following work:

Tender Notice No.: 20 of 2020. **Description of work:** Comprehensive annual maintenance contract of HBL make Integrated power supply system (IPS) installed over Lucknow Division for 2 years. **Approx. Value:** ₹ 25,61,999.76. **Earnest Money:** ₹ 51,200.00. **Cost of Tender Form:** ₹ 5,000.00. **Completion period:** 24 months. **Tender Notice No.:** 21 of 2020. **Description of work:** Comprehensive annual maintenance contract of G.G. Tronics make High availability Single section Digital Axle Counter (HASSDAC) installed in DAL-STP-HA section over Lucknow Division for 3 years. **Approx. Value:** ₹ 32,20,232.88. **Earnest Money:** ₹ 3,000.00. **Completion period:** 36 months. **Tender Notice No.:** 22 of 2020. **Description of work:** Comprehensive annual maintenance contract of Block Panel and universal fail safe Block interface of Deltron make in DAL-STP-HA section over Lucknow Division for 3 years. **Approx. Value:** ₹ 24,83,996.40. **Earnest Money:** ₹ 49,700.00. **Cost of Tender Form:** ₹ 3,000.00. **Completion period:** 36 months. **Tender Notice No.:** 23 of 2020. **Description of work:** Comprehensive annual maintenance contract of CEL make Single section Digital Axle Counter installed over Lucknow Division for 3 years. **Approx. Value:** ₹ 17,71,595.28. **Earnest Money:** ₹ 35,400.00. **Cost of Tender Form:** ₹ 2,000.00. **Completion period:** 36 months. **Date & Time of closing of E-Tender 05.08.2020 at 15.00 Hrs.** Note: 1. Manual offers are not allowed against these tenders and any such manual offer received, shall be ignored. For full details and submission of bid, kindly visit the official website of Indian Railway i.e. http://www.ireps.gov.in

Sr. Divisional Sig. & Telecom Engineer/CPRO/Signal-II Lucknow

About any passenger amenity complaint SMS on Mob. No.: 9979484595 Do not travel with inflammable article in train

202 test +ve in biggest spike

Minister Chetan Chauhan, SP MLC Sunil Mahajan among those infected



PNS ■ LUCKNOW

In the highest spike in terms of the number of patients, as many as 202 persons tested positive for coronavirus in Lucknow on Saturday, including Minister for Home Guards Chetan Chauhan and Samajwadi MLC Sunil Sajan. Lucknow recorded the biggest tally in the state which saw 1403 cases on Saturday. Besides, two patients died of Covid-19 at KGMU. Civil Hospital director Dr DS Negi confirmed that Chetan Chauhan tested positive and said he had asked for another test to be done on Saturday morning. "His report came out positive and we informed the CMO about it," he said. Dr Negi also confirmed that Sunil Sajan tested positive for coronavirus at the hospital.

KGMU media spokesperson Dr Sudhir Singh said a 55-year-old woman from Jankipuram, who was admitted on July 9, died due to cardiopulmonary arrest and respiratory failure.

A 55-year-old man from Balrampur, who was admitted on June 30 and was suffering from kidney disease and hence on dialysis, died due to fluid overload and respiratory failure. He said three doctors tested positive, including one from the Dental department and two residents from the ENT department. "Their contact list is being prepared," he said.

Chief Medical Officer Dr Narendra Agarwal said those who tested positive included 14 from Gomti Nagar, 12 from Dial 102, 11 from Indira Nagar, 10

from Cantt, nine from Rakabganj, eight from DG office, seven from Rajajipuram, six from Mandi Samiti (Sitapur road), five each from Faizabad, Chowk, Alambagh, Kaiserbagh and Telibagh, four from Kursi road, three each from Lalbagh, Jagat Narain road, Daliganj and KGMU, two each from Sarvodayanagar, Kanpur road, Aliganj, Sarojininar, Home Guards Directorate and Paltan Chhawni, and one each from Malihabad, Rajaram Mohan Rai Marg, BKT, Ashok Nagar, Khadra, Para, Rajendranagar and Mahanagar.

With one person testing positive from CMO office, it was closed down for 48 hours and samples were taken from 10-14 persons. As many as 13 people recovered in the city while 62 new containment zones were made. Meanwhile, 24 containment zones ceased to exist as ones. Samples of 708 people were collected during contact tracing and sent to KGMU for testing.

Meanwhile, in the state, 1,403 people tested positive, including 147 in Ghaziabad, 57 in Gorakhpur, 53 in Prayagraj, 25 in Sant Kabirnagar, 34 in Ballia and 64 in Hapur, taking toll to 35,431. There were 25 deaths in the state, including three in Meerut, two each in Noida, Mathura, Fatehpur, Prayagraj, five in Kanpur and one each in Lucknow, Ayodhya, Siddharthnagar, Moradabad, Varanasi, Gorakhpur, Etawah, Jhansi and Bareilly, taking the toll to 913. Besides, 902 people recovered in the state, taking the figure to 22,689.

Lockdown redux: City comes to a standstill

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The two-day lockdown imposed by the state government beginning Friday night, brought the city to a standstill as shops remained closed and roads deserted. There was very little movement of people on Saturday in a stark contrast to a day earlier when crowds had thronged marketplaces. District Magistrate Abhishek Prakash, who inspected various areas such as Jugauli, Kaisala, Narayan Purwa and Faizullahganj to check whether guidelines were being followed or not, said the lockdown, which will continue till 5 am on July 13, is witness only essential and emergency services.

He said a special cleanliness campaign was also being carried out during lockdown and all the areas were being sanitised. "Unclean areas are also being identified, such as areas of Jugauli, where cleanliness drive will be carried out. The aim of this exercise is not only to prevent the spread of coronavirus but also contain communicable diseases," he said. He said after lockdown was lifted, the markets would open from 8 am to 9 pm. "Two shops adjacent to one another will open on alternate days — one shop will open on one day while the one adjacent to it on the next," he explained. The DM said there would be 80 enforcement teams to ensure adherence to guidelines.

With the increasing number of coronavirus cases in Lucknow, District Surveillance Officer KP Tripathi said they were making arrangements for extra ambulances for the patients. "We have asked the district administration to arrange 10 more ambulances to carry Covid-19 patients to hospitals. Directions have been issued for private hospitals to ferry their patients in their own ambulances. As per the CM's directions, we have increased the testing by identifying more and more cases of SARI and ILI and the daily testing has been increased to 1,700 per day. In Lucknow, we have already tested over 70,000 samples," the officer said.

Meanwhile, Balrampur Hospital's BSL level-2 lab for testing of coronavirus samples



was inaugurated by Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath from his official residence on Saturday. Director Dr Rajeev Lochan said they showcased the lab to the CM online.

"It is a state-of-the-art lab and all the technicians and staff were present on the occasion. We began testing from evening onwards and tested 15 samples from the lab. We will start the testing of samples from our own hospital and then we will also test the samples given to us," he said.

Media spokesperson of Ram Manohar Lohia Hospital Dr Srikesh said the number of Covid-19 patients reached the figure of 90. "We have a total of 100 beds in the Covid area and hence the holding area is the only portion where we can increase the beds," he said. He added that the number of other patients in the non-Covid areas was also increasing.

An official from the CMO office said that with the large number of cases coming up, it was clear that transmission at the local level had increased. "Now, the patients are not local travellers but it's a case of local transmission. It is difficult to say where the infection is coming from, with a large number of people testing positive for coronavirus."

Meanwhile, Additional CMO MK Singh said that on the sixth day of the door-to-door surveillance, the houses covered were 1,24,465 and the



While city largely wore a deserted look, cops stood guard and prevented people from stepping out. Sanitisation drive was carried on a large scale. A total of 1,137 persons were challaned for not wearing masks and a fine of Rs 11.96 lakh from the offenders. The police registered a total of 52 cases during checking

population covered 5,14,325. There were 2,911 found to be suffering from diabetes, 1,487 from hypertension, 56 from cancer, 243 from heart disease, 64 from kidney ailments, 103 from fever, 90 from cough and 69 from breathlessness.

Meanwhile, officials said that under the special communicable diseases programme, LMC will be running a cleanliness drive in every ward and as per micro-plans, garbage collection and cleaning of drains will be done simultaneously. "There are 1,094 drains under the health department of

LMC and silt has been removed from them," an official said.

Meanwhile, Rajya Karmachari Sanyukt Parishad president JN Tewari said they were grateful to the Chief Minister for expressing concern over the vacant posts of lab technicians in the state, especially during these times. He said they had been putting forth this demand with the state government with the Principal Secretary. He pointed out that there were 1,000 vacant posts of lab technicians in the state.



Cops prevent people from stepping out

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

As the 55-hour lockdown began on Friday night, the roads wore a deserted look with people preferring to remain indoors even as police stood guard to prevent them from stepping out.

Sanitisation of police stations, police outposts and booths started on Saturday after Commissioner of Police Sujeet Pandey wrote to the Fire department. A spokesman said the police prepared a week-long schedule for sanitisation drive and under the arrangements, sanitisation started at Naka, Gautampalli, Gomti Nagar, Gomti Nagar Extension

and other police stations. All the police stations under the commissionerate and CP office in Hazratganj have been divided in the 7-day plan and sanitisation work will be done accordingly between 7 am and 11 am," he said. Besides, senior officers, including the Commissioner of Police and JCP (Law & Order), conducted surprise inspections to check the alertness of cops deployed to implement lockdown in different parts of the city. A total of 1,137 persons were challaned for not wearing masks and a fine of Rs 11.96 lakh from the offenders. The police registered a total of 52 cases during checking drive.

Cane dept training women to become self-reliant

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Aiming to make rural women self-reliant, the UP government is imparting them training and employing women Self-Help Groups in cane producing districts.

Cane Commissioner Sanjay R Bhoosreddy said that the Cane department started work for making rural women, self-reliant in 26 cane producing districts and was imparting training to rural women under Women Employment Generation Scheme.

Bhoosreddy said that detailed information was being

provided to rural women entrepreneurs so that they could become self-reliant in seed selection, cutting single bud pieces from hand operated machine, germination in tray, time of growing, method of

planting and over all purpose of this scheme. "Trained women will earn income through sale of cane seedlings, grown by using Bud Chip method. These will be used in sowing of demonstration plots, to be set up under NFSM (National Food Security Mission) scheme," he said.

The cane commissioner said that cane seedlings prepared by this method would solve the problem of late sowing due to excessive moisture in fields for autumn cane sowing in lowland / flood prone areas, thereby increasing autumn cane area.

Antigen tests show 93.51% accuracy

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The CMO office, which is getting both antigen and RTPCR tests done on the samples collected in door-to-door surveillance across the district, has found the antigen testing showing 93.51 per cent accuracy when matched with RTPCR results.

Additional CMO MK Singh said they made a comparative chart of 385 samples collected in door-to-door surveillance and both antigen and RTPCR tests were carried out. "There were six people who tested positive in antigen and RTPCR tests, three people whose antigen test came out positive but RTPCR came out negative while there were 16

people whose antigen test was negative but RTPCR was positive. There were 360 people whose antigen and RTPCR tests came out negative, clearly showing that the accuracy of the antigen testing at 93.51 per cent," he said. "It shows that the antigen testing can be trusted since 360 RTPCR and antigen tests have matched," he pointed out. It may be noted that there has been a general perception that the antigen testing is not very reliable. Additional CMO said that with this comparison, it shows that the antigen testing is effective. "Antigen testing is carried out by us in the field and it gives out the results in 15-20 minutes but RTPCR is carried out in KGMU labs," he added.

Girl hangs self after failing in Class XII examinations

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

An 18-year-old girl hanged herself to death at her house in Ghazipur police station area on Saturday after having flunked the ISC (Class XII) exams, results of which were declared on Friday.

As per reports, Ashita Singh of Indira Nagar (A-Block) was found hanging with a saree tied around her neck around 11 am on Saturday. She was rushed to a hospital where she was declared dead. A team, led by sub-inspector Shiv Mangal Singh, reached the spot. Singh said Ashita was upset over failure in Class XII exams on Friday.

However, no suicide note was recovered from the scene. Her father runs a workshop preparing furniture in Alambagh.

In another incident, a Class XII student, identified as Priyanshu Prajapati (17) of Saunahi village under Sushant Golf City police station area, was found hanging at his house on Saturday. Police said he committed suicide but failed to explain the reason. Reports said Priyanshu was found hanging from the ceiling with a rope tied around his neck. It surfaced during investigation that Priyanshu was normal the previous night and had dinner with his family before retiring to his room. The

police said father Ramanand Prajapati found Priyanshu hanging from the ceiling.

Meanwhile, a 28-year-old man, identified as Rakesh of Gopal Khera locality in Mohanlalganj, was found dead on Saturday. His mutilated body was recovered from railway tracks. Reports said a person, identified as Ram Sumiran Rawat of Dalauna village, spotted the body lying on the tracks and informed the police. The cops recovered an Aadhaar card on the basis of which the identity of the deceased was ascertained. The police said Rakesh was a bachelor and worked as a labourer.

Heavy rains forecast in isolated parts

Lucknow (PNS): The Met department has forecast heavy to very heavy rains in isolated parts of the state on Sunday. Met director JP Gupta said moderate to severe thunderstorm and lightning is likely in Allahabad, Pratapgarh, Azamgarh, Mau, Ballia, Deoria, Kushinagar, Sant Kabirnagar, Gonda, Ambedkarnagar, Amethi, Sultanpur, Kaushambhi, Jaunpur, Siddharthnagar, Ghazipur, Varanasi and Mirzapur.

The Met department said that the impact expected was waterlogging in low lying areas and roads, overflow of drainage, disruption of traffic and electricity. Gupta said the troughline of south-west monsoon was passing through foothills of the Himalayas. The local forecast is partly cloudy skies with rains and thundershowers likely in some areas. On Saturday, hot and humid weather conditions prevailed in the city. The state capital recorded the maximum temperature at 35.2 degree Celsius, which was 1.3 degrees above normal, while the minimum temperature settled at 26.4 degree Celsius.

Sanitisers bring in ₹1,000 cr to govt

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

UP Excise department issued 91 FL-41 licenses to sugar mills, distilleries and drug license units for the manufacture of hand sanitiser across the state. Additional Chief Secretary, Excise, Sanjay R Bhoosreddy said over 1.33 crore litres of sanitiser was produced till July 8, out of which, 67.42 lakh litres was supplied within the state and 47 lakh litres exported to other states.

Before the coronavirus outbreak, there was only one unit manufacturing sanitiser in the state which has now increased to 91. This has not only increased availability of sanitiser in the state but also helped in keeping prices under check.

The sanitiser industry employed more than 1,600 people and from its production and distribution, the government generated a revenue of Rs 15.63 lakh in form of denaturation fees, Rs 586.13 lakh under license fees and Rs 9493.99 lakh in GST which added up to Rs 1,000 crore. The amount earned from the industry in the

previous year stood at Rs 2.08 crore. The quantity supplied within the state includes sanitiser supplied to various government agencies and government hospitals through district magistrates. Besides, 47 lakh litres sanitiser was supplied to Assam, Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Chandigarh, Chhattisgarh, Dadar & Nagar Haweli, Delhi, Gujarat, Goa, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Kerala, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Odisha, Punjab, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Uttarakhand, West Bengal, Mizoram and Union territory of Ladakh.

Centralised admission to emotionally integrate affiliated colleges: LU VC

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The centralised admission process will emotionally integrate affiliated colleges with Lucknow University and also help in bringing quality in terms of students getting admission, Vice-Chancellor Alok Rai said on Saturday.

"When I came here, I realised there was no emotional integration of the institutions or students with the university. The students and the institutions were taking themselves as a separate entity and I wanted greater integration through handholding," he said.

He added that the relationship which existed between the university and affiliated colleges was sort of inspectorial which he wanted to shed. Lucknow University was only supposed to give them affiliation and enroll experts in their faculty selection. There has to be greater integration prospects available through engagement," he said. He pointed out that all these students were, after all, the students of Lucknow University. "When students fill LU forms, appear for the exams



conducted by LU and get results prepared by LU, they have to be more involved with the university. Many of the colleges that are in the periphery in terms of funds and if the university has given them affiliation, sometimes they do not have as sophisticated a website as LU's so, at times the quality in the admissions gets compromised vis-à-vis the merit of the students. We have got applications from over 50,000 students this year and we will not be admitting more than 5,000, so can we offer them seats in colleges which are owing our name, teaching our curriculum and having our examination system. It will also help us have some quality control," he said. The Vice-Chancellor said this process would not only give

them better quality of students but also more students. "In a particular course such as BCom, more than 20 colleges have less than 10 students, and hence this process will help these colleges get more students," he added.

He said he was getting a good response from colleges in terms of participation. "We have 170 colleges, out of which 18 are not eligible because they are running only BEB programmes through the centralised admission process. The minority institutions are not participating because they have to have reserved seats. Some of the aided colleges that have got better grants are not participating," he said, adding that they started a little late because of coronavirus. He pointed out that 50 per cent of the colleges were participating in the process. Regarding the admission procedure, he said colleges had already registered and they were placing their names along with the programmes on the website and students could opt for their choices and be called for counselling. He said they had extended the date for submitting application forms to July 15.

2 held for duping pvt cos through cheque cloning

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Two youths were arrested on Saturday for duping private companies and innocents through cheque cloning. Those arrested were identified as Mohammed Irshad Ali of Allahabad and Noor Ali of Gorakhpur. Police recovered a cloned cheque, three fake IDs, three mobile phones and four SIM cards from their possession. They owned up their crime and disclosed that they would prepare cloned cheques and get the same encashed by depositing them in the bank accounts of some of their aides.

Inspector Kshittij Tripathi said the accused used to get bank account details of their targets in connivance with employees or by luring domestic helps of the victims. They would then prepare cloned cheques and get the same encashed in the bank accounts of some of their aides. The cash used to be distributed among them. Though the police did not share more details, sources said the fraud came to light after a resident lodged a complaint of cash transfer from his account. The police worked

on the case and it surfaced that a cloned cheque was used in the fraud. During further investigation, the names of the accused surfaced and they were nabbed.

Meanwhile, the Jankipuram police arrested an accused in connection with an eve-teasing case on Saturday. A case was registered against the accused, identified as Abhishek Mishra of Sitapur, three months back.

In another success, the Gudamba police arrested a drug peddler, identified as Sonu Shukla of Sitapur. The police recovered 106 grams of smack from the possession of the accused. Meanwhile, in Kakori, a police team on Saturday arrested an accused for his involvement in a loot incident which took place on February 25, 2015. The accused was identified as Ram Sewak Mahawat of Gomti Nagar Extension. His name had surfaced after the police arrested his aide Harun in March, 2015. The police said Ram Sewak was absconding since then and a reward of Rs 10,000 was announced in his name. He was arrested near Ghaila Bridge in Madaion following a tip-off.

Life comes to a standstill on first day of 55-hr lockdown

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

As the majority of people are realising the serious threats of worldwide coronavirus pandemic in view of its recent sharp spike in number of cases, they virtually stayed indoors, except a few, on the first day of 55-hour lockdown imposed in the state here on Saturday. The roads, ghats, markets, places of worship and others wore a deserted look. Senior district and police officers were seen inspecting various areas to study the stock of the situation. Inspector General (Range) Vijay Singh Meena, along with ADM (City) and SP (City) inspected Godowlia, Dashaswamedh and adjoining areas and gave instructions to the security personnel not to allow the residents to move outside.

Actually it is a lockdown of just two days because despite all the reliefs, there were restrictions on the movement during the night hours. Leading markets like Visheshwarganj, Godowlia, Dashaswamedh, and many others which were seeing a shocking heavy rush of customers, violating all the COVID-19 norms, wore a deserted look. Only a few shops of vegetables, fruits, essential items, medicines and others as per their scheduled opening time remained open but they did not see much rush as at many places, the security personnel were seen asking about



IG (Range) VS Meena inspecting lockdown in Godowlia area in Varanasi on Saturday

Pioneer

the reasons of movement from the people. The medicine shops remained open for four hours while vegetables and milk were three hours. At many places, the police were seen checking vehicles. As it was a second Saturday, banks and many other offices remained closed as usual so there were no activities there. The same is expected on the second day lockdown as it is weekly closure day not only of offices but also of the majority of markets.

Many other markets including Chowk, Maidagin, Lahurabir, Chetganj, Sagra, Bhelupur, Mehmoorganj, Luxa, Sonarpura, Assi, Lanka, Sundarpur, Kakarmata, trans-Varuna localities including Orderly Bazar, Bhojubar, Shivpur, Pandeypur, Pahadia, Sarnath and others remained closed and only a few selling essential items and medicines were seen open. Many fear that the duration of lockdown may be extended in view of seeing

the sharp increase in the number of corona cases in the recent days.

During the last two weeks, the number of cases has jumped up alarmingly putting pressure on many districts to make additional arrangements of isolated wards for positive patients.

In Varanasi, more floors of Sir Sunderlal Hospital (SSH) in Banaras Hindu University (BHU) may be reserved for the COVID-19 patients.

38 new COVID-19 patients found

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

There is no let up in finding of high number of COVID-19 cases as the day equaled the last biggest spike recorded two days ago as 38 new corona positive cases have been detected in the district on Saturday. With this, the total number of positive patients has increased to 798, just two less than to reach 800-mark. Earlier, by 11 am during the day, nine patients were found. The total death remained at 26.

Meanwhile, Additional Chief Secretary (Agriculture) Devesh Chaturvedi, who is



ACS (Ag) Devesh Chaturvedi inspecting DDU Covid L2 Hospital in Varanasi

also nodal officer of the district, inspected Pt Deen Dayal Upadhyay Hospital at Pandeypur and saw the condition of COVID-19 patients being treated there. He also talked to the health officers.

Chaturvedi also inspected the cleanliness drive in Ramnagar Nagar Palika areas and progress of Communicable Diseases Control Programme in Sarnath. Besides, the finding of

cases in this belt of Purvanchal (eastern UP) comprising 10 districts of three divisions continued. During the last 24 hours by Friday, the region also saw a large number of 112 new cases and with this, the total number of COVID-19 patients has increased to 3,442. Due to increasing in the number of active patients, the per cent reached 37.22 with 1,283 patients while the recovery rate has declined further to 60.74 per cent with 2,091 patients discharged from the hospitals. However, the mortality rate has declined to 1.97 per cent with 68 deaths.

DC for forming FPO in every district

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Divisional Commissioner (DC) Deepak Agrawal stressed the need of forming a Follow on Public Offering (FPO) in every district for marketing the major crops being produced there in the state, national and international markets. Citing the example of Amul's success story in Gujarat, he said 'the formation of FPOs will provide direct benefit to the farmers and their products will get fair prices. Besides, they have in position to finalise the prices of their products and save themselves in situation of crop price devaluation.'

Agrawal was presiding over a meeting of Agricultural and Processed Food Products

Development Authority (APEDA) here on Friday organised under the Union Ministry of Commerce and Industry to discuss the role of FPO in promotion of farm product exports. APEDA recently played an important role in exports of green chillies, Langda mangoes and Adamchini rice from the division. The DC further asked the Horticulture and Agriculture departments to cooperate with National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) for helping the farmers to form FPOs. 'For the benefit of its members, transparency and mutual trust are the basic mantras in any group formation', he added. Assistant General Manager (AGM) of APEDA CB Singh, while dis-

cussing in detail the role of Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT) and APEDA in formation of FPOs for helping farmers become exporters, highlighted the initial objectives of the meeting. 'First of all the farmers are required to obtain the Import-Export Code (IEC) on the DGFT site after giving the details of PAN cards and bank accounts. After getting the details of their organisations, they have to upload the self-certified IECs and bank certificates on the site of APEDA', he said, adding that for promotion of FPO business, one can use APEDA's Farmer Connect portal as on the said portal, both the exporters and the producers are registered and they can do business in mutual harmony and save

themselves from the exploitations of the middlemen. Later, Agrawal gave export certificates issued by APEDA to Jaya Seeds Producers Company Limited, Shri Shivash Krishak Producers Company Limited, Isani Producers Company Limited and Navchetna Producers Company Limited. The meeting was also attended by Deputy Director of DGFT Amit Kumar, District Development Manager of NABARD Anuj Singh, Deputy Director (Horticulture) Munna Yadav, District Horticulture Officer Sandeep Kumar Gupta, directors of four FPOs of Varanasi, five of Ghazipur, one of Chandauli and one of Mirzapur apart from other officers of APEDA and Horticulture department.

Jhunna Pandit's properties attached

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

In the wake of Kanpur incident, the police are now in action in the district and attached the properties of notorious criminal Prakash Mishra aka Jhunna Pandit on Saturday. Jhunna is in jail in Chitrakoot at present in connection with the murder of a pan seller.

The ADM (City) Gulab Chandra and SP (City) Vikash Chandra Tripathi along with heavy police force reached Lamahi and Hashimpur villages under Lalpur-Pandeypur police station on Saturday afternoon and attached the properties of the notorious criminal Jhunna Pandit. The process of the attachment of properties of Jhunna was made by the police in connection with the murder of a pan seller.

It may be noted here that the pan seller Dipal Patel, a physically challenged person, was shot dead on September 3, 2019 when he was sitting at his shop in Majhwan. The name of

Jhunna and some others had come to fore in this murder case. The police had succeeded in arresting all the criminals involved in this murder case including Jhunna who had been arrested by Punjab police.

After the murder of Dilip, the district police had announced a cash reward of ₹ 1 lakh on his head. More than two dozen criminal cases including murder and extortion are pending against Jhunna in various police stations of Varanasi and adjoining districts too.

BODY OF COMPLEX OWNER FOUND: Sensation prevailed at Kachnar in Rajatalab, under the Rohania police station when the locals saw the body of the owner of a commercial complex on Saturday morning. The police sent the body for the post-mortem examination and detained some for interrogation in this connection. The cause behind this could not be ascertained and the police also failed

in reaching out to killers till the news last came in.

According to information, the residents of the above mentioned area saw the blood spot in the lobby of a commercial complex and suspected something wrong. They peeped into a room and were stunned to see the inside scene. The body of the complex owner Jai Hind Patel alias Golai Patel (40) was lying on ground in a pool of blood.

It led to sensation there and the locals reported to police about this. On being informed the police reached the site and took stock of first hand information about the incident. The forensic team also reached the spot and collected samples to know about reason behind the murder.

It was said that the deceased had made two marriages and his first wife had died while he had dispute with his second wife. The police detained some for interrogation but failed in finding out the

actual reason behind the murder and also reaching out to the killers.

Meanwhile, a youth reportedly committed suicide by hanging with the bamboo used in shed in Jagdishpur village, under the Cholapur police station. The news came to light on Saturday morning and the police sent the body for the post mortem examination.

According to information, the deceased identified as Sandeep Yadav (25) went to sleep under tin-shed outside the house as usual at night on Friday. In the morning on Saturday, the family members were stunned to see him hanging from bamboo. The family members reported to local police about this. On being informed the police reached the site and took stock of first and information about the incident. The police sent the body for the postmortem examination. The cause behind this could not be ascertained till the news last came in.

Complete lockdown in Prayagraj

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ ALLAHABAD

Prayagraj city witnessed a complete lockdown once again here on Saturday imposed by the Yogi Adityanath's Government in view of the increasing infection of coronavirus. The lockdown which started from Friday night, the lockdown will continue until the morning of July 13. During this, only shops of essential things were open. Police had barricaded the entire city. Vehicles were not plying on roads unnecessarily. The police were interrogating those who were walking around aimlessly and were asking the reason for stepping out of the house. At the same time, strict action will also be taken against those stepping out on the road.

Police have barricaded the borders of Prayagraj district. Strict action will be taken against those who break the rules during the ban. There will be a complete shutdown till 5 in the morning of July 13. As the situation previous remained at the time of lockdown, it will remain almost the same. Shops of essential services are open, while related vehicles are also seen on the road.



Market closed during lockdown in Prayagraj on Saturday

Pioneer

The boundaries of the district have been barricaded. Police force has been deployed near Lalara Gopalganj, Mauaima, Budhia's Inara Phulpur, Janghai, Koraon, Shankargarh. Whatever vehicles were passing here, people were being allowed to go ahead only after interrogating them. At the same time, police forces have also been deployed in other markets including Chowk, Civil Lines, Telীগanj, Katra, Kothaparcha, Sulem Sarai, Laxman Market.

SP City Dinesh Singh said that special instructions have been given to the police force.

He also asked the subordinates for immediate action against those who break the rules.

In view of the two-day lockdown announced by the state government, the operation of roadways buses has been stopped from 10 o'clock on Friday night. Buses will not run until Monday July 13. This includes buses going to rural and other districts. The Civil Lines bus depot was closed at 10 pm on Friday. In view of the two-day shutdown, more than 20 extra buses were sent on the Gorakhpur, Lucknow and Varanasi routes on Friday

evening, leading to more congestion in roadways buses. Of these, six buses went to Gorakhpur, six Lucknow, five buses to Varanasi.

Roadways Assistant Regional Manager (Civil Lines) CB Ram said that between 250 and 300 buses run on Civil Lines on normal days. On Friday, 20-25 buses departed more. Roadways Regional Manager TKS Bisen said that in the sequence of instructions from the administration, roadways buses will be stationed there for the convenience of passengers arriving at the railway station and airport. Passengers arriving there will be charged a fare to their destination. The effect of the lockdown is also seen in the neighbouring district of Pratapgarh. Police stopped the drivers who were on the road and let them go only after interrogation. The lockdown is being followed by the police in Kunda Nagar. There was a pin drop silence on the road from Wahempatti Chowk to the Civil Line. Grocery, medical stores and vegetable shops opened in Patti Nagar on Saturday during the lockdown. The remaining other shops remained closed.

Four Covid deaths reported

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ ALLAHABAD

With four coronavirus patients including a city based doctor while one from Fatehpur succumbing to COVID-19, the Prayagraj reported a total of 49 new infected patients late on Friday night. At the same time 52 positive cases were found on Thursday night. The city has reported a total of 544 corona patients so far. Corona patients have started getting in large numbers ever since the testing of corona has been started through antigen kits in the city.

The increasing number of patients has added to the Health department's woes. A large number of coronas have been admitted to COVID-19 Hospital Kotwa Bani, Beli and SRN Hospitals.

Keeping in view the increasing number of patients, the Railway Hospital was also made operational for corona patients from Saturday. All arrangements in the hospital have been completed. Testing for COVID-19 conducted at different places on Friday in which 49 corona positives were



Nagar Nigam health worker sanitising market during lockdown in Prayagraj

reported late in night.

In this, the report of 40 samples came from RT-PCR, five tests were conducted by a true knot machine and four sample test reports came from an antigen kit. The 52 positives who were reported on Thursday were admitted to the hospital by ambulance on Friday.

Nodal Officer for Corona Dr Rishi Sahai said that 49 positive cases have been found while two corona positive patients have also died. The surveillance team is collecting details of all these patients. Patients have been admitted to the hospital on Saturday.

Two more patients of the coronavirus-infected suc-

cumbed in Prayagraj. At the same time, a patient of Fatehpur also died of COVID-19. All of them were admitted to Swaroopnani Nehru COVID Hospital. Two have been cremated on Friday night while an infected patient was cremated on Saturday.

Hailing from Soraon of the Prayagraj district, Dr SP Dwivedi (68) succumbed to corona while undergoing treatment at the SGPGI, Lucknow on Saturday. He had been admitted to SGPGI, Lucknow three weeks ago.

Besides, the age of one deceased was around 75 years. He was admitted to the SRN Hospital on July 3 last and it was here that his report came

positive after being tested for coronavirus. He was undergoing treatment here. When his health deteriorated he was put on a ventilator but he died soon after that.

According to the doctor, the deceased was a heart patient. Angioplasty also took place a few days ago. During treatment, he also developed diabetes and pneumonia.

Similarly, the age of the other patient was 41 years. He was also admitted to SRN Hospital on July 3 last. He was put on a ventilator when his health deteriorated but could not be saved.

The funeral took place on Saturday, as the family of the deceased lived outside. Dr Sujit Verma, the nodal officer of the SRNH, said that both the patients were suffering from diabetes and pneumonia. Similarly, a patient is a resident of Fatehpur district, who died while undergoing treatment at SRN Hospital.

Nodal officer for COVID-19, Dr Rishi Sahai said that the number of patients succumbed to corona has now reached 16 in the district.

Ashraf shifted to Bareilly jail

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ ALLAHABAD

Prime accused of the BSP MLA Raju Pal murder, Khalid Azeem alias Mohammad Ashraf has been shifted from the Naini Jail to Bareilly.

Ashraf, having a reward of Rs 1 lakh on his head, had been arrested recently from Puramufti in Kaushambi district where his inlaws live. He had been absconding for the past three years. He was wanted in 32 cases.

His elder brother mafia don Atique Ahmad is also languishing in jail. He had been shifted from Naini to Deoria jail where he had beaten up brutally a property dealer who had been lifted by Atique's gang men and was produced

before the don in the jail itself. After this incident Atique was shifted to Ahmedabad jail.

POLICE RAID ABBAS, AKHTAR HOUSE: Police raided the house of Abbas and Akhtar alias Balam, residents of Attarsuiya, close aides to former MP Atique Ahmed, late on Friday. During this, his family members were questioned when Abbas was not found at home. They then seized several vehicles including two cars from his house.

Akhtar, who lives in Ranimandi, under the Attarsuiya police station, was arrested from Koni area of Shahdol in Madhya Pradesh late on Thursday. Abbas and Akhtar are history-sheeters. Late night several officers including ADG Prem Prakash,

IG KP Singh, SSP Abhishek Dixit suddenly reached Attarsuiya. Thereafter, along with the force, the top officials raided the house of Atique's close aides.

The ADG said that apart from Prayagraj, a case has also been registered in Bhadoli against Akhtar arrested in Madhya Pradesh. The ADG also reprimanded Inspector Attarsuiya for not taking action.

Meanwhile, the police recovered the licensed pistol of former MLA Khalid Azim alias Ashraf. The pistol was recovered from the house of one Mohd Talibh living in Mariyadiah under the Dhumanganj police station on Friday. During the absconding, Ashraf's license was revoked

but the pistol was not submitted to the police station. The police started the interrogation by taking him into custodial remand and recovered the pistol on Thursday. CO Civil Lines Vrajnarayan Singh said that Ashraf has been sent to jail after the recovery of the pistol.

Outpost Incharge Rani Mandi Ajit Singh and PRV-77 constable Rakesh Singh Yadav, Sanjay Kumar Mishra have been suspended on charges of dereliction of duty on Friday night.

At the same time, the Leader Road incharge Sher Singh Yadav has been sent to the line. In fact, ADG inspected several police station areas and sought information about the proceedings including the top ten list of criminals.

NCR tops list of 20 'good work' done

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ ALLAHABAD

Railway Board has issued a list of 20 'good work' done by Zonal Railways, Production Units, Centralised Training Institutes and RDSO. And North Central Railway has topped the list with eight items from a total of 20 good works selected by Railway Board in whopping 2,645 entries.

With intent of replicating and standardising good practices and innovations, Railway Board had directed Zonal Railways, Production Units, Centralised training institutes and RDSO to actively share the good work being done by different Railway units. A dedicated online 'Rail Good Work Portal' was created by Railway Board for reporting such works by different Railway units.

Railway Board has selected best 20 items from the overwhelming 2,645 entries received for the period from September 14, 2018 to December 31, 2019 and has directed for wide circulation and implementation of selected 20 items on different Railway units.

In a major achievement, North Central Railway is on top among all Railway units with eight items from NCR finding place in the list of 20 'good work done'.

Eight good works done on NCR featuring in this coveted 20 items list are Bell system for alerting passengers two minutes before departure of originating train implemented at Prayagraj, Real time on-board CCTV monitoring system installed in Prayagraj-Anand Vihar Humsafar

Express, Indian Railways' first hot axle-cum-hot wheel detector installed at Chunar, air quality monitoring equipment installed at NCR HQ, Prayagraj station and divisional office Agra, provision of toggle switch for testing hotel load (HOG) converter in locomotive by loco shed Kanpur, Online NS demand, issue note, imprest note generation and delivery of high speed diesel from divisional stores Prayagraj, reconditioning of CMS crossing by translaminar robotic welding technique and ultrasonic flaw detection of Rail / welds using vehicular system.

Besides the above eight items of NCR, other selected items from different Railway units are UTS on mobile app, online temperature and speed monitoring system for passing

and terminating trains, UTS on mobile with Bluetooth printer, QR code based mobile app for monitoring point machine maintenance, Battery operated torque wrench, natural water cooler, railway line burr removing equipment, Push-pull gadget for repair of motors, LHB coach spring changing gadget, in position repair arrangement for bogie component in locomotive, Railway stores vendor guidance system and use of Rail road equipment.

Under the dynamic leadership of General Manager North Central and Northern Railway Rajiv Chaudhry, North Central Railway has been leading the way in implementing good practices and innovations in operation and maintenance fields.

KDA razes illegal plottings and constructions in city



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

As part of its ongoing drive against encroachments and unauthorised constructions in the city, Kanpur Development Authority's enforcement squad on Saturday removed three plottings done by real estate developers without approval of layout and demolished constructions on illegally occupied land.

The KDA enforcement squad removed illegal plotting done by one Sonu Yadav on two bigha land without an approved layout in Hindupur near Ganga Barrage on Bithoor Road. The enforcement squad also razed the illegal plottings on around four bigha land in Singhpur Kachhar at Kalyanpur by one Shiva Kant Shukla and on about two bigha land in the same area by Bhanwar Lal Kothiwala and

Anil Kothiwala without getting the layout approved by the KDA.

The enforcement squad also demolished the illegal constructions being carried out by one Ram Prakash Bajpai after taking illegal possession of the land acquired by KDA in village Budhpur Machhariya Naubasta, Hanspuram and village Karampur in Kanpur Nagar. OSD Alok Kumar Verma,

Joint Secretary KK Singh, Executive Engineer Atul Misra, RP Singh, Tehsildar Ajit Singh, Vyas Narain, officials of KDA enforcement, engineering, revenue departments were present during the drive along with police force.

KDA Secretary SP Singh has directed the officials concerned to continue the drive to remove encroachments and unauthorised constructions in the city.

66 more test +ve in Kanpur

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Sixty-six more persons tested positive for coronavirus infection in Kanpur Nagar during the last 24 hours.

Chief Medical Officer Dr AK Shukla said on Saturday that 66 new coronavirus infection cases were detected in the city, taking the total to 1,690.

Dr Shukla said with the discharge of 27 COVID-19 patients, 1,078 coronavirus infected persons had completely recovered in the city. He said at present 527 active coronavirus cases were undergoing treatment in the city.

The CMO said with three more deaths reported, the death toll reached 85 on Saturday evening.

He said 518 samples were collected on Friday, 294 of them from surveillance areas.

5 more held in Senger murder case

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

The police arrested five more accused in the Bahujan Samaj Party leader Narendra Singh alias Pintu Senger murder case on Friday night. They included a sharpshooter.

Police recovered a country-made pistol, three live cartridges, ₹2,700 cash, a KTM motorcycle and a car from them. Pintu Senger was murdered on June 20. Earlier, the police had arrested Pappu Smart, his brother Tausif alias Kakku, Manoj Gupta, Shyam Sushil Misra, Virendra Pal, Tanvir, and Ehsan Qureshi in connection with Senger's murder.

Those arrested on Friday were identified as Salman Beg, Anis, Mohd Amir, Mohd Aslam and Mohd Ayaz.

THEFT

The laptop and purse of a junior doctor of Children's Hospital admitted to Covid hospital was stolen on Friday. On Friday morning, when the doctor went to washroom, some unidentified miscreant took away her purse and laptop from the bed.

CCTV footages showed a youth wearing mask, blue shirt and jeans walking away with the doctor's purse and laptop. Due to the mask, he could not be identified. The doctor filed a complaint with the police through the chief medical superintendent of LLR Hospital ((Hallet).

DIG asks people to wear masks

CORRESPONDENT ■ BANDA

DIG Chitrakootdham range Deepak Kumar along with SP Banda Siddharth Shankar Meena inspected Banda city on Friday night and advised the people to follow the guidelines during the restrictions announced by the government. DIG asked the people to wear masks and keep their hands sanitised for their own safety. He issued instructions to the police authorities to impose a challan of ₹500 on those who



were found without a mask. Deepak Kumar directed SP Banda to ensure that the guidelines during the restrictions were implemented in the district. DIG and SP Meena questioned more than two dozen

people coming out of their houses without any valid reason. They all were allowed to go after they promised to follow the instructions in view of the curbs. DIG said that the restrictions announced by the government would be implemented strictly in entire Chitrakootdham range. He said that he had already issued instructions to the SPs of Banda, Mahoba, Chitrakoot and Hamirpur to ensure their proper implementation in their respective areas.

Commissioner inspects works

CORRESPONDENT ■ BANDA

Commissioner Chitrakootdham division Gaurav Dayal inspected different works being carried out in Mamas Khurd village under the uninterrupted water campaign in Kamasin block recently. He inquired about the population of Mamas Khurd from the pradhan who told him that it was 56,000. Pradhan informed him that total 136 migrant labourers had come to the village. He told him that these labourers had not been given relief kits. Dayal expressed great concern over it and directed SDM Baberu to make them available at the earliest. Later Dayal inspected Chuhuka nullah at Mamasi Khurd gram panchayat and found 167 labourers working there. Pradhan told the commissioner that length of Chuhuka nullah was 1.5 km. He said that 12 water storage tanks had already been constructed. Commissioner directed BDO Kamasin to get the remaining water storage tanks constructed as early as possible. Dayal directed BDO to ensure plantation on both sides of the nullah. Earlier Dayal planted saplings at Mamsi Khurd. He also instructed

the BDO to ensure the payment of wages to labourers within the stipulated time-frame. He inspected the 30-metre-long water storage tank which was being constructed on the nullah and said that it would provide sufficient water to the cattle and also be helpful in recharging the land. He directed the BDO to get the width of the nullah examined by executive engineer Minor Irrigation in order to check the possibility of making a checkdam here. Commissioner inspected ponds constructed by Minor irrigation department in Tilausa and Sadasani villages. EE told the commissioner that ₹25.4 lakh and ₹35.41 lakh respectively had been spent on both the ponds. Commissioner directed the executive engineer to ensure plantation around the ponds for giving them a beautiful look. Later the Commissioner inspected the pond and other works being carried out under MGNREGA at the Agriculture Science Centre situated at Kamasin. Dayal directed the authorities concerned there to ensure social distancing among the employees. Dayal also instructed them to keep their hands sanitised. He said that those who did not follow the instructions would be dealt with strictly.

Sanitation drive launched

CORRESPONDENT ■ MIRZAPUR

A sanitation drive was launched in Halia block on Friday. To make the drive successful the BDO deployed 198 sanitation workers in all 79 gram panchayats with the directive to clean the drains and remove filth from all places. BDO Nandlal Kumar visited Banjari, Sikta, Mahugarh, Gadbad, Babura and Madawa Dhanawal villages. He was accompanied by ADO Panchayat Piyush Dubey.

FIRE CAUSES HUGE LOSS: Property worth over Rs 1 lakh was destroyed when a fire broke out in a house in Baraini village under the Kachhawan police station. A short circuit led to the fire. On Friday morning family members of Shyam Singh noticed smoke in one portion of the house where a flour mill was running. The houseowner said that property worth more than Rs 1 lakh had been destroyed in the fire.

DIRECTIVES: Nodal officer Surendra Prasad Singh inspected few hospitals in Seekhar block and issued necessary directions to the health staff on Friday. At CHC Seekhar he was informed that no doctor had been appointed for the place because at present it was being run as additional PHC. At Mangaraha CHC he found doctors along with the staff present on duty and OPD was also running. The officer asked the doctors to maintain social distancing. During inspection he asked the staff to adopt proper protocol in case any visitor was found with early symptoms of Corona.

SAINIK SAMMELAN: SP Dr Dharmveer Singh has directed the police personnel to regularly review all points for proper policing. These views were expressed by him during the Sainik Sammelan organised at Police Lines. In the sammelan the SP first of all heard the



problems of policemen belonging to different branches of the police and asked the authorities concerned to solve them and inform him about each matter. He directed the cops to be in regular touch with the government offices and take action against the anti-social elements who tried to hamper their smooth functioning.

During his address the SP made it clear that reports like character verification and arms licence should not be delayed unnecessarily at all. Reviewing other points, including investigation, vigil over criminals, chargesheets, patrolling, smuggling etc he laid emphasis on strengthening of the beat system. He directed the beat staff to keep a close watch on the ongoing activities. He was of the view that capable beat staff was a medium for controlling crime and working out the cases.

CONFISCATED: On the order of the District Magistrate two motorbikes and a three-wheeler worth around ₹2 lakh of the cattle smuggler, Vinod Sonkar, were confiscated by Dehat Kotwali police on Friday. Vinod Sonkar, a resident of Chandaipur village, had been jailed under Gangster Act recently.

TAKEN INTO CUSTODY: Halia police took two hoodlums into custody for attacking a house. Pramod Mishra, a resident of Mandawa Dhanawal village informed the police that some persons had attacked his house at night. SO Amit Singh took two hoodlums into custody. Victim Pramod Mishra had lodged the complaint in the police station.

Lightning claims farmer's life

CORRESPONDENT ■ CHANDAULI

A farmer was killed when lightning struck him in Badur village under the Baburi police station while working in the field on Friday. Police sent his body for the post-mortem examination. Chhangur Biyar (35), son of Narayan and Munshi Biyar, (45) son of Punwasi, had gone to the field when it started raining around 12 noon and got scorched when they were struck by a flash of lightning. On seeing the spectacle some others working in the field raised an alarm and informed the police. On getting information along with police an ambulance arrived from the district hospital and took both of them to the district hospital where the doctors there declared Chhangur dead. Munshi was undergoing treatment. Police sent the body for the post-mortem examination.

ARRESTED: The Alingar police arrested a youth near Barhuli Pulia during checking and on frisking him recovered a pistol and a cartridge from his possession.

Two end lives

CORRESPONDENT ■ GORAKHPUR

Two persons committed suicide in two different parts of the district. Indal Prasad (35) ended his life by hanging himself in his house in Kotha village under Khajni police station. Pradhan Sunil Tiwari informed the police that Indal used to work as a mechanic. In the second incident a youth ended his life in Nagar Panchayat area ward number 14 under Sahajanwa police station. Police sent their bodies for the post-mortem examination.

Jaipuria hogs limelight in ISC, ICSE results

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

The prominent ISC and ICSE schools of the city once again proved their mettle by scoring high in the recently declared ISC and ICSE results. The noted Seth Anandram Jaipuria Public School once again excelled on its own set standards with the best results for this session. The school's topper was Harleen with 99.25 per cent marks, followed by Samridhi Gupta with 98.75 per cent, Yashwardhan with 98.75 per cent, Mehul Rastogi with 98.25 per cent, Vaibhav Jaiswal with 98.25 per cent in ISC exams. Similarly in the ICSE the topper was Pranjali Tripathi with 99.6 per cent marks, followed by Avni Nevatia with 98.4 per cent, Riddhima Singhal with 98.4 per cent, Samia Siddiqui with 98.4 per cent and Anyana with 98.2 per cent.

The school management congratulated the top achievers and wished the best for the rest of the students who made the school proud.

KDMA WORLD SCHOOL

Principal, S Raja said that this year the

school came out with flying colours and in science, history, computer, PED its students scored as high as 100 per cent.

The ISC toppers were Japreet Singh Chhabra with 96.7 per cent marks followed by Pragati Gangwar with 91.2 per cent marks where as in ICSE, Anshita scored 97.2 per cent, Shruti Sachan, 96.8 per cent, Manvendra Pratap Singh, 96.2 per cent, Varun Mishra 94 per cent, Mohica Singh, 93.4 per cent to make the school proud.

The principal said in ISC, over 33 per cent of the students scored over 90 per cent marks where as in ICSE 36 per cent scored above 90 per cent marks.

ST MARY'S CONVENT

The school claimed in ISC their school student Nandini Verma topped with 98.5 per cent marks, followed by Zenab Fatima (97.5 per cent), Laiba Khalid (97.2 per cent), Anyana Mishra (96.75 per cent) and Samiya Saghir (95.25 per cent).

Similarly ICSE student Shreya Bahl was the topper with 99 per cent marks, followed by Tarushi Taneja with 98.2 per cent,

Ameesha Gupta with 97.4 per cent, Kritika Agarwal with 97.2 per cent Adya with 97 per cent marks.

HELIGER BORDEN EDUCATION CENTRE

The school claimed 100 per cent result. In the ISC exams, Divyansh Patel scored 95 per cent marks, Sandli Srivastava 93 per cent, Rahul Prasad, 94 per cent, Aniket Sahu, 94 per cent, Kriti Gupta, 94 per cent, Prerna Chauhan 93 per cent, Purshottam Singh 93 per cent, Aditya Kumar 93 per cent, Ashi Shukla, 92 per cent, Om Dubey, 92 per cent, Ajit Kumar, 92 per cent, Raghavendra Chauhan, 92 per cent, Harshit Katiyar, 91 per cent, Narendra Rajput, Varun Gupta, 91 per cent and Aastha Mishra 90 per cent.

In ICSE exams, Vaibhav Prajapati with 91 per cent, Vanshika Verma 91 per cent, Satyam Bharadwaj 91 per cent, Siddharth Gautam, 90 per cent, Pratigya Saingh 90 per cent, Anwita Mishra 90 per cent brought laurels to the school.

Principal Dr Vivek Srivastava congratulated the students on their achievement.

Expert advises farmers to go for indoor mushroom cultivation

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Chandra Shekhar Azad University for Agriculture and Technology has advised farmers to start indoor cultivation of mushrooms which are much in demand.

Head of department of plant pathology, Prof SK Biswas, while addressing a webinar on 'Indoor mushroom farming', said in India, mushroom was a non-traditional cash crop grown indoors, both as a seasonal crop and under the controlled environmental conditions and the two prominent mushrooms were button mushroom and Oyster. He said mushroom cultivation was more encouraged by the government by providing subsidies to farmers for it.

He said this business did not create any type of pollution and because of this, large numbers of growers were following mushroom farming business and earning lakhs from this agricultural business plan.

He said one could easily start mushroom farming at home with less capital, less space and less time and earn a lot from it in a very short time period. He said one could even start this business on a small scale rather than going for large-scale business.

He said groundwork was highly important for this farming and thus one had to fill compost in the pasteurisation tunnel and the moment the compost in the tunnel stuffed the doors and new air damper was

appropriately closed, it was ready. He after 12-15 hours of mulch filling, the temperature of compost starts climbing, and after 48-50° Centigrade was achieved it needed to be kept for 36-40 hours together with the venting system. He added that the warmth of compost was increased to 57-58° C by self-production of heat from parasitic activity if it was not obtained. He said thus one had to inject live steam at the majority chamber and keep it for eight hours to guarantee effective pasteurization.

Discussing spawning, Prof Biswas said the seeds were a mix of the compost and before seeding, one should wash the utensils used in seeding in 2 per cent formalin solution. He said casing soil should keep the moisture content and exchange of pollutants inside the top layer of the compost which assisted in the correct development of the mycelium. He said the casing soil was stacked on cemented ground and could be treated with 4 per cent formalin solution. He said it was a lot easier to grow mushrooms now than it ever had been. For decades, most of the mushrooms that one ate came from giant farms using lab-based cultivation practices that required expensive equipment and demanded precision.

He said now small farmers and home growers had access to more accessible and efficient practices and the university was helping to spread those practices by sharing them online.

He said mushrooms were more than a popular food and they could also be grown in ways that improved the overall health and efficiency of plant and animal systems. He said most farms produced tons of agricultural waste that was often burned or composted. He said but as nature's great recyclers, fungi were able to break down nearly any carbon-based material, from woody trees to industrial pollutants. He said multiple commercial mushroom species had been shown to grow on over 200 agricultural residues, including corn cobs, bamboo shoots, potato leaves, soybean hulls, and peanut shells. He said rather than placing all the value on the seed or fruit of a given crop, farmers could start to see the other 80-90 per cent of the plant as food for another crop that was edible and medicinal ie, mushrooms. He added that mushrooms could be grown year-round and it was ideal to grow them during the winter months when other local foods were only minimally available.

He said most mushrooms species were high in various B vitamins, while others contained an abundance of vitamin C but all mushrooms had ergosterol — a compound called a vitamin D precursor — in their cell walls. He said mushrooms were also an excellent source of macronutrients like calcium, magnesium, sodium, potassium, and phosphorus, as well as the microelements copper, iron, selenium, manganese, and zinc.

Population dynamics key to sustainable development

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Population stability is an important concept in model management and population stability index (PSI) is a statistic that measures how much a variable has shifted over time, and is used to monitor applicability of a statistical model to the current population.

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, launched that Population Stability Fortnight on Saturday. It will continue till July 24. The UP government is committed to expanding the reach of modern contraceptives to every home so that family planning can be given a boost to control population in the country, especially Uttar Pradesh. This was stated by Joint CDO Brij Bhushan while speaking about the family planning future plan to be taken up in a big way in Uttar Pradesh. He said the Union Health Ministry had launched a campaign focussing on population stabilisation, especially in high fertility districts, across seven states in India. The campaign would monitor fertility with high TFR and under this specific targeted initiatives shall be taken for population stabilisation through better services delivery.

Bhushan said population

UP government is committed to expanding the reach of modern contraceptives to every home

dynamics had a significant influence on sustainable development and added that the changes in population growth rates and age structures were closely linked to national and state developmental challenges and their solutions.

He said that the issue of population stabilisation was so gigantic in its proportion that the government alone could not address the issue and thus the collective involvement of NGOs, private sector and corporate sector shall play a pivotal role.

Bhushan said the UP government would be conducting half-yearly review of the programme to gauge whether it was moving in the right direction. He said under this campaign there had been an increase in the basket of contraceptive choices to meet the changing needs of people and steps had been taken to ensure quality assured services and commodities were delivered to the consumers in both rural and urban areas.

Demands for Rahul to take over as party chief dominate Cong meet

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

A meeting of Congress Lok Sabha MPs called by party president Sonia Gandhi to discuss the COVID-19 pandemic and the political situation in the country was dominated by calls for Rahul Gandhi to take over as the party chief on Saturday.

The demand was first raised by party chief whip in Lok Sabha K Suresh and seconded by a majority of MPs who attended the virtual meeting that lasted over three hours, sources said.

Suresh is learnt to have said that Rahul Gandhi, who has been at the forefront of espousing people's issues during the pandemic, needs to take over the reins of the Congress at this critical time.

The demands were raised with Rahul Gandhi in attendance at the meeting, even though neither he nor Sonia Gandhi said anything on this issue, the sources said.

Manickam Tagore, Gaurav Gogoi, Anto Antony, Gurjeet Singh Aujla, Saptagiri Sankar Ulaka, and some others backed the demand.

Rahul Gandhi resigned as Congress president after the party's 2019 Lok Sabha poll debacle and Sonia Gandhi was installed as interim chief on August 10 by the Congress Working Committee, the party's highest decision-making body.

On Saturday, she had convened a meeting with party Lok Sabha MPs to discuss the current political and COVID-19 situation in the country.

According to the sources, the MPs also raised the demands for convening

the Monsoon Session of Parliament and how the government was evading parliamentary scrutiny. The India-China standoff was also raised by many MPs, including Rahul Gandhi, who said the government continues to mislead the country on Chinese incursions and the current situation in Ladakh.

All the MPs demanded restoration of MPLADS funds which have been discontinued due to the pandemic. The Congress members said since

they were public representatives, they were unable to fulfil their responsibilities in view of the suspension of the scheme.

The Central Government suspended the Member of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme (MPLADS) for two years in view of huge funds requirement to fight COVID-19. The funds under MPLADS for the next two years will be part of the Central pool to fight the pandemic.

The Congress parliamentarians also raised the issues of economic downturn, agriculture distress, high petroleum prices. Many suggested the party should raise the cause of the middle class, who have been the hardest hit due to the slowdown and job losses.

Rahul Gandhi said the Congress was not playing politics on the issue of Chinese incursions and the party did not want India to be seen as a "weak country" by ceding its land to China. He also accused the Prime Minister of "misleading" the country on the border issue, the sources said.

On COVID-19, the former Congress chief said the central government has "mishandled" the situation and highlighted its apathy in handling the crisis.

Now, he said, when the situation has gone out of hand, the Centre has left it to states to fend for themselves. He also demanded that the PM-CARES Fund be audited as it has accepted public money and raised the issue of donations received from some Chinese companies into the fund which, he added, needs to be probed.

The Congress is likely to raise the issues discussed on Saturday during the Monsoon Session of Parliament, which may take place next month.

The Congress has been critical of the BJP-led Government over various issues, particularly its handling of the pandemic as COVID-19 cases have risen exponentially after the easing of lockdown, and the situation at the border with China in eastern Ladakh where 20 Indian soldiers were killed in a violent standoff with Chinese troops on June 15.

COVID-19 CURBS VIOLATIONS

Gautam Buddh Nagar: 62 held, 973 vehicles penalised

PTI ■ NOIDA

Sixty-two people were arrested and owners of 973 vehicles penalised across Noida and Greater Noida on Saturday for allegedly violating curbs imposed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Gautam Buddh Nagar police said.

Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC) Section 144, which bars assembly of more than four persons, is in force in Gautam Buddh Nagar, whose urban areas fall in the 'Red Zone' for COVID-19.

"Eighteen FIRs were registered and 62 people arrested for violating the curbs. A total of 1,950 vehicles were checked across 200 barrier points in the district and challans issued to 973 of them, while four were impounded," the police said in a statement.

Altogether, Rs 40,650 was collected in fines during the action, the police said.

The security checks have intensified in view of fresh lockdown-like curbs which began at 10 pm on Friday and will continue till 5 am on July



13 to prevent the spread of the COVID-19 and other vector-borne diseases, the officials said.

The Noida-Delhi border continues to remain sealed for movement except for essential services and people having passes issued by the district administration, according to officials.

All shops, offices, commercial establishments, including shopping malls, shall remain closed till July 13 across Noida and Greater Noida, Gautam Buddh Nagar administration had said on Friday.

The administration also warned that people will be fined ₹500 each time for non-

compliance if they are found without face cover or masks outdoors.

Supply of essential goods and services shall be allowed through home delivery while there will be no restriction on supply of medical goods and services during the period.

Such category of people whose movement is permitted by the government order do not require separate passes. Identity cards issued by respective organisations or industry shall be considered as valid for their movement.

Movement to and fro railway stations and airport shall not be prohibited till July 13.

Assam Cong MP urges CM to set up SIT for arresting drug syndicate bosses

PTI ■ GUWAHATI

Assam Congress MP Gaurav Gogoi has requested Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal to take steps for curbing the menace of drug in the state and constitute a Special Investigation Team to arrest kingpins of drug syndicates.

In a letter to the chief minister, the MP from Kaliabor said there has been an alarming rise in drug addiction cases among the youths of Assam and drug-related crimes are also increasing consequently.

Around 9 kg of heroin was seized from a single peddler last year, he said in the letter. "These drugs were being stored with the intention to

traffic to different states of the North East and even to Myanmar via Nagaland.

These incidents are a testament to increasing drug abuse and trafficking-related cases in Assam," the MP said.

Drug abuse adversely affects not just the individuals who are addicts but also their families, various businesses and government resources, Gogoi said in the letter.

"Therefore, I urge you to take immediate steps to unearth and nab those involved in drug peddling in the State. I request you constitute a top-level special investigative team (SIT) to arrest the key culprits in the drug syndicate," his letter to the CM read.

Drug abuse adversely affects not just the individuals who are addicts but also their families, various businesses and government resources, Gogoi said in the letter

Meanwhile, a police officer on Saturday said they have arrested two drug dealers in upper Assam's Dhemaji district and seized 2 grams of opium from them. They were captured near Kulajan when they were trying to cross Bogibeel Bridge over Brahmaputra to reach Dibrugarh on Tuesday.

IMA demands setting up of all-India medical services for healthcare admin

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Indian Medical Association (IMA) has demanded the setting up of an Indian Medical Service (IMS), on the lines of IAS, IPS and IFS, to bring about a drastic change in the healthcare sector, the doctors' body said.

The IMA feels that there is a dire need for a drastic change in health administration which can be realised by raising a new cadre of administrators, it said in a statement.

The IMS will be responsible for holding the administrative responsibilities pertaining to the district medical officer, project officers of various disease control programmes, and the various ranks of secretaries in the Union health ministry and

the state health departments and the heads all other areas in the health sector, Dr Rajan Sharma, IMA national president, said.

The basic qualification to sit for the IMS examination should be MBBS, he said.

"Even though IMA has been enthusiastically working, we request the government of India to emphasize upon the certain major provisions.

Meticulously continuing the public health activities of contact-tracing and testing will ensure a minimal morbidity rate," he said.

"There is an urgent need for a new post-COVID healthcare policy providing equal priority to non-COVID care as well," Sharma added.

Working closely with the central and the state govern-

ments during the pandemic, the IMA said it has been involved in various activities like availing of insurance for healthcare workers, anti-violence ordinance, inclusion of clinics, nursing homes and hospitals in MSME, modifications in testing policy, PPEs in work places, policy for quarantine of caregivers and plasma therapy among others.

Management of this pandemic would have been better had the public infrastructure and the strategies in place been better, it said.

"There is a dire need for the government to increase its GDP allocation to five per cent for the healthcare structure. The IMA also demands for creation of 'One Nation - One set of guidelines for health'," Dr R V Asokan, IMA secretary general, said.

Karnataka Govt to implement anti-cow slaughter law soon

PTI ■ BENGALURU

Karnataka will soon implement a ban on cow slaughter, sale and consumption of beef in line with other States, Animal Husbandry Minister Prabhu Chavan has said.

The BJP in its manifesto ahead of the 2018 Assembly election had promised prohibition of cow slaughter.

"The Government is committed to enact the anti-cow slaughter law.

Once the Covid-19 crisis eases an expert committee would be constituted to look into its implementation, and if need be, it will visit states like Gujarat and Uttar Pradesh to study about implementation there," Chavan was quoted as saying by his office in a release on Friday.

He said he will hold discussions with the Chief Minister in this regard and

was committed to make it more effective than other States.

If the law is enacted, along with prohibition on slaughter, sale and use of beef, illegal transportation of animals for slaughtering will be stopped, the release said.

Despite resistance from opposition, the then BJP government led by B S Yediyurappa in 2010 had got the controversial Prevention of Slaughter and Preservation of Cattle Bill passed that proposed to replace the Karnataka Prevention of Cow Slaughter and Cattle Preservation Act, 1964. The bill had widened the definition of 'cattle' and imposed a blanket ban on cattle slaughter, coupled with stringent penalty clauses for violation.

However, the Congress government headed by Siddaramaiah that came to power in 2013, withdrew the

bill that was before the President for his assent.

After the BJP came back to power in the state, several party leaders have been making a pitch to re-enact the anti-cow slaughter law.

Stating that the Cow Protection Commission (Goseva Aayoga) will be made functional, the Minister said it was set up in 2013, but the Congress government scrapped it.

The Government wants to ensure protection of cows, development of gaushalas and give encouragement to dairy products, he added.

Chavan said following the Supreme Court's directions, the state government has also set up an animal welfare board, as he noted that a war room is being set up to help those engaged in animal husbandry, with expert advice, among other necessary things.

Indian economy showing signs of returning to normalcy: RBI Guv

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The Indian economy has started showing signs of returning to normalcy in response to the staggered easing of lockdown restrictions, RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das said on Saturday.

He further said the need of the hour is to restore confidence, preserve financial stability, revive growth and recover stronger. "The Indian economy has started showing signs of getting back to normalcy in response to the staggered easing of restrictions," Das said at the 7th SBI Banking and Economics Conclave.

Indian companies and industries respond better in a crisis, he noted. Das, however, said it is still uncertain

when supply chains will be restored fully, how long it will take for demand conditions to normalise, and what kind of durable effects the pandemic will leave behind on potential growth.

According to him, targeted and comprehensive reform measures already announced by the government should help in supporting growth. Possibly in a vastly different post-COVID global environment, reallocation of factors of production within the economy and innovative ways of expanding economic activity could lead to some rebalancing and emergence of new growth drivers, Das added.

The central bank, he said, strives to maintain the balance between preserving financial

stability, maintaining banking system soundness and sustaining economic activity.

"Post containment of COVID-19, a very careful trajectory has to be followed in orderly unwinding of counter-cyclical regulatory measures," he said.

The financial sector should return to normal functioning without relying on the regulatory relaxations as the new norm, he added.

He said the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) has reduced policy rates by 250 basis points since February 2019 to support growth.

The conventional and unconventional monetary policy and liquidity measures by RBI have been aimed at restoring market confidence, allevi-

ating liquidity stress, easing financial conditions, unfreezing credit markets and augmenting the flow of financial resources to those in need for productive purposes, he said.

"The broader objective was to mitigate risks to the growth outlook while preserving financial stability," he added.

Das said despite the substantial impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the country's financial system, including all the payment systems and financial markets, are functioning without any hindrance.

"RBI is making continuous assessment of the changing trajectory of financial stability risks and upgrading its own supervisory framework to ensure that financial stability is

preserved," he said.

Banks and financial intermediaries have to be ever vigilant and substantially upgrade their capabilities with respect to governance, assurance functions and risk culture, Das noted. The Governor also said banks will have to improve their governance, sharpen their risk management and raise capital in an anticipatory basis instead of waiting for a situation to arise.

He said as the lockdown has obstructed RBI's on-site supervision to an extent, the central bank is further enhancing its off-site surveillance mechanism. The objective of the off-site surveillance system would be to 'smell the distress', if any, and be able to initiate pre-emptive actions, he added.

FROM PAGE 1

CHINA STARTS PULLBACK FROM PANGONG

on their side. Similarly, the Chinese have also not removed their fast interceptor boats from a jetty in the perceived Indian zone in the lake. A giant Chinese map is also put up at the jetty.

Realising the sensitive nature of this face-off site, the Corps Commanders of the two armies next week will discuss the issue, officials said, adding India will insist that the Chinese remove their boats as soon as possible to facilitate smooth disengagement.

As of now, the Chinese continue to dominate the spurs (referred to as 'Fingers') in this region with tents erected along the course of rivulets located along the contours of the spurs.

There are eight noticeable spurs, or 'Fingers' located along the banks of the high-altitude Pangong Lake in Eastern Ladakh. India maintains that the LAC here lies at 'Finger 8' while China believes it lies further to the West.

The de-facto boundary presently lies at Finger 4 beyond which Chinese forces have prevented Indian soldiers from patrolling.

Dozens of Indian soldiers were seriously injured in clashes here in May. India has repeatedly stated that it has right to patrol till Finger 8, a claim contested by China.

RAHUL RAPS GOVT OVER LAC ROW, COVID, SAYS PM DECEIVES NATION

Sonia Gandhi's term as Congress' interim president is coming to an end on August 10.

In the meeting, some MPs said that the Government should call a full-fledged session of Parliament while adhering to social distancing norms. Sonia Gandhi asked the MPs to raise in the next Parliament session the handling of the coronavirus pandemic and the Sino-India standoff at Ladakh.

The Congress has been critical of the Modi Government over various issues, especially its handling of the pandemic as Covid-19 cases have risen exponentially after the easing of the lockdown, and the situation at the border with China

in eastern Ladakh where 20 Indian soldiers were killed in a violent standoff with Chinese troops on June 15. Sonia also asked her leaders to take on the Government for not granting financial relief to the poor. She called for cash transfer into bank accounts of the poor and deprived sections. She further asked the MPs to corner the Government over the rise in petrol and diesel prices.

2018 TIGER CENSUS IN GUINNESS BOOK OF WORLD RECORD

A positive outcome of the survey was that it showed that India's tiger population had increased by roughly one-third: from 2,226 in 2014 to 2,927 in 2018, though the Guinness team says "some have cautioned that this rise may in part reflect more comprehensive surveying as opposed to purely a population surge". Ground surveys and camera traps recorded tiger presence in 88,985 km² (34,357 sq mi) of forests across 20 Indian States in 2018-19. The "lion's share" of the tigers were found in the States of Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka, and Uttarakhand. Together, these three Indian States were home to 1,492 tigers.

However, other key takeaways that still need to be improved to continue tigers' comeback include improving "corridors" between isolated pockets of tiger territory, reducing poaching, and helping to build up prey numbers through habitat restoration, said a senior official from the Union Environment Ministry.

BJP LURING CONGRESS MLAS TO TOPPLE GOVT, SAYS GEHLOT

The CM alleged Leader of Opposition Gulab Chand Kataria, Deputy Leader of Opposition Rajendra Rathore and BJP State president Satish Poonia were executing the agenda of their party's central leadership.

"Amid the crisis posed by the coronavirus pandemic, BJP leaders have gone beyond humanity and are engaged in toppling the government," the chief minister said. The BJP has sabotaged governments in several states. It now wants to play the same game in Rajasthan, that it did in Madhya Pradesh, Gehlot said.

"But they have been exposed and people will give the BJP a befitting reply at the right time," he added.

Rate cut helping deliver growth is not working in simplistic way: Rathin Roy

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Senior economist Rathin Roy on Saturday said the assumption that rate cut helping deliver growth is not working in simplistic way as transmission is not happening.

Rathin Roy, director of National Institute of Public Finance and Policy (NIPFP) - a think tank backed by the Finance Ministry, said the assumptions on linear relationships between rate cuts resulting in growth by lowering the cost of capital is not working for some time now.

"I am not persuaded by the RBI's monetary policy statements, including that of the governor, regarding the rush down for these rate cuts. I

heard him (Governor) just before this session and I continue to not being convinced," Roy said at Annual Economics Conference organised by State Bank of India.

Roy was also a member of the Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister. RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das, who had addressed the gathering before the economists' panel, reduced rates by a cumulative 1.15 per cent in two moves since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, on the top of over one percentage point cuts before that with an eye on the sagging growth, which slipped to 4.2 per cent in FY20. "It is very clear that this assumption (of rate cuts delivering growth) is not work-

ing in a simplistic way for some time now. Transmission is not happening," Roy said. He also said there is an "additional danger" posed by the lack of any known analysis done by the RBI on whether we are getting into what he termed as a 'J-part of the interest rate curve'. Roy also expressed concerns on the collateral free lending scheme as not making the cut from a regulations perspective.

"That's actually breaking your own regulations, hopefully for a noble purpose. I would like to know what that noble purpose is. The noble purpose I can discern can only come from one place: the lack of action in terms of direct income support by the government," he said.

BJP MPs, PAC chief spar over PM CARES scrutiny

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The lines are drawn in the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) over the scrutiny of the PM CARES Fund. While the BJP MPs in the panel have strongly opposed its examination by the PAC, panel chairman Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury, who is also the leader of the Congress in the Lok Sabha, has favoured a proper scrutiny of the Fund and is expected to use his prerogative as the panel head to give it a go ahead. The Congress and its president Sonia Gandhi have been raising questions over the setting up and utilisation of the PM CARES Fund and seeking an audit of it.

In the PAC meeting on Friday, the BJP, which has 12 MPs on the panel, objected to any examination of the controversial PM CARES Fund by the parliamentary panel citing that the expenditure or the revenue is not related to Parliament authorisation.

Chowdhury invoked the interest of the nation to appeal

to the MPs against objecting to the examination of the PM CARES Fund as it is a fund of the Government and the country needs to know how the money collected funds from the public is utilised.

Many BJP MPs protested the move of the PAC Chairman to include the examining of the PM CARES Fund in this year's subjects selected by the panel. According to them, this move was just a politically-motivated one to summon the officers of PMO and Home Ministry to settle political scores.

It is learned that even though a majority of the MPs reject a subject to be included, as PAC Chairman, Chowdhury has the right to use his prerogative to include the subject. BJP MPs are expected to complain to the Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla if Adhir uses such prerogative.

But Opposition MPs pointed out that the PAC Chairman, who is always from the main Opposition party, has the prerogative to include subjects like on earlier occasions during the UPA regime when BJP

leader and panel chief Murlu Manohar Joshi used his power to include many subjects opposed by the then majority Congress MPs in PAC.

Opposition MPs also pointed out that the PAC Chairman needed the Speaker's clearance only for summoning Ministers. He requires no clearance for summoning officials. In Friday's meeting, Opposition MPs countered the BJP MPs saying that the Parliament has the right to know who are the donors in the PM CARES Fund as well as how it was utilised.

Though the PAC Chairman is from the Opposition party, the majority is always with the ruling party as the members are selected on the basis of representation.

While 15 MPs are selected from Lok Sabha including the Chairman, seven MPs are selected from Rajya Sabha.

The total strength of the PAC is 22 MPs including the Chairman. At present, two seats from Rajya Sabha quota are vacant.

Migration from cities to villages to spike corona cases: Study



ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

Migration of labour post-lockdown from cities to vulnerable forest-fringe villages particularly in Central India will flare up the infected cases as well as fatalities given the crumbling and negligible infrastructure in these regions, according to a study published in the Current Science.

To curb the cases, researchers from John Hopkins and Azim Premji University among a few others have suggested lenient restrictions for people within a village as well as between villages to reduce the exposure of the locals.

Such a 'village bubble' strategy could reduce the risk of spread among vulnerable

populations and requires that essential goods reach villages," they said. Interestingly, New Zealand has successfully implemented a bubble strategy, with initial bubbles restricted to the household level and broadened to larger social groups as restrictions ease.

The researchers from the institutes such as School of International and Public Affairs from New York, Ashoka University from Sonapat, International Institute of Health Management Research, Azim Premji University also participated in the study.

Based on a previously collected household survey of 5,000 villages across 500 forest-fringe villages in 32 districts of central India, the researchers

○ The researchers from the institutes such as School of International and Public Affairs from New York, Ashoka University from Sonapat, International Institute of Health Management Research, Azim Premji University also participated in the study

○ Based on a previously collected household survey of 5,000 villages across 500 forest-fringe villages in 32 districts of central India, the researchers identified migration patterns over the last 5 years

identified migration patterns over the last 5 years.

Villages with seasonal workers are widely dispersed (75 percent of surveyed villages) and 81 per cent of destination cities had reported Covid-19 cases at the beginning of the lockdown.

There have already been reports how the cases are gradually moving from urban to semi-urban and now to rural areas in the hitherto untouched regions.

India has already reported over 8 lakh cases and 22,000 deaths till date.

Using a disease spread model to assess distancing strategies if returning migrants carry the virus to villages, the researchers said that they found that lenient restrictions for people within a village combined with maximal restrictions between villages could

reduce the number of people exposed compared with moderate restrictions both within and between villages.

"Such a 'village bubble' strategy could reduce the risk of spread among vulnerable populations and requires that essential goods reach villages," they added.

With the outbreak of Covid-19, the potential for seasonal migrants to carry the virus from cities to their home villages generates grave concern both for local people and authorities managing the crisis. The poorest households in these villages use seasonal migration to supplement their incomes, raising the potential for exposure to Covid-19 as migrants return.

As restrictions eased, chances of exposure and spread to adjacent villages from migrants who have

already returned persist. Alternatives to severe physical distancing are needed to reduce the chances of exposure while allowing people to obtain essential supplies, plant crops and carry out other necessities of daily life, said the study.

The populations include many tribal communities living in and around forests, with Gonds and Baigas as the main tribes. Moreover, "availability of health facilities is more than five times less than the national average. Eighty-seven per cent of rural households rely on wood as a primary cooking fuel, although recently, the availability of LPG has penetrated into remote areas."

A primary concern is to contain the spread of the virus across villages in the case of exposure in one village.

To reduce chances of exposure in the population in a rural setting such as Central India, the model results suggest that a prudent post-lockdown strategy might focus on easing physical distancing restrictions within villages but maintaining movement restrictions between villages, while quickly imposing strict lockdown both within and between villages if a case emerges.

DCGI approves restricted use of Itolizumab in Covid-19 treatment

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Itolizumab, a drug used to cure skin ailment psoriasis for the last many years, has been approved for "restricted emergency use" to treat Covid-19 patients with moderate to severe acute respiratory distress.

Written informed consent of each patient is required before the use of this drug, said the drug regulator Drug Controller General of India while approving the drug for the treatment of the viral infection.

A senior official from the DCGI said that Drug Controller, Dr V G Somani, approved monoclonal antibody injection Itolizumab, an already approved drug of Biocin for several years, for restricted emergency use. It is for the treatment of 'cytokine' release syndrome in moderate to severe acute respiratory distress syndrome patients due to COVID-19, he added.

"The approval was given

after its clinical trials on COVID-19 patients in India was found satisfactory by the expert committee comprising pulmonologists, pharmacologists and medical experts from AIIMS, among others, for treatment of cytokine release syndrome," said the official.

"It is already an approved drug of Biocin for treating psoriasis for the last many years," the official said.

The company has received the DCGI approval to market Itolizumab injection 25mg/5mL solution for emergency use in India for the treatment of cytokine release syndrome in moderate to severe acute respiratory distress syndrome (ARDS) patients due to COVID-19, Biocin said in a BSE filing.

The company, however, did not disclose the price at which it will be selling the drug.

The firm has repurposed the drug, an anti-CD6 IgG1 monoclonal antibody

launched in India in 2013 as Alzumab for treating chronic plaque psoriasis, Biocin said.

The drug will be manufactured and formulated as an intravenous injection at the company's bio-manufacturing facility at Biocin Park, Bengaluru.

"As an innovation-led biopharmaceuticals company, I am proud of the successful outcome of the pivotal study we conducted with our novel immuno-modulating anti-CD6 monoclonal antibody, Itolizumab, which has proven to be an efficacious intervention in treating the serious hyper immune response seen with COVID-19," Biocin Executive Chairperson Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw said.

"This positions India among the leading global innovators in their effort to overcome the COVID-19 pandemic, she added.

"We plan to take this therapy to other parts of the world impacted by the pandemic," Mazumdar-Shaw said.

Hardik Patel made Gujarat Congress working president

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Hardik Patel was appointed Gujarat Congress—a position currently being held by Amit Chavda—on Saturday.

Congress President Sonia Gandhi approved the appointment of 26-year-old Patel, who had joined the Congress in March last year ahead of the Lok Sabha polls.

A press release from AICC All general secretary KC Venugopal said: "Congress President has approved the proposal of the appointment of Hardik Patel as the Working President of Gujarat Pradesh Congress Committee with immediate effect."

The founder of the Patidar Anamat Andolan Samiti (PAAS), Patel rose to prominence as the face of the Patidar agitation in 2015 that eventually turned violent. He still faces sedition cases in connection with the protests.

Before he joined the Congress, he had claimed neither he nor any member of his Samiti would ever join politics or form a party and had argued for citizen activism.

BJP had accused him of being the Congress party's B-team during the 2017 assembly polls.

Patel's appointment is being seen as Congress party's attempt at wooing the resourceful Patidar community in Prime Minister Narendra Modi's home State. The party also changed the district unit presidents of Anand, Surat and Dwarka.

India made right choices on Covid: Jaishankar

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India made the right choices in its response to the Covid-19 pandemic and is as realistically well placed as any country could be under the prevailing circumstances, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said on Saturday.

Jaishankar, who is part of the Group of Ministers (GoM) on Covid-19, said that when the pandemic started assuming global proportions, choice that every country faced was how to respond while playing to their own strengths.

Some countries had better testing capabilities like South Korea, while others like Germany had a strong ICU system, he said while speaking at the India Global Week 2020 via a video link.

What is interesting is that while India is at number three in the world in terms of case-load, in terms of fatalities, it is at number eight, Jaishankar said.

"We still have our challenges ahead, we are very conscious of it," he said.

Modi to States: Emulate Delhi's Covid-19 fight

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Appreciating the efforts of the Centre, State and local authorities in containing the COVID-19 situation in Delhi, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday called for the replication of a similar approach in the entire NCR area to check the contagion.

Reviewing a meeting to take stock of the COVID-19 situation in various parts of the country and the preparedness of various states, the Prime Minister also directed that real-time national level monitoring and guidance should be provided to all affected states and places with high test positivity rate.

The Prime Minister reiterated the need to observe personal hygiene and social discipline in public places, a statement from the Prime Minister's Office said.

Modi said the awareness about the pandemic should be disseminated widely and a continuous emphasis on preventing the spread of the infection should be laid

He said there is no room for any complacency in this



regard, according to the statement

"The Prime Minister appreciated the concerted efforts of the Centre, state and local authorities in containing the pandemic situation in Delhi," the statement said.

"He further directed that a similar approach should be adopted with other State Governments in containing the COVID-19 pandemic in the entire NCR area," it said

The review meeting was attended by Union Home Minister Amit Shah, Health Minister Harsh Vardhan and the cabinet secretary among others

The Union Home Minister had stepped in last month to

handle the coronavirus situation in the national capital amid rising cases and criticism in different quarters of the Delhi Government's handling of the COVID-19 situation, with complaints of non-availability of beds in hospitals for patients and difficulty in getting the tests done in laboratories

Shah had discussed ways to check the spread of the virus in the NCR with chief ministers of Delhi, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh

The NCR comprises districts belonging to Haryana, Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan. The prominent ones being Gautam Buddha Nagar (Noida), Ghaziabad, Gurgaon

and Faridabad During Saturday's meet, the "successful example" of surveillance and home-based care through 'Dhanvantri Rath' in Ahmedabad was highlighted and it was directed that it may be emulated in other places, the statement said

India's COVID-19 tally zoomed past the eight-lakh mark with the death toll climbed standing at 22,123 even as 519 people died the disease in 24 hours

Of the 519 new deaths reported, 226 are from Maharashtra, 64 from Tamil Nadu, 57 from Karnataka, 42 from Delhi, 27 from Uttar Pradesh and 26 from West Bengal

Andhra Pradesh reported 15 fatalities, Gujarat 14, Telangana eight and Rajasthan six. Assam, and Jammu and Kashmir reported five deaths, followed by Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha and Punjab with four deaths each from Haryana and Puducherry three fatalities each while two persons have succumbed to the infection in Chhattisgarh.

Covid-19 patients with high blood sugar level are more prone to death: Study

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Covid-19 patients who are not diabetic but have abnormally high blood sugar level are on the higher side of the risk of death as well as severe complications due to the infection, according to a study.

The study conducted by Dr Yang Jin and his team from the Union Hospital and Tongji Medical College, Huazhong University of Science and Technology, Wuhan, Hubei, China, has been published in the recent edition of Diabetologia (the journal of the European Association for the Study of Diabetes [EASD]).

A number of studies have shown links between diabetes and poor outcomes in COVID-19 patients.

However, Dr Jin and his team showed direct correlation between fasting blood glucose (FBG) level at admission to hospital and clinical outcomes

of Covid-19 patients without diagnosed diabetes.

The retrospective study assessed all consecutive Covid-19 patients with a known outcome at 28-days and FBG measurement at admission from 24 January 2020 to 10 February 2020 in two hospitals based in Wuhan, China.

Demographic and clinical data, 28-day outcomes, in-hospital complications and CRB-65 scores of COVID-19 patients in the two hospitals were analysed. The CRB-65 score is an effective measure for assessing the severity of pneumonia and is based on four indicators: level of confusion, respiratory rate (over 30 breaths per min), systolic blood pressure (90 mmHg or less) or diastolic blood pressure (60 mmHg or less), and age (65 years or over), as per the study.

A total of 605 Covid-19 patients were enrolled, including 114 who died in hospital. Of which 208 (34 per cent) had one or more underlying conditions (but not diagnosed diabetes), of which high blood pressure was the most common. Almost one third (29 per cent) of patients fell into the highest category of FBG on admission which if found consistently would result in a diagnosis of type 2 diabetes.

The results showed that patients in the highest FBG group were 2.3 times more likely to die than those in the lowest, a statistically significant result.

The data also showed that men were 75 per cent more likely to die than women.

The authors suggested that during a pandemic of Covid-19, measuring fasting blood glucose can facilitate the assessment of prognosis and early intervention of hyperglycaemia to help improve the overall outcomes in treatment of the infection.

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AJKPC demands security audit of panchayat members

PTI ■ JAMMU

The All Jammu and Kashmir Panchayat Conference (AJKPC) Friday requested the Centre to order a comprehensive security audit of Panchayat members in all vulnerable areas.

"The killing of political workers and elected Panchayat members is a matter of concern for all. Family members of our Sarpanches and Panches are living under constant fear in such

a hostile atmosphere. We appeal to the Prime Minister and the Union Home Minister to direct the UT administration for early conduct of a security audit so that all Panchayat members in vulnerable areas are provided adequate security," Anil Sharma, UT president of AJKPC told a press conference.

The AJKPC leader, who was on a week-long visit to different Panchayats and Blocks in Kashmir Valley, said every

Panchayat member wants to contribute more for the development of his village and Panchayat, but their movement and activities are confined due to security reasons.

Blasting the Pakistani Army, the ISI and their nurtured terrorists' organisation, Sharma said they are unable to face the brave armed forces of India, so they target innocent civilians and PRI members.

CPM calls UGC's proposal for online exams discriminatory

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The CPI(M) politburo on Saturday objected to the UGC's proposal to conduct online exams citing that internet connectivity is accessible to only 36 per cent of the population and thus, it is unfair to the students from rural areas and marginalised sections of the society.

The CPI(M) said that under the pandemic situation, it is best to give the degrees based on previous perfor-

mances. The party also blamed the CBSE for excluding crucial chapters from classes X-XII courses on citizenship, nationalism, secularism and federalism.

"The Polit Bureau of the CPI(M) rejects the unilateral proposal made by the University Grants Commission through a circular issued on July 6. This imposes a homogeneous national pattern of online/open book examinations where physical mode of examinations may not be possible under the conditions of the pandemic and lockdown.

"Internet connectivity in the country is still around 36% only. Access to online classes or examinations does not exist for a vast majority of our students, particularly the marginalised and those living in remote digitally unconnected parts in our country. This UGC direction is highly discriminatory and hence cannot be accepted," said the CPI(M) politburo in a statement.

The party said that educa-

tion is in the concurrent list of our Constitution and the UGC cannot issue such a uniform diktat without consultations with the State Governments and state universities.

Criticising the CBSE's move to exclude crucial chapters from classes X-XII courses, the CPI(M) said: "Using the pretext of the current pandemic and lockdown restrictions, in the name of reducing the syllabus for students, the CBSE has unilaterally take recourse to this measure."

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ED raids tour and travel operators' offices

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Directorate of Enforcement (ED) has conducted searches under Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA) at eight different locations in the national Capital and neighbouring Ghaziabad on the premises of a number of tour and travel operators and associated chartered accountants and seized unaccounted cash amounting to ₹3.57 crore.

The searches at the residences and offices of Directors of the tour and travel companies besides the Chartered Accountants were conducted on Thursday that continued till next day. The searches yielded several incriminating documents and digital records besides the unaccounted cash, the agency said here on Saturday.

Investigations under FEMA, 1999 were initiated against various entities including tour and travel companies on the basis of specific inputs that these entities were involved



○ Investigations under FEMA, 1999 were initiated against various entities including tour and travel companies on the basis of specific inputs that these entities were involved in unauthorized receipt of foreign remittances through payment gateways in the name of providing e-visa services to the foreigners, the ED said.

○ "Investigations conducted in the matter so far have revealed that two such entities received foreign remittance of more than ₹ 200 crores for processing Indian e-visa applications of foreigners without any authorization from the Government of India," agency said in a statement.

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conducted in the matter so far have revealed that two such entities received foreign remittance of more than ₹ 200 crores for processing Indian e-visa applications of foreigners without any authorization from the Government of India," agency said in a statement.

These entities were also involved in high value suspicious transactions. Investigations also revealed that certain Chartered Accountants played a key role in managing the affairs of these entities and were behind the suspicious transactions carried out by them.

The seizure of unaccounted cash of ₹3.57 Crores during the search operations has raised further suspicion about the operations of such entities and their blatant violation of the statutory requirements, it said.

Further investigation in the case is under progress to unravel the larger nexus of the syndicate and the intended purpose behind the suspicious transactions, officials added.

Infiltration bid foiled in Kashmir, 2 ultras killed

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

Head of the first anniversary of abrogation of Article 370 and reorganisation of the erstwhile State of Jammu & Kashmir on August 5, the Pakistan Army has started pushing small groups of heavily armed terrorists inside the Indian territory to scale up violence in the region.

Foiling one such infiltration bid by a group of heavily armed terrorists, alert jawans of the Indian Army on Saturday neutralised at least two terrorists in the Nowgam sector of North Kashmir's Kupwara district.

Besides this, fresh alert has also been sounded all along the line of control in Bhimbergali and Nowshera sectors following intel reports of possible strikes by the Border Action Teams (BAT) of the Pakistan army.

Meanwhile, briefing the

'Around 200-300 terrorists waiting in launch pads to infiltrate into India'

media persons about infiltration bid foiled near the Line of Control (LoC) in the Nowgam Sector in Kupwara border district, General-officer-Commanding (GoC), 19 Infantry Division, (Baramulla), Major General Virender Vats Saturday said, "two terrorists were killed in the operation in Nowgam and a huge cache of arms and ammunition, including 1.5 lakh of Indian and Pakistani currency, was recovered from them."

He said the cache of arms recovered from the slain terrorists comprises 2xAK rifles and 1x Pistol with magazines, ammunition, and some grenades and medical supplies. Major General Virender Vats also warned that Pakistan is

trying hard to push more and more terrorists into the Kashmir Valley to disrupt the peace in Jammu & Kashmir.

Sharing his assessment about the possible number of terrorists camping across different launch pads across the line of control, the senior officer said, "Inputs indicate that their launch pads are fully occupied. If we have to guess, it could be anything between 250-300 terrorists presently occupying the launch pads."

Exposing the role of the Pakistan army, Major General Virender Vats said, "the terrorists, who were trying to infiltrate into the area by cutting the anti-infiltration fence, were dressed in combat fatigues. They had taken the route through Pakistani forward posts in the area, which clearly indicates that Pakistan is pushing terrorists to this side."

Kerala: 488 test +ve on Saturday, 2 die

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

There was no let up in the ever increasing number of coronavirus cases in Kerala as the State diagnosed nearly 500 persons with covid-19 on Saturday, making it the highest number of cases to be traced in a single day.

The day saw 488 persons testing positive against Friday's 416 cases, according to Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan.

He disclosed in a virtual media meet on Saturday that 167 of those diagnosed with the pandemic were expatriates while 76 were those who returned to the State from other parts of the country. In yet another indication that community transmission has set in the State, 234 persons who tested were infected through social contacts. The State also saw two sexagenarians succumbing to the pandemic on the day.

The Chief Minister said that Kerala would enter the community transmission phase soon. "Right now we are undergoing the Super Spread stage which means that the pandemic from one person reaches hundreds in a region. Once more and more places come under the

Super Spread phase, it is a matter of time before the community transmission sets in," he said.

"The Opposition parties' attempt to derail the Covid prevention programme initiated by the Government is the reason behind the surge in the number of cases seen in Kerala. They are staging unreasonable demonstrations across the State for flimsy reasons violating the Covid Protocol. I warn them that their action is as good as a criminal offence and the Government would not hesitate to take action against those who violate the guidelines like wearing face masks and not observing social/physical distance," said Vijayan.

He was referring to the demonstrations and protest marches staged by the Congress and the BJP across the State demanding the resignation of the Chief Minister in connection with the gold smuggling activity that was busted by the Customs Department at Thiruvananthapuram last Sunday.

Vijayan disclosed that 570 persons were admitted to hospitals in the State on Saturday. There are 196 hotspots in the State while the day saw 143 persons getting cured of the disease, he said.

3,965 more infected, 69 succumb to virus in TN

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ CHENNAI

Saturday turned out to be yet another day of anxiety and apprehension in Tamil Nadu as 3,965 persons were diagnosed with Covid-19 on a single day. On Friday, the number of Covid-19 cases tested were 3,680. The day also saw 69 persons succumbing to the pandemic across the State taking the death toll to 1,898 till date. As on Saturday, there were 46,410 covid-19 patients in the State.

A medical bulletin released by the Tamil Nadu Government said aggressive testing was on in the State with 102 laboratories working round the clock to identify and isolate the persons afflicted with the pandemic. The day saw 36,628 persons getting tested and this took the number of persons tested till date to 1.5 million across Tamil Nadu.

Though the day showed small falls in the number of persons tested positive in Chennai and Chengalpet, it is not convincing that the situation in the State is under control. While 1,185 persons were tested positive in Chennai (which had tested 1,205 persons on Friday), 237 were tested in Chengalpet (against 242 on Friday).

The day saw 36,628 persons getting tested and this took the number of persons tested till date to 1.5 million across Tamil Nadu

But the number of persons diagnosed with the pandemic in Kancheepuram shot up to 119 (against 61 tested positive on Friday) and that in Thiruvallur to 346 (which had tested 219 on Friday).

Districts like Madurai (277), Salem (136), Kanyakumari (133) ended up on higher side which dampened the spirit of health experts in Tamil Nadu who were expecting some positive developments after the series of lock downs and stringent regulations.

Tamil Nadu will soon have a plasma bank, the second of its kind in the country, the first being in New Delhi. According to Dr C Vijaya Baskar, health minister, the facility is being set up at the Rajiv Gandhi Government General Hospital at Chennai. He has sought the cooperation of persons who were cured of Covid-19 to donate plasma without fear as this is a life saving initiative.

Suspended cop Rath barred from social media post

PNS ■ JAMMU

A court in Jammu has directed suspended senior police officer Basant Rath not to publish any post or material by any means of communication which is defamatory or derogatory against six persons who claimed to be "acquainted with the current Director General of Police, Dilbagh Singh."

The order was passed by the judicial officer Jeewan Kumar Sharma, 2nd Additional Muniff Jammu, on a suit filed by six persons—Parveen Kumar Mittal (businessman dealing in Plywood Manufacturing), Virender Dubey (Medical practitioner), Saurabh Dang (businessman), Rahul Bansal (businessman), Davinder Verma (businessman) and Amit Kohli (businessman).

They have sought a decree of permanent prohibitory injunction, restraining Rath from posting any defamatory, derogatory, libel or slanderous posts or material on social media such as twitter, Facebook, Instagram or any other available social media platform with regard to them.

They have contended Rath has made expressions, representations and gestures against them which on the face of it are opposing the decency and morality, besides being defamatory in its nature.

The plaintiffs have stated that they are "acquainted with the current Director General of Police, Dilbagh Singh and have family relations with him. "It appears that (Rath) has some personal grouse against

They have contended Rath has made expressions, representations and gestures against them which on the face of it are opposing the decency and morality, besides being defamatory in its nature

Dilbagh Singh and in this regard, he is maligning the image of not only the Director General of Police, but also the plaintiffs," they said, adding, "(Rath) in his various posts refers to the Director General of Police as "DILLOO" and has alleged various allegations of land grabbing besides other

allegation of connivance and statements which are defamatory and derogatory to the plaintiffs."

After hearing their counsel, the court issued a notice to Rath for filing a written statement in the main suit as well as objections in the application for grant of temporary injunction.

"In the meanwhile defendant (Rath) is directed not to publish any post or material by any means of communication which is defamatory or derogatory against the plaintiffs which has an effect of injuring the reputation of the plaintiffs in the society till next date of hearing," the court said as per an order with Global News Service, adding, "This order is however, subject to objections from the other side." The case has been listed again on July 25.

Healthcare spends, making India slum-free should be Govt's priority: Experts

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The Government can turn COVID-19 crisis into an opportunity by investing in healthcare, and it should also pursue making all the cities slum-free by 2023, according to economists. At the seventh economic conclave - organised by State Bank of India on Saturday, there was an unanimity among the economists on laying greater thrust on decentralisation in policy-making in the future, as a one size fits all approach may not work always.

India at present has the third highest number of COVID-19 cases after the US and Brazil, and has already lost over 22,000 people.

"Its very concerning that a lot of this discussion of the Aatmanirbhar (Bharat) package or other packages are not talking at all about what investments are taking place in the health sector. How much are we spending on testing, basic information campaigns.

"This is a health induced crisis, you got to respond to that in order to respond to the economy," Rohini Pande, who is associated with Yale University,

said. India has historically under-invested in health and the increase is not very much right now as well, she said, stressing that we need to recognise that for economic recovery, humanitarian and health crisis are all interlinked.

"To change this crisis to an opportunity, let us invest in the health sector," SBI's chief economist SK Ghosh said, suggesting a plan to build a 500-bed hospital in 250 districts at a cost of ₹60,000 crore over the next two years. Pande said frontline health workers are not paid, and we can immediately start paying them and expand their base, which will lead to better case spotting and also contact tracing.

Arjun Jayadev with Azim Premji University said concerns on the health infrastructure affect the broader economy as well and pointed out that the animal spirits can only be rekindled once the fear of health shock goes away.

"Many migrant labourers may not want to return to the cities not just because they are not getting a good conducive environment to live, but they are bothered about their health condition as well," he said.

Fake branch of SBI busted in Panruti, 3 held

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ CHENNAI

Panruti in Tamil Nadu's Cuddalore district is famous for the jackfruits grown in its countryside. Those who travel through the national highway passing along the town have made it a habit to stop their vehicles and buy the Panruti Jackfruit which is sweeter than other jackfruits. But Panruti earned another distinction, though the population of the small-time town may not cherish it.

Panruti made its mark in the record book by being the first town in the country to open a duplicate branch of a nationalised Bank and operating it for three months. The local police arrested three persons including the brain behind the fake branch.

One of the customers of the State Bank of India's Panruti branch was surprised when he came across a new branch of the same Bank in the same town. He intimated about it to the Branch Manager where he has an account.

The Branch Manager took up the matter with the Zonal Office of the Bank which in turn informed him that SHI has two branches in Panruti

and there was no third branch.

The Manager, on his part, undertook a mission to the branch mentioned by his customer and he was taken aback by the newly opened third branch with all paraphernalia befitting the branch of the country's premier bank. The billboard in front of the new branch had the age-old catchword of the SBI displayed prominently: the Banker to every Indian.

The Branch Manager got back to the Zonal Office which deputed a team of officials to probe the matter. The Bank officials got in touch with the local police station. Inspector Ambedkar rushed to the duplicate branch and took into custody three persons including one Kamal Babu, the mastermind behind the plot.

Kamal Babu's parents were with the SBI for many decades. After the death of his father and the retirement of his mother from service, Babu thought of an innovative idea, to launch his own SBI in Panruti. According to police officials, the fake branch was operating for the last three months but the Covid-19 pandemic played 'spoilsport' to Babu's dream of roping in any customers.

'Lockdown to be re-imposed in J&K if guidelines not followed'

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

Amid constant rise in the total number of cases of coronavirus especially in Kashmir valley, several senior doctors have now raised a 'red flag' warning the local residents to strictly follow the guidelines else Government would be forced to reimpose lockdown to prevent the situation from going out of hand.

"We are inviting disaster for ourselves. The number of coronavirus patients are increasing every day. The severity of the virus is increasing. Out of 90 patients admitted in the Chest disease hospital, at least 65 of them need high flow oxygen, around 10 patients are admitted in the ICU and two are on Ventilator support", Head of the Department, Chest Disease Hospital Srinagar, Dr Naveed Shah said sharing his assessment while participating in a discussion on a social media platform.

According to the media bulletin, the total number of coronavirus cases crossed 10,000 in Jammu & Kashmir while 10 more deaths due to Covid 19 were reported, nine from Kashmir division and

According to the media bulletin, the total number of coronavirus cases crossed 10,000 in Jammu & Kashmir while 10 more deaths due to Covid 19 were reported, nine from Kashmir division and one from Jammu on Saturday

Out of these 10,156, Jammu division has so far recorded 2,181 cases i.e 21.5 percent cases while 7,975 cases i.e 78.5 cases were detected across Kashmir valley

Out of 4,092 active cases, 2,131 cases are active across three districts of Srinagar, Baramulla and Kulgam in Kashmir valley only", the media bulletin said

one from Jammu on Saturday. Out of these 10,156, Jammu division has so far recorded 2,181 cases i.e 21.5 percent cases while 7,975 cases i.e 78.5 cases were detected across Kashmir valley.

"Out of 4,092 active cases, 2,131 cases are active across three districts of Srinagar, Baramulla and Kulgam in Kashmir valley only", the media bulletin said.

So far, 169 patients have died due to covid 19 in Jammu and Kashmir and at present the active positive cases are 4,092.

Significantly, 58 percent of patients have recovered so far.

Reacting to the behaviour of common people especially in different parts of Srinagar, Dr Shah said, "majority of people are not taking adequate precautions. Other than CD hospital, the profile of patients admitted in other hospitals of Srinagar clearly suggest patients with symptoms of Pneumonia are admitted there. The situation is alarming and we have to adhere to the guidelines very strictly to contain the situation.

Deputy Commissioner Srinagar, Dr Shahid Iqbal Choudhary also appealed to the local residents to strictly follow the guidelines

He said at the time of taking the decision to open the market places and allowing normal business activity the stakeholders were consulted and taken in to confidence.

"Now if the need arises to reimpose the lockdown we will first consult them. Till then, if we want to prevent the reimposition, the least we can do is to follow the norms of social distancing and other guidelines strictly", he added.

Lockdown in Guwahati may be extended for another week

Guwahati/Agartala: In view of surge in Covid-19 cases, the Assam Government is likely to extend the lockdown in the Kamrup (Metro) district for one more week after the 14-day shutdown ends on Sunday.

"The Chief Secretary as the Chairman of the executive committee of the disaster management in consultation with the citizens' forum and MLAs of the Kamrup (Metro) district would take the decision on the extension. "Though the health department has said one-week extension will be enough, others are advocating two more weeks in view of the rising infection," Health minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said on Saturday.

With a population of 11.20 lakh, northeast's main commercial hub Guwahati is the headquarters of the Kamrup (Metro) district.

With some strict restrictions, Guwahati was likely to reopen in the fourth week of the month, he said and added, around 10 per cent population of the city had been tested for Covid-19.

IANS

1,813 new cases in Andhra, 1,168 cured

Amaravati: Andhra Pradesh reported yet another all-time high of 1,813 new coronavirus cases in a 24-hour cycle ending 9 am on Saturday, the fourth time this week that a record high has been breached. On the positive side, the day also witnessed a high of 1,168 patients cured of Covid-19 and discharged.

On Friday, the state had recorded 1,608 positive cases, 1,555 on Thursday and 1,322 on Monday.

The new cases include 38 returnees from outside Andhra Pradesh, health officials said.

Andhra Pradesh's total corona cases crossed the 27K-mark to touch 27,235 cases on Saturday.

The new cases were reported from all 13 districts in the

A total of 17 deaths were reported from the State -- Kurnool four, Guntur and Vizianagaram three each, Krishna and Nellore two each, and Kadapa, Anantapur and Visakhapatnam one death each. The total death toll in Andhra Pradesh was 309 on Saturday morning

state. Anantapur district topped with 311 cases, followed by Chittoor with 300, Kurnool with 229, Srikakulam with 204, East Godavari with 143, and Krishna with 123 cases.

Andhra Pradesh conducted 20,590 more tests, as against 21,020 samples tested in the 24-hour cycle ending Friday morning.

As many as 1,168 more persons were discharged from hospitals and Covid treatment centres in the state. The cured patients now total 14,393.

As of Saturday, 12,533 coronavirus patients are admitted in hospitals and designated Covid treatment centres in the state.

A total of 17 deaths were reported from the State -- Kurnool four, Guntur and Vizianagaram three each, Krishna and Nellore two each, and Kadapa, Anantapur and Visakhapatnam one death each. The total corona death toll in Andhra Pradesh was 309 on Saturday morning.

The number of coronavirus cases among returnees from other states rose by two.

Returnees from Telangana continue to dominate this category, with 22 of the 34 cases returnees from the neighbouring Telugu state. There were also four positive cases from

among Odisha returnees. Similarly, three returnees each from Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu, and one each from Delhi and Karnataka are among corona positive patients.

As of Saturday, 2,385 state returnees have so far tested positive while there are 690 active cases in this category. As many as 1,695 persons have recovered till date.

On Saturday morning, four new cases were reported from among foreign returnees -- two returnees from Kuwait, one from Saudi Arabia and one from the USA.

The total tally in this category is 428, with 299 patients cured and discharged. As of Saturday, 129 patients in this category are under treatment in hospitals.

IANS

Petrol, diesel futures trading to start soon on exchanges

IANS ■ NEW DELHI

Market regulator Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) may soon allow futures trading in auto fuels petrol and diesel giving an opportunity to bulk consumers of these petroleum products to hedge their risks from a volatile market where there is a sudden spurt in prices.

Sources said that petroleum ministry has approved the plan to allow trading of petroleum products in the derivative market and the commodity exchanges would be able to launch petrol and diesel futures soon after SEBI releases its final regulations in this regard.

Futures are financial contracts which help the buyer to purchase a commodity, or the seller to sell the commodity, at a

predetermined future date and at a predetermined price. In the case of petrol and diesel, the derivative product would involve buying a specified quantity of the at a specified price with delivery set at a specified time in the future. In a rising market where prices of fuel is going up, the futures product would protect the participant from losing out as the financial product would hedge the risk and ensure uniform pricing of the commodity.

"It is a good development as it will allow industrial and bulk consumers of the two petroleum products to hedge their risks. But in current market conditions, in the absence of a big pick up in demand oil prices are either stable or falling, hedging would work against the interest of participant as it would add up to the cost of hedging," said an oil sector analyst asking not to be named. Currently futures trading is allowed in crude oil giving opportunity to refiners to hedge their risks against frequent price fluctuations. The addition of petrol and diesel will give them another instrument to hedge their refining margins.

Sources said that as current market conditions may not be conducive for a futures market in petroleum products, it may wait before intruding the new product in the market.

Petrol and diesel futures in any case will not benefit retail customers as the quantum of fuel used by them would be low. SEBI may allow derivative products with a floor of say 100 litre of petrol and diesel. This will be too high a level for retail customers to participate in the futures market.

With the fresh 223 deaths, the total number of deaths jumped to 10,116.

Of the total deaths, Mumbai accounted for 39 deaths which took the total number of deaths in the metropolis to 5,244 now, while the total number of positive patients climbed up by 1,284

8,139 test positive, 223 die in Maha

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

The coronavirus situation worsened in Maharashtra on Saturday, as the State recorded an all-time high of 8,139 infected cases and with 223 more deaths, the total number of deaths crossed 10,000-mark to touch 10,116.

A day after the state recorded the highest-ever daily tally of 7,862 Covid-19 infected cases, the number of positive cases went further to 8,139, taking the total number of infections in the state to 2,46,600.

With the fresh 223 deaths, the total number of deaths jumped to 10,116.

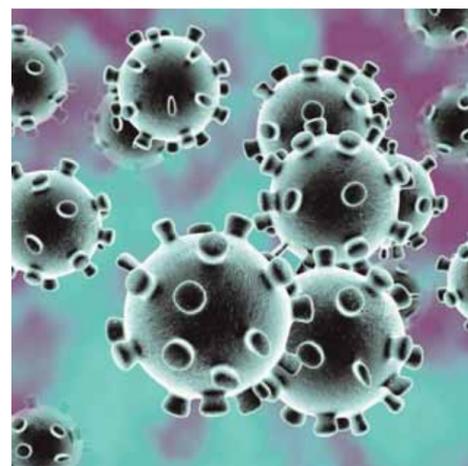
Of the total deaths, Mumbai accounted for 39 deaths which took the total number of deaths in the metropolis to 5,244 now, while the total number of positive patients climbed up by 1,284

cases to touch 91,745.

Apart from 39 deaths in Mumbai, there were 62 deaths in Thane, 34 deaths in Pune, 17 in Jalgaon, 13 in Nashik, 9 each in Palghar and Aurangabad, 8 in Jalna, 7 in Solapur, 6 in Raigad, 4 in Satara, 3 in Latur, 2 each in Kolhapur, Nanded, Nagpur and Amravati and one each in Dhule, Sangli, and 2 from other states. In addition, one person from another state died of Covid-19 in the state.

Meanwhile, Dharavi has come in for praise from the World Health Organisation (WHO) for the manner in which it tackled the Covid in Asia's largest slum.

In Mumbai, a BMC Assistant Municipal Commissioner Ashok Khairna, 57, lost to Covid-19, making him the 102nd civic official to have been killed by the virus so far.



With 59487 infected cases and 1,598 deaths, Thane continued to be the second worst hit district in Maharashtra.

Pune, which has emerged as the third worst affected district in terms of spread of the pandemic, has recorded 35,356 infections and 1060 deaths till now.

In a related development, the total number of patients discharged from various hospitals after full recovery since the second week of March this year touched 1,36,985. The recovery rate in the state stood at 55.55 per cent. The mortality rate in the state is 4.1 per cent. The state health authorities pegged the number of "active cases" in the state at 99,202.

Out of 12,85,991 samples sent to laboratories, 2,46,600 have tested positive (19.17) for Covid-19 until Monday. Currently, 6,80,017 people are in home quarantine while 47,376 people are in institutional quarantine.

REPORT ON FORCED STERILISATION OF UIGHURS

China may sue researcher

Beijing: After several reports of the Chinese government torturing its ethnic minority community surfaced, the authorities are now considering to sue the researcher and think tank who are behind these revelations.

The Global Times has reported that German researcher Adrian Zenz and a think tank — Australian Strategic Policy Institute — will be sued for spreading “disinformation about China.”

Recently, Mr Zenz had revealed in his research that the sudden decline in the birth rate among the ethnic minority communities in Xinjiang might be an indication of the fact that the targeted birth prevention strategy is being conducted.

US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo condemned the coercive family planning against Uighurs and said that continuous repression of minorities in Xinjiang reflects that the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has no respect for



human life and basic human rights. “The United States condemns the use of forced population controls against Uyghur and other minority women and calls on the CCP to cease its campaign of repression.

History will judge how we act today,” he tweeted.

German researcher Adrian Zenz’s shocking revelations are sadly consistent with decades of the CCP practices that demonstrate an utter disregard for the sanctity of

human life and basic human dignity,” he said while adding “We call on the CCP to immediately end these horrific practices and ask all nations to join the United States in demanding an end to these dehumanising abuses.” **AGENCY**

Trump says China relationship severely damaged, rules out phase 2 of trade deal

Washington: US President Donald Trump has for the time being ruled out a second phase trade deal with China, saying the relationship between the two countries has been severely damaged with Beijing’s handling of the coronavirus outbreak.

“The relationship with China has been severely damaged. I don’t think about it now,” Trump told reporters on Friday from Air Force One when asked about the trade deal.

Earlier in the year, the Trump administration had signed a mega phase one deal with China, after intense negotiations between the two countries.

Relations between Washington and Beijing have spiralled downward since the outbreak of the novel coronavirus. US President Donald Trump has questioned the

Asian powerhouse’s handling of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The two countries have also sparred over China imposing a new national security law in Hong Kong, restrictions on American journalists, treatment of Uyghurs Muslims, and security measures in Tibet.

“Relationship with China has been severely damaged. They could have stopped the plague, they could have stopped it, (but) they didn’t stop it. They stopped it from going into the remaining portions of China from Wuhan province. They could have stopped the plague, they didn’t,” Trump said.

The coronavirus, which first emerged in China’s Wuhan city, has claimed over 1,30,000 lives in the US with 3.1 million confirmed cases. The virus toll in China stands at 4,641 with nearly 85,000 confirmed infections. **PTI**

Trump threatens to pull tax exemption for schools, colleges

Washington: In his push to get schools and colleges to reopen this fall, President Donald Trump is again taking aim at their finances, this time threatening their tax-exempt status.

Trump said on Twitter on Friday he was ordering the Treasury Department to re-examine the tax-exempt status of schools that he says provide “radical indoctrination” instead of education.

“Too many Universities and School Systems are about Radical Left Indoctrination, not Education,” he tweeted.

“Therefore, I am telling the Treasury Department to re-examine their Tax-Exempt Status and/or Funding, which will be taken away if this Propaganda or Act Against Public Policy continues.

Our children must be Educated, not Indoctrinated!” The Republican president did not explain what prompted the remark or which schools would be reviewed.

But the threat is just one more that Trump has issued against schools as he ratchets up pressure to get them to open this fall. Twice this week Trump threatened to cut federal funding for schools that don’t reopen, including in an earlier tweet on Friday.

It’s unclear, however, on what grounds Trump could have a school’s tax-exempt status terminated. It was also not

clear what Trump meant by “radical indoctrination” or who would decide what type of activity that includes.

The White House and Treasury Department did not immediately comment on the president’s message.

Previous guidance from the Internal Revenue Service lays out six types of activities that can jeopardize a nonprofit organization’s tax-exempt status, including political activity, lobbying and straying from the organization’s stated purpose.

But ideology is not on the IRS’s list, said Terry Hartle, senior vice president of the American Council on Education, which represents university presidents. Any review of a school’s status would have to follow previously established guidelines, he said.

“It’s always deeply troubling to have the president single out schools, colleges or universities in a tweet,” Hartle said. “Having said that, I don’t think anything will come of this quickly.”

In his latest threat, Trump revived his oft-repeated claim that universities are bastions of liberalism that stifle conservative ideas. He used the same argument last year when he issued an executive order telling colleges to ensure free speech on campuses or lose federal research funding. **AP**

15 people killed in Nepal landslides

Kathmandu: Fifteen people were killed in a landslide caused by incessant rains in western Nepal on Saturday, taking the total number of fatalities due to the landslides in the last 48 hours in the country to 37, the home ministry said.

All the 15 deaths were reported from Myagdi district, it said. Fifteen people, who were buried in the landslide in the district, are still missing, it said. On Friday, 22 people were killed in different incidents of landslides across Nepal.

The total number of deaths due to landslides in the country in the past 48 hours has reached 37.

Meanwhile, the government has mobilised the Army and police personnel to carry out rescue operations.

Narayani and other major rivers in the country have swollen due to the continuous downpour. Meteorological Department on Friday had forecast that the monsoon rains will last for another three days. **PTI**

Singapore PM Lee returns to power with clear mandate

Singapore: Singapore Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong’s People’s Action Party has retained power with a “clear mandate” in the general election held amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, but the opposition staged its best performance ever by securing a record 10 seats in Parliament.

The People’s Action Party (PAP), in power since 1965, won 83 of 93 parliamentary seats or 61.2 per cent of the vote — down from nearly 70 per cent it had in the 2015 general election. In 2015, the PAP secured 83 seats out of 89 seats in 29 constituencies.

The surprise this time was that the opposition Workers’ Party secured 10 seats — its best result.

Friday’s election was widely seen as a referendum on the Prime Minister Lee’s handling of the coronavirus outbreak. Singapore is currently facing the city state’s worst recession with economy projected to shrink between 7 and 4 per cent.

Singapore is only a handful of countries to have held an election during the pandemic. This was not a “feel-good”



election, said Lee. But he noted that the ruling PAP received a “clear mandate” from the people.

“We have a clear mandate, but the percentage of the popular vote is not as high as I had hoped for,” 68-year old Lee told a PAP’s post-results press conference on Saturday morning.

“Nevertheless, the results reflect broad-based support for the PAP,” Lee said at a press conference marking the end of the election. “Singaporeans understand what is at stake and why we must come together to uphold our national interests.”

“I will use this mandate responsibly to deal with

COVID-19 and the economic downturn to take us through the crisis safely and beyond,” he added.

Prime Minister Lee congratulated the Workers’ Party for what he called a “strong performance.”

The opposition Workers’ Party secured 10 seats and defeated a team in the Group Representation Constituency of Sengkang led by former Minister in the Prime Minister’s Office Ng Chee Meng who is also the Secretary-General of the power National Trades Union Congress (NTUC). “I congratulate the

Workers’ Party for their strong performance,” Lee, who leads the PAP as secretary-general, wrote in a Facebook post. “I look forward to them participating in and contributing to the debate in Parliament, and to the national debate, as we deal with the urgent issues before us.”

Lee assured it is “only right” that Workers’ Party’s Indian-origin secretary-general Pritam Singh be “formally designated” as the Leader of the Opposition, and that he will be provided with “appropriate staff support and resources to perform his duties.”

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday congratulated his Singaporean counterpart for winning the general elections.

“Congratulations to Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong for success in the General Elections. Best wishes to the people of Singapore for a peaceful and prosperous future,” Modi wrote on Twitter.

The son of country’s founding father and long-time ruler Lee Kuan Yew, Lee has been in office since 2004. For the second time in

Singapore’s history, all seats were contested, with two constituencies seeing three-cornered fights. Altogether, there were 10 opposition parties and one independent candidate who vied for a spot in Parliament.

A total of 2,535,565 votes, including rejected votes, were cast in what was the country’s 13th election since independence. This made up 95.63 per cent of the 2,651,435 registered electors, the largest turnout since 1997.

Prime Minister Lee said, “Singaporeans understand what’s at stake and why we must come together to uphold our national interests.”

He pledged to use this mandate “responsibly” to deal with the COVID-19 situation and economic downturn, to take Singapore “safely through the crisis and beyond”.

“The results reflect the pain and uncertainty that Singaporeans feel in this crisis, the loss of income, the anxiety about jobs, the disruption caused by the circuit breaker and the safe distancing restrictions,” he said. **PTI**

Oli says intra-party disputes can be resolved through dialogue as NCP again postpones its meeting

PTI ■ KATHMANDU

Under mounting pressure to resign, Nepal’s beleaguered Prime Minister K P Sharma Oli has downplayed the intra-party rift and said such disputes are “regular phenomena” that can be resolved through dialogue, as a crucial meeting of the ruling party was postponed by a week to give more time to the warring factions to reach a power-sharing deal.

Prime Minister Oli also vowed to protect Nepal’s sovereignty and territorial integrity, amidst a border row with India.

In a previously unannounced address to the nation on Friday night, hours after the crucial Standing Committee meeting of the Nepal Communist Party (NCP) was

postponed for the fourth time, Oli said that it is the duty of a political party and its leaders to resolve the internal matters and disputes.

The meeting of the NCP’s 45-member powerful Standing Committee was scheduled to be held on Friday. But it was postponed for a week at the last moment, citing floods and landslides that killed at least 22 people.

Top NCP leaders, including former prime minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal ‘Prachanda’, have demanded Prime Minister Oli’s resignation, saying his recent anti-India remarks were “neither politically correct nor diplomatically appropriate.” But in his prime-time address, Oli tried to downplay the intra-party rift and growing demand for his resignation. **PTI**

Dozens of US Marines in Japan’s Okinawa get virus

Tokyo: Dozens of US Marines at two bases on the southern Japanese island of Okinawa have been infected with the coronavirus in what is feared to be a massive outbreak, Okinawa’s governor said on Saturday, demanding an adequate explanation from the US military.

Gov. Denny Tamaki said he could say only that a “few dozen” cases had been found recently because the US military asked that the exact figure not be released. The outbreaks occurred at Marine Corps Air Station Futenma, which is at the center of a relocation dispute, and Camp Hansen, Tamaki said.

Local media, citing unnamed sources, said about 60 people had been infected.

“Okinawans are shocked by what we were told (by the U.S. Military),” Tamaki told a

news conference. “We now have strong doubts that the US military has taken adequate disease prevention measures.”

Tamaki demanded transparency in the latest development and said he planned to request talks between the US military and Okinawan officials. He said Okinawan officials also asked the Japanese government to demand that the US provide details including the number of cases, seal off Futenma and Camp Hansen, and step up preventive measures on base.

Okinawan officials made similar requests to the US military on Friday in order to address local residents’ concerns, Tamaki said.

The Marines said in a statement on Friday that the troops were taking additional protective measures to limit the spread of the coronavirus and

were restricting off-base activities. The statement said measures are “to protect our forces, our families, and the local community,” without providing details on the infections.

The Marines did not immediately respond on Saturday to an Associated Press inquiry about the latest outbreak.

Okinawa is home to more than half of about 50,000 American troops based in Japan under a bilateral security pact, and the residents are sensitive to US base-related problems. Many Okinawans have long complained about pollution, noise and crime related to US bases. Okinawans also oppose a planned relocation of the Futenma air base from the current site in a densely populated area in the south to a less populated area on the east coast. **AP**

Thousands protest arrest of Russian regional Gaovernor

Moscow: Thousands of demonstrators in the Russian Far East city of Khabarovsk have held a protest against the arrest of the region’s governor on charges of involvement in multiple murders.

The Saturday demonstration in the city 6100 kilometers (3800 miles) east of Moscow was unannounced but no arrests were reported. Local news media gave estimates of the crowd ranging from 5,000 to 35,000.

Sergei Furgal, the Khabarovsk region governor, was arrested Thursday and flown to Moscow where he was interrogated and ordered held in jail for two months.

Russia’s main criminal investigation body says he is suspected of involvement in several murders of businessmen in 2004 and 2005, before his political career began. **AP**

UNESCO regrets Turkish move to convert Hagia Sophia into mosque

United Nations: The UN’s cultural agency has voiced deep regret over Turkey’s decision, “made without prior discussion”, to convert Istanbul’s iconic sixth-century Hagia Sophia into a mosque, saying its status as a museum reflects the universal nature of its heritage and makes it a powerful symbol for dialogue.

The ancient Hagia Sophia was founded around 1,500 years ago as a cathedral and is widely regarded as the foremost example of Byzantine Christian architecture in the world.

Following the rise of the Ottoman Empire, it became a mosque, but in 1934, was designated a secular museum,

shared by Christians, Muslims and those of all faiths or none, alike.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan signed a decree following years of campaigning by a cultural association, and the decision earlier in the day by a Turkish court, handing control of the building over to the nation’s religious directorate, allowing it to reopen for worship as a mosque, the UN said in a statement.

“Hagia Sophia is an architectural masterpiece and a unique testimony to interactions between Europe and Asia over the centuries. Its status as a museum reflects the universal nature of its heritage, and

makes it a powerful symbol for dialogue,” UNESCO Director-General Audrey Azoulay said in a statement on Friday.

Azoulay said that the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) “deeply regrets” the decision of the Turkish authorities, “made without prior discussion, to change the status of Hagia Sophia” and shared her serious concern with the Ambassador of Turkey to the UN cultural agency.

Responding to questions on the issue, UN spokesperson Stéphane Dujarric said at his daily press briefing that the UN Secretary-General fully backs UNESCO. **PTI**

5 killed as gunmen storm church in S Africa over leadership battle between two factions

Johannesburg: Five people were shot dead and over 40 suspects arrested after a heavily-armed group stormed a prominent South African church near here and held several people hostage reportedly following a battle between two factions over its leadership.

Police reportedly freed about 200 people who had taken refuge inside International Pentecostal Holiness Church in Zurbekom, west of here after attackers arrived in several vehicles in the early hours of Saturday and began shooting randomly inside and outside the church.

National police spokesperson Brigadier Vish Naidoo said that four men were shot and

burnt in a vehicle just outside the church and a fifth man, believed to be a security guard who had responded to a call, was shot in another car.

Six other people were injured.

He said swift reaction by the police had averted what could have become “a blood-bath.”

“We have arrested over 41 suspects, including six who were injured and were taken to hospital. We also seized over 40 firearms, including rifles, shotguns and handguns,” Naidoo said.

The attack by a group of armed people “may have been motivated by a feud” between church members, the police statement said. **PTI**

Over half of Covid-19 infected adults in S Africa are asymptomatic: Official

Johannesburg: A top health official in South Africa has said that about 50 to 66 per cent of all the adults infected with the COVID-19 disease in the country are asymptomatic, with many infections going undetected.

The deadly contagion, which first emerged in China’s Wuhan city in December last year, has claimed 3,860 lives and infected over 2,50,000 people in South Africa.

“The majority of COVID-19 infections are going unnoticed,” according to Dr Shabir Madhi, the leader of the South African leg of an international vaccine trial headed by the University of Oxford.

In an interview with CNBC on Friday, Madhi said that the



high number of asymptomatic cases was causing difficulties in vaccine trials.

The enrolment process has shown that far more people are asymptomatic than what was previously believed, he said.

He estimated that only about 10 per cent of all COVID-19 cases are being officially reported.

Madhi said around 80 per cent of all children who are infected are asymptomatic.

The clinical trials require people who have not been infected by the virus. Part of the

enrolment process for the COVID-19 vaccine trial involves the screening of individuals.

Qualifying participants are randomly allocated into one of two groups — vaccine group or placebo group.

Madhi said the results on whether the vaccine works as protection against COVID-19 would be available by the end of November this year, but the trials may be extended into the second quarter of next year.

He warned against the undue optimism, reminding that only 10 per cent of vaccines that go into clinical trials are eventually licensed for use. Right now there are approximately 200 vaccines that are being developed (around the world) for the COVID-19. **PTI**

HOME THEATRE

A bit of heavy breathing

BREATHE: INTO THE SHADOWS
Amazon Prime Original
Episodes: 12
*ing: Abhishek Bachchan, Madhavan, Amit Sadh
Rated: 5/10

Abhishek Bachchan's debut in a second season of an established series *Breathe* was being awaited with, well, bated breath. He does not disappoint but one really never gets to go beyond the Jr Bachchan's persona much as he tries to get into the skin of a beleaguered psychiatrist. He is still his father's son, in the sense he carries some of senior Bachchan's mannerisms into the character, messing it all up, at times.

Breathe's Season 2 is better than Season 1 in the sense that the premise of the plot is better placed on believability but it suffers from all kinds of loopholes that stand tall throughout the drama enfolding around the kidnapping of a little girl from an outdoor birthday party.

Before proceeding on the ifs and buts of this season, a word first on the remarkability and presence of Amit Sadh who returns as Inspector Kabir as much more muscular, much more sensible and much less doused in alcoholic persona. Sadh is a delight to be with when he gets into waylaid characters like a guilt-prone father lubricating his liver with only *daru* and yet having the keenest eye for detail on a crime scene. In this one, he does well as a plain and simple Crime Branch spook handling the case of psychotic serial killings with acumen and incredible presence of mind.

The problem with *Breathe 2* is that it has a lot of jargon, a lot of mumbo jumbo and even Abhishek, as Avinash the shrink, seems to be analysing the crime with frivolous conclusions and many OTT liners on "ravan kay 10 sar, meaning dus

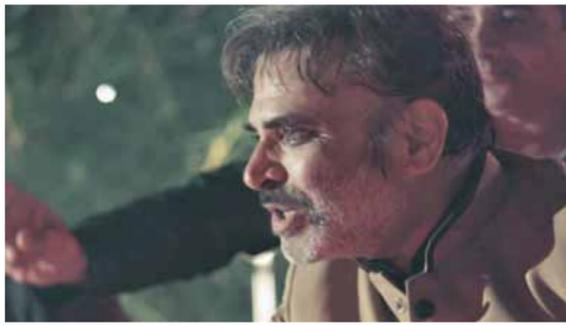


emotions to kill" type of analyses.

Flashbacks though meant to explain, often intrude on the story which itself is struggling with reason and logic most of the time. A kidnapper picks up a girl and does not make a move for nine months and then suddenly plans the killings of sundry people across Delhi. The moment it is revealed who the killer is, you lose interest in the proceedings. And that's revealed in the sixth-seventh episode and you

still have five more to go to the conclusion, which incidentally, is predictable but well mounted.

In short, *Breathe 2* is not too easy to inhale or exhale, but keeps going nevertheless with all kinds of sub-plots and side stories of people in extraordinary circumstances, be it a lesbian relationship, a dark incident in college and germophobia to name a few. A case of flailing limbs to stay afloat in a sea of crime dramas.



The one to watch

UNDEKHI
SonyLiv Original
Episodes: 10
*ing: Harsh Chhaya, Dibyendu Bhattacharya, Ankur Rathee, Anchal Singh, Abhishek Chauhan and others
Rated: 9/10

The more the virus is forcing you to stay home, the more you are marvelling at some stunning content emerging from OTT platforms, *Undekhi* being the latest thriller in this altered entertainment environment.

Raw, aggressive, intense, intriguing and fleshed out with the minutest of details of the story and its characters, this Original lives it up in style. Created by Siddharth Sengupta, *Undekhi* unplugs a stinging, action-packed story emanating from a resort wedding in Manali where a dancer is shot in cold blood with no regrets in any of the gun-toting, power drunk, alcohol doused gentry led by the ruthless adopted owner Rinku (brilliantly played by Surya Sharma) to kick scruples in the butt as hard as you would be taught to do the same to wrongdoing in a missionary school.

Harsh Chhaya, Dibyendu Bhattacharya, Ankur Rathee, Anchal Singh, Abhishek Chauhan, Ayn Zoya, Apeksha Porwal and Sayandeep Sen are not names you would remember in a hurry but after their measured performances in *Undekhi* you would like to do a quick roll call.

The 10 episodes keep you in the

grip without really playing to the gallery in an in-your-face way. Along the way, the faulty lifestyle, the blatant immorality, the extreme insensitivity or should we say the animalistic mindsets of an upper class Punjabi business family and its cohorts are laid bare with maximum impact and precision. Abuse, assault and sex, the oiling of the system, an innately corrupt police force, the fall of grace of many citadels of honesty — it is all there to leave you heaving in impact. Also, there is a story to reckon with and that's quite delightfully in-your-face, giving meat to the series.

Besides Surya Kumar, Debyendu Bhattacharya as the seasoned DSP and Apeksha Porwal as the tribal girl being hunted down lead the list of stellar performances, not to mention Harsh Chhaya who lives it up as a debauched, abusive motormouth patriarch of the family which dotes on its sleazy, hazy and totally anti-social existence.

The depiction of our society by Sengupta shows up the place of women in our society, be it the trophy wives of the rich and the powerful, or a daughter of the forgotten and the powerless. Injustice, and the acceptance of it by and large not just by the perpetrators and the victims but also by the media, churns up a scenario where you feel the need for purge.

Well, it is such raw depiction that thrills and kills in this gem of a series punctuating a space where a lot of intrigue has been fighting for a pedestal.

Slick teen thriller

ALEX RIDER
SonyLiv
Episodes: 8
*ing: Otto Farrant, Stephen Dillane, Ronke Adekoluejo and others
Rated: 6.5/10

Let's get to the issue *Point Blanc*. It's a teenage James Bond and Jason Bourne mix that helms the crime, cloning, syndicated world of fast paced action, murder, British Secret Service and a global ring of swish criminals that keeps Rider and its viewers on their toes. Flitting from London to a shadowy finishing school for errant teenagers in the snow-capped French Alps, this not exceptional and yet not run-of-the-mill spy thriller is both for young adults and, well, old adults in a season where home entertainment is the buzzword.

As a book, *Alex Rider*, written by Anthony Horowitz, sold a staggering 20 million copies in the teenage espionage segment and this series does not take too many artistic licences from the book. *Stormbreaker*, its original film version, however, took quite a beating at the box office, making this home entertainer a revelation.

The story gets going after Farrant, an otherwise normal school-going teenager, suffers a familial setback in the murder of his uncle and is consequently blackmailed by a shadowy unit head of the British Secret Service to penetrate into a crime ring and extract information.

Unknowingly trained into secret service mores by his uncle, Farrant plays the central role with precision and perfection turning into an errant teenager with issues that need a *Point Blanc* intervention.

What comes out of this so called high society correctional facility is a truth so dirty and alarming that the Secret Service is stunned too even as Farrant puts up the nonchalance of an irreverent teen with the right amount of gumption to pull a fast one on the syndicate run by a fascist doctor and his Woman Friday Stellanbauch.

Rider does well to remain in top gear all through and leave a window for a second one perhaps? Tune in with your teen and his friends for an eight-hour soiree built carefully to engage you in the proceedings without being entirely teeny or entirely adult.



'I have been acting since I was 10'

HARSH CHHAYA tells MUSBA HASHMI what made him take up the role of Papaji in Sony Liv's *Undekhi*, his fondest memory from the sets and his takeaway from the industry in his 30-year career

■ **What is your role in *Undekhi*?**

I play a rich, powerful and out of control kind of man, Papaji. He is a resort owner in Manali and couldn't care any less about anything on the planet. His only solution to everything is *goli mardangey*.

■ **Were there any apprehensions before taking up the role?**

Absolutely not. I was perfectly fine with the project and the role. I like to do different things but most of the times, I have played similar parts and this was something different. I just had to say yes to it as soon as I heard the narration.

■ **Your fondest memory from the sets.**

Everything went on without a mishap, that was the best part actually. We were shooting in Manali for 15 days and it was fun. I was working but at the same time I was also on a holiday. The whole unit was fun to work with. There were new actors and some of them were first timers so the whole energy was different and exciting.

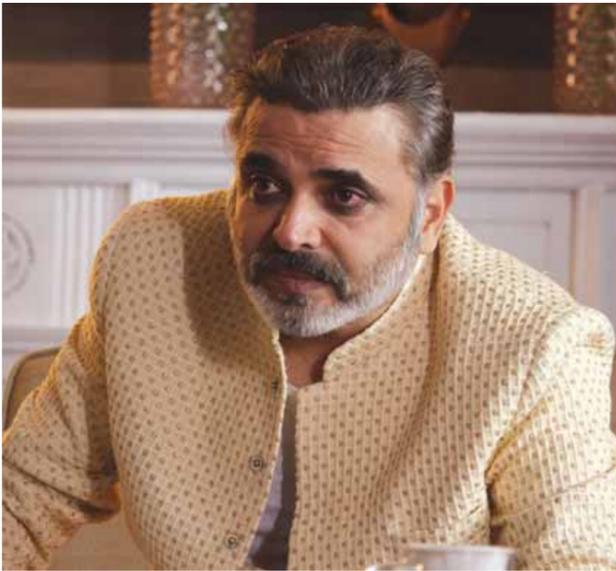
■ **Was acting always on cards?**

Yes, it was. I have been acting since I was 10. There's nothing else I would have chosen to do but acting.

■ **In almost 30 years of career, what has been your takeaway from the industry?**

To keep to yourself and deliver your best on time and in the way people want you to. Rest keep out of everything else.

■ **Where do you find yourself most**



comfortable working in — TV, films or OTT platforms?

That is dependent on the part I am playing. As long as, I have a part of my interest I am fine with working in any medium. If I have a film and TV offer at the same time, and I like the part in

TV then I would take that.

■ **What is there in the pipeline?**

Right now there is nothing to talk about because the things that we were in talks with has been postponed or cancelled. At this point of time, I really don't know.

AN INSPIRING MESSAGE

The rerun of *Jyoti* on Dangal TV is all about a woman's journey and the sacrifices she makes, her courage and how she stands proud despite the problems she faces, says SHALINI SAKSENA



It is not very often that one gets to see a show that talks about a woman's courage in the face of an adversary. Most of the serials are the usual *saas-bahu* drama and after some time, each show ends up along the same storyline. However, *Jyoti* that aired back in 2009-2010, stood out for a few reasons. First, it showed the lead protagonist as a very strong character. Second, it sent a message across to women that despite roadblocks, it is possible to stand tall and proud.

Interestingly, the story of *Jyoti* is based on a real-life person — unfortunately, she died many years back. Writer Purnendu Shekhar tells you that when the makers approached him to write, the first thing he thought about was to write a story about this brave and strong woman who tied rakhi to him. "When the makers asked me to write a story, her story was waiting to be told. She was sister's friend and colleague. So, she was a sister to me as well," Shekhar says.

He tells you that it is sad that TV serials have become regressive. But there is a reason for this. Back in the 90s, the shows on DD were watched by a select few because owning a TV was a luxury. Hence, the content also matched the intellect of the niche. "Today, while it is good that every

household can afford a TV, it has also meant that the content that is being shown caters to the taste of the masses hence, the usual *saas-bahu* dramas.

Also, soon the makers and channels realised that people were looking for drama and twists and turns. The end result was that though the shows started on a good note, they all went the drama way. Take *Kyunki Saas Bhi Kabhi Bahu Thi* and *Kahani Ghar Ghar Ki*. Both Tusli and Parvati are such strong characters. Yes, they were housewives but had a mind of their own. It was the drama for the sake of it and the unbelievable drama made the show's look regressive and gave them the tag of *saas-bahu* shows. Regression became the core of drama," Shekhar explains.

There is a reason for this and he blames the viewers. "The educated viewers who used to watch TV earlier have switched to OTT platforms and the target viewership which television is catering today is of the viewers who still don't have much excess to OTT platforms. For them, television is still the cheapest and the most convenient source of entertainment. Most of these viewers belong to lower economic strata with low rates of education too. So, broadcasters and makers are targeting those mindsets. Hence, the stories are full of unreal,

unbelievable drama. We can blame the viewers as well as the cut throat competition amongst the broadcasters," Shekhar says.

The advantage with *Jyoti* was that since the character was based on a true person, it was easier for the writers to be as true to her life as possible. Also, there were twists and turns in her life. It was easier to not dramatise and yet not give away everything. "Some of the dialogues in the show have actually taken place and were spoken by my mother and sister to her," Shekhar says and tells you that one must watch the rerun of *Jyoti* for one simple reason.

She is such a strong character. The message that she gives is that even in the worst-case scenario one must stand tall, proud and strong," Shekhar says.

Sneha Wagh who plays the lead in the show says that it would be wrong to say that television doesn't do woman-centric shows. "All the shows that are shown for the women. TV is mostly for and about women because a large portion of viewership comes from women. TV is a woman-oriented platform," Wagh says. She tells you that to play *Jyoti* was not something that she had planned but it was a big opportunity. "Everything was happening around me and it was

not something that I had a choice. I said yes to whatever good that came my way," she says.

"This show is off the normal track. Also, the character is relatable to today's scenario and not the usual *saas-bahu* drama. Her character, since it is based on a real-life person, makes what happens in the show so much more than the drama that one gets to see," Wagh says.

The hitch that TV faces when it comes to air women-centric shows even though the majority of the audience is women is because TV is all about family viewing. "The entire family sits and watches TV and it would be wrong to compare the content that one gets to see on the OTT platforms and small screen," Wagh tells you.

However, it doesn't mean that one can't show more such shows that portray women in a strong light that are based on real-life women. "It is important to send a message to even the women sitting at home in small towns and villages. We don't always show women all decked up. There is a need to air shows where women are powerful. We have a patriarchal society and will continue to be so unless we change our mindset. Shows like *Jyoti* will go a long way to change this thinking," Wagh says.

TELLY TALE

SALUTE TO WOMEN POLICE FORCE

Earlier this year, Sony SAB launched *Maddam Sir*, a show which addresses social issues through the eyes of four dynamic women police officers taking every challenge as it comes and solving cases with *jazbaat* i.e. policing with a heart. The show features Gulki Joshi as SHO Haseena Mallik and Yukti Kapoor known as Sub Inspector Karishma Singh along with Sonali Naik as Head Constable Pushpa and Bhavika Sharma as Constable Santosh.

Taking a cue from the challenges presented to them in their reel-life as the Maddam Sir team, the actresses had an exclusive tête-à-tête with real life women police officers. The cast even discussed nuances of being able to successfully represent policewomen on-screen and took this opportunity to thank the real-life women police officers for their contribution towards our safety and well-being during this challenging phase.

Gulki Joshi recalls her audition days of the show and says: "When I wore the prestigious uniform during my audition for *Maddam Sir*, I didn't know if I will get the role but getting the mere

opportunity to wear a police officer's uniform filled me with such pride. I was ecstatic when I got the role of Haseena Mallik, but with that came the responsibility to do justice to this role and represent our heroes with immense respect. These past few months have filled me with so much gratitude towards the police force and witnessing their relentless and courageous efforts towards keeping the society safe by putting themselves on the frontline. I am so proud to have the opportunity to represent such a force and I want to salute the police force for their unparalleled contribution. They have truly defined the words — *Kuch Baat Hain Kyunki Jazbaat Hain*."

EISHA ALL SET TO MAKE COMEBACK

With people across the country stepping out into the new normal, Zee TV has resumed shoots of its shows and is all set to reconnect its audiences with the journeys of their beloved characters that have become their favourite dinner-table companions. With an aim to reunite the audience with another such

character that had struck a chord with the viewers, Zee TV's *Ishq Subhan Allah* will see the return of the original Zara Siddiqui that was essayed by Eisha Singh till last year.

Season one of *Ishq Subhan Allah* had ended with a heart wrenching twist when Zara (Eisha Singh) was assumed dead after her car having fallen off a cliff. Viewers hoped for a magical turn of events that would reunite Kabir (Adnan Khan) and Zara, however the second season of the show brought in a fresh and engaging plot full of twists and turns between the lovestruck, grieving Kabir and a new Zara. However, in a fresh twist post lockdown, Eisha Singh will return in a new avatar and leave everyone stunned! Assumed to be dead all this while, the real Zara aka Eisha Singh will make an exciting comeback into the lives of Kabir and his family. She will be seen in an all new avatar, though — that of a music healer who believes in the extraordinary healing powers of music and its potential to revive even the most depressed. Questioning Kabir's prior mindset that music is haram as per his interpretation of religion, she challenges his traditional belief system, while denying that she is the Zara of his life.

ROAD LESS TRAVELLED

SHALINI SAKSENA speaks with VISHAKHA FULSUNGE, the country's first woman motovlogger about what got her interested in riding and experiences from her travels

She loved to compete with the boys in her area and do one better. She was in primary school when the neighbourhood boys bought themselves BMX cycles and she had no intentions to be left behind and insisted that her father buy her a cycle as well. She got a girl bike which she rejected on sight. She wanted the one that the boys were riding. When she was in Class VIII they graduated to motorbike and she also wanted one. Since then there has been no stopping this 26-year-old — the country's first motovlogger. Meet Vishakha Fulsunge who has three Indian Book of Records to her name for her feat. The first, India's first woman motovlogger. Second, first woman to ride solo to Andaman and Nicobar Islands. The third is on the way.

For those who don't know who or what a motovlogger is, he is a person who shoots a video log while riding a motorcycle. While her parents may have indulged her and told her to follow her passion, it was not very easy for Fulsunge to reach where she is today. She tells you that it is tough to be a rider in this country especially if you are a woman.

There have been a couple of instances where Fulsunge has had to resort to threats to get a room in a hotel. "I ride alone. When I am all geared up people can't tell whether I am a man or a woman. But the minute I take off the helmet, there is no hiding. Sometimes I ride long hours but other times I take short breaks. As a woman rider I can't pitch a tent anywhere. When I went to this hotel and asked for a room, he refused. I understood that he thought that since I was a woman and alone, he could take me for a ride and I would beg. Instead, I threatened him and told him that I was recording whatever he had said. He had not expected that and finally relented and gave the room," Fulsunge recounts.

Another time, she ended up getting the fright on her life while taking a parikrama of the Narmada River. It had got late and she took a wrong turn and it took her on a narrow kuccha narrow lane. Soon she reached a dead end and realised there were three men squatting and staring at her, walked up to her and asked: *Aur chhori kahan ja rahe hai*. "That really scared me but I knew if I showed fear they would pounce so I calmly without looking at them turned the bike, it took a bit of back and forth since there was no space and rode out of there like there was a fire on my trail. It was dark and on a bike the headlights give light only in front. In a jungle one doesn't know from where the danger can come," Fulsunge tells you.

Then there is the whole issue of toilets. "It is not easy to leave all the gear on the bike and go to the washroom. It takes ages to take off all the protective gear and wear it again. Also, when I take a break to eat, I have to park the bike where I can see it all the time or pick a snack I can eat on the go," Fulsunge says.

Then there have been some serious accidents that she has met with. An acci-

“WHEN I FIRST STARTED TO GO ON RIDES ALL ALONE, BUYING THE GEAR WAS A CHALLENGE. TO BEGIN WITH, YOU JUST CAN'T GET ONTO ANY BIKE AND BECOME A RIDER. YOUR MACHINE AND YOU HAVE TO GET USED TO LONG HOURS OF BEING ON THE ROAD. FOR THIS, THE BIKE HAS TO BE IN PRISTINE CONDITION AS WELL AS YOU TO BE ABLE TO TAKE LONG HOURS OF RIDING”



dent last year put her in the ICU. Her mother was a pillar of strength. While people told her that maybe her riding days were over, it was her mother who told her that her bike whom she has named Kashish is waiting for her at home. It was only once Fulsunge was home, after three months, that her

mother broke down and cried. Since then, she has a few people who are immediately contacted if her bike falls. There is an app that she has synced to her phone and any jolt sends a message to people listed as emergency contacts.

There are safety measures that she devised. One of them is a ponytail that

she has attached to her helmet which has pink ponies to let people know she is a woman rider and not to touch her. At night, the ponytail is out for the same reason — she doesn't want people to know she is a woman rider.

It is not just about people giving her strange looks because she is a woman

rider. "When I first started to go on rides all alone, buying the gear was a challenge. To begin with, you just can't get onto any bike and become a rider. Your machine and you have to get used to long hours of being on the road. For this the bike has to be in pristine condition and so should you be, to be able to take long hours of riding," Fulsunge says.

She also had to get used to wearing all the protective gear. It took her two years before she could buy proper riding gear. This includes a jacket and we all know the price of a good quality jacket in the country. In a country like India, where it is hot nine out of the 12 months, the jacket that she has to wear has to be special, that which has can withstand extreme heat and extreme cold since she has traveled the length and breadth of the country excluding North-east which is on her wish list and she all set to go there when the lockdown was announced. Her plans have had to be put on hold but not for long, she tells you.

"Back then, it was extremely difficult to get quality products in the market. I would ask my friend or acquaintance who would travel abroad to get me the gear that I needed," she tells you.

More so, because Fulsunge had decided she would pursue her passion under her steam and not borrow money from her parents. For this, even she was still a teenager, she took up jobs that came her way.

"When I was in college, I used to earn money by asking people to fill coupons. I would save up for months on end to buy what I needed. I was also very confident and could chat with people easily. I am also unlike most bike riders. I am petite. People take to me easily. There was an event at a mall in Mumbai where I was working when I saw that the organisers were a bit agitated. I came to know that their host had not turned up. I told them I could do it. It was the best event that the company had had in a long time and I walked away with Rs 4000. Slowly, my earnings increased and bought my gear and then started vlogging. Today, there are many companies that cater to women riders and it has become easy to source the protective gear. It is still expensive though," Fulsunge says.

Then there are knee-high boots with special soles to protect the feet from all the grit that hits when you ride. The length of the boot is to protect the legs from road burns if she falls. Riding pants and gloves are just as important. She tells you that a riding jacket costs ₹25,000 depending on the level of protection, pants ₹18,000, a helmet ₹22,000, gloves ₹5000 and boots another ₹25,000.

Interestingly, before she started her channel, she completed her integrated MBA. "In our country, people give importance to a degree and not skills. I wanted to pursue a degree. But I also knew that I was the kind to tie to a 9 am to 5 pm job. I love what I do. Yes, there are perils that come with it but the freedom that it gives me, makes me happy," Fulsunge says.

Young and beautiful at heart

She dons several hats and that is what sets her apart from others. ARUSHI NISHANK tells MUSBA HASHMI how she got interested in social work and how she is using her dancing skills to give out a social message

At an age, when most people focus on their career and yearn for name and fame, this leading lady thought of giving it back to Nature. When children are busy playing around with mud and building sand castles, this young heart realised the importance of preserving and respecting Mother Nature.

Meet a 33-year-old social activist, environmentalist, young-preneur, film producer and dancer, Arushi Nishank. It is not easy for Nishank to don several hats, it took years of effort, hard work and not to mention eternal dedication.

Having been born in Kottwar, Uttarakhand, Nishank always feel

that she has a moral responsibility towards River Ganga, and that is how she came on board as National Ambassador of Sparsh Ganga, a campaign that aimed at restoring and conserving the holy river.

"The Sparsh Ganga Campaign was started by my father, Ramesh Pokhriyal, in 2009. People hailing from Uttarakhand realise that it is their duty to protect and conserve Ganga ji. The whole world looks up to the river as *moksh* giver, they see it with a lot of *aastha* and a whole lot of feelings are attached with the holy river. This is what got us thinking and in 2009 under the guidance of Dalai Lama, several

dharam gurus and Hema Malini ji we started the campaign in Rishikesh. At that time, my father was the Chief Minister of Uttarakhand at that time and the campaign was a Government project. However, there was no surety that the next Chief Minister will have the same feelings for the campaign, so we privatised it. And now, more than 5.5 lakh people from around the world are associated with this campaign," Nishank tells you.

What is even more interesting is that people associated with the campaign do it out of free will and without any pays or funding. "All these people organise a weekly Sunday cleaning drive. This has now become a ritual. This doesn't mean they only clean River Ganga, instead they get together and clean any river that is there in the proximity or for that matter even colonies and drains," Nishank explains.

This is not it. In 2016, she also boosted the Clean Ganga Initiative through her Kathak shows *Ganga Tujhe Salam* in Dubai and UAE. The purpose of these shows was educating the NRI's about the importance of River Ganga and its cleanliness. Even, her compositions and choreography like *Ganga Avataran*, a story of Goddess Ganga coming to earth, and *Sajda*, a classical Kathak dance performance are based on the Sufiyana theme.

"Being from the young generation, I know that the best way to give out a social message is to do it in an entertaining way. I have studied in Toronto, and have had a lot of friends from India and abroad. Whenever we conversed, I realised that it is not like our generation isn't concerned about anything, they do care about our culture and environment. But the fact is they don't want to see it in the

old traditional way. This got me thinking and I started walking on this road. I tried utilising my dancing skills and came up with several compositions that talked about our culture. Also, I am a trained Kathak dancer and if I started doing typical Kathak, no one would have understood it. Therefore, I experimented with it a lot and came up with the compositions," she says.

Her passion for Kathak came from her mother. "My mother was a Kathak dancer. She left all of us at an early age. Seeing her photos where she is all dressed up in classical attire and performing Kathak, I got interested in the dance form and started pursuing it when I was in Class VIII. The thought that some day I would also look that beautiful in the classical attire, excited me a lot. Also by God's grace, my family has that values and virtues that we are automatically inclined towards Indian culture," she tells you.

Nishank is also associated with various social reform programmes aimed at uplifting women all over the world. Off late, she chaired the International Women Empowerment Program (IWEP) in Dubai, and for her contribution to social work and women empowerment, she was featured in Forbes Middle East. She is also globally active to promote *Beti Bachao Beti Padhao*, a Government initiative to save Girl Child. She also founded the Himalayan Ayurvedic Medical College and Hospital in Dehradun, Uttarakhand in 2006. She took the step to educate the youth

“I ALWAYS HAD THIS THING IN THE BACK OF MY MIND THAT ONE DAY I WILL CREATE A SOCIETY WHERE WOMEN WILL BE CREATING SYNERGY WITH EACH OTHER AND WHERE ONE PLUS ONE WILL BE 11”



about the benefits of Ayurveda and to create employment.

The sense of empathy strike Nishank at an early age, all thanks to her being the eldest daughter of the family. "I have two younger sisters, and everyone knows that the eldest in the family is automatically more responsible towards the family. That was the case with me. As I grew up, I became responsible towards my career and when I achieved that, I realised that I am responsible to bring in good things to our society as well. That is how I started doing all the social work," she tells you.

What made her play an active role in women empowerment, she says, is the reason that a woman's greatest enemy is a woman. "We all have heard the saying once in a while, but somehow we never understood its depth and essence. Gradually, when you grow up and face a lot of politics in your respective fields, you realise how true it is. I faced a lot of difficulties in my life. Sometimes when you are pretty, you are bullied, you are pushed around by other girls and people are judgemental about you because of who your parents are. Having faced all this, since a very young age, I always had this thing in the back of my mind that one day I will create a society where women will be creating synergy with each other and where one plus one will not be two but 11," she says.

She adds that in Uttarakhand women are the bread earners of the family. "These women are the best example of

women empowerment. They are so mentally and physically strong that no one can even dare to touch them. To help these women even more, we with the help of other women from different countries came up with policies at IWEP in Dubai," she tells you.

With the help of NGOs in Uttarakhand, Nishank also helped in generating more employment opportunities for these ladies. "We used Vimal tree's bark to make a fabric out of it. The bark was also used by these women to make baskets. This not only created employment opportunities for 800 women of Uttarakhand, but also acted as a substitute for plastic. Then we used the flowers and petals that were drained into Ganga to make scent sticks, this further gave employment to around 200 women. The numbers are small but we plan to grow even more," Nishank tells you.

She recalls a story that she says was the introduction of women power to her: "It was my school days and I was in Rajasthan. One day, I saw a member of the hostel staff who lived nearby, she made her toddler sit on a *charpayi/khat* and placed a tub underneath it. She then bathed her son and utilised the water to wash her clothes and gave the remaining to the animals. She didn't waste a single drop of water. We have been using the ornamental words like reuse and recycle for decades now, but the real essence of these words is known by our women who are doing it since eternity. That was a wake up call for me to understand a woman's brain."

Being a film producer, there were certain Bollywood films on Nishank's cards which are now on hold. "Keeping in mind the current situation, all those projects are now on hold. But we are eyeing the digital space at the moment. We shall come up with something soon," she tells you.

Crawley pushes Eng lead past 100

Rahane wants to make ODI comeback



Dom Sibley raises his bat to celebrate his fifty runs during fourth day

1st Test, Day 5
Live from 3:30pm IST
SONY SIX NETWORK

AFP ■ SOUTHAMPTON

Roston Chase proved a thorn in England's side once again as West Indies strengthened their grip on the first Test at Southampton on Saturday.

England were 168-3 in their second innings at tea on the fourth day, just 54 runs ahead of West Indies' first innings 318.

Chase had taken 2-45 in 19 overs, although both Rory Burns and Joe Denly donated their wickets to the off-spinner.

And in between their exits, Dom Sibley — bowled off a no-ball immediately after completing his half century — fell for exactly fifty when he was caught down the legside off Shannon Gabriel.

Zak Crawley was 38 not out, with England stand-in captain Ben Stokes yet to get off the mark.

All-rounder Stokes, leading the side in the absence of Joe Root, had top-scored with 43 in England's lowly first-innings 204.

The paceman, second to West Indies captain Jason Holder in the ICC's Test all-rounder rankings, then led from the front with the ball as well by taking 4-49.

England resumed Saturday on 15-0 in ideal sunny batting conditions on a placid pitch.

BROAD SHOULD BE PLAYING EVERY TEST MATCH: CORK

SOUTHAMPTON: Former England pacer Dominic Cork has backed Stuart Broad, saying the ace pacer has every reason to be angry as he should be playing every Test match.

Veteran pacer James Anderson was given the nod alongside Mark Wood and Jofra Archer as Broad had to be content with following the action from the bench.

"Absolutely I agree with him," Cork was quoted as saying by *Sky Sports*. "It's a big decision to leave someone out of his quality."

"Look at what he's done, not just over the last two years, and how well he has bowled, but throughout his career."

"He always seems to have to prove himself to people what a superb bowler he's been. He and Jimmy Anderson are up there with the best pairings in world cricket."

"Of course he should be frustrated, of course he should be angry."

"He should be playing every Test match so, fair enough, come out and put the people who've made this decision under pressure and say 'I want to be in this side, I deserve to be in this side, this

West Indies were without a frontline spinner after omitting Rakeem Cornwall."

But they could call upon Chase, who although a batting



is my shirt."

"Let's see what happens, whether he plays in the next Test match," he added.

Earlier, former England captain Nasser Hussain said the hosts missed a trick by leaving Broad out.

"I agreed with every word Broad said, and his right to say it, which he has built up over 138 Tests for his country. And, if I'd been captain, I'd have enjoyed the fact that the decision annoyed him. I'd have liked how he sought out the national selector Ed Smith and asked for an explanation," Hussain wrote in his column for *Daily Mail*.

Holder took a Test-best 6-42 after losing the toss in the opening match of a behind closed doors series.

Kraigg Brathwaite then made 65, the opener's first Test fifty in 22 innings, and Dowrick a valuable 61 as the tourists built a sizeable first-innings lead of 114.

And having already made 47 in this match, he removed well-set opener Burns for 42 when the left-hander saw a careless cut caught at backward point to end a first-wicket stand of 72.

Sibley pressed on to a painstaking fifty off 161 balls. The very next delivery saw Sibley play on to Gabriel only for third umpire Michael Gough to rule the fast bowler had over-stepped.

It was a desperately close no-ball call but, two balls later, Sibley glanced fast bowler Gabriel to diving wicketkeeper Shane Dowrick and was out for exactly 50.

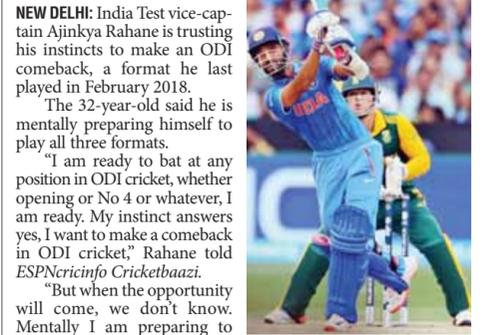
This was not the first time in his seven Tests Sibley had been caught down the legside, with England fast bowler Jofra Archer also dismissing him in similar fashion during an intra-squad warm-up match.

Denly, averaging under 30 in Test cricket and needing a big score to cement his place in the side, then undid all his hard work by tamely chipping Chase to Holder at short midwicket.

West Indies had dominated the first three days of a match that marks international cricket's return from lockdown.

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NEW DELHI: India Test vice-captain Ajinkya Rahane is trusting his instincts to make an ODI comeback, a format he last played in February 2018.

The 32-year-old said he is mentally preparing himself to play all three formats.

"I am ready to bat at any position in ODI cricket, whether opening or No 4 or whatever, I am ready. My instinct answers yes, I want to make a comeback in ODI cricket," Rahane told *ESPNCricinfo Cricketbaazi*.

"But when the opportunity will come, we don't know. Mentally I am preparing to play all the formats. It is all about being positive yourself and about your abilities."

To make an ODI comeback will be tougher than ever considering the stiff competition. He will be comfortable batting at four but fellow *Mumbai* Shreyas Iyer has secured that spot for now. The team also has a settled opening pair in Rohit Sharma and Shikhar Dhawan.

"I have enjoyed opening the innings, but I don't mind batting at number 4 if I am asked to. I have enjoyed both roles," he said when asked which position he would prefer in ODI cricket.

"It is very hard to suddenly open the innings and adjust to it after you have been batting at No 4 for a while, which I had done. It is hard to say which position I prefer. I can do well in both," said Rahane who has played 90 ODIs.

Rahane has also played in 65 Tests, the last being in February this year. He has also not been a part of the Indian T20 team for nearly four years.

Asked about his approach in T20s, he said, "I don't try and copy anyone in T20 cricket. My cricketing shots are inside out, behind the bowler, and other shots I have developed."

"I think if you are sure of your shots, you should back them. If I am playing 18 overs, I aim to see how I can get my strike rate to 150-160."

Rahane said it's important to break down innings in T20 cricket. "For example, if I am batting after sixth over, I have to plan accordingly."

He said he got advice from the great Rahul Dravid that it does not matter whether a shot looks good or not as long as the runs are coming.

"Sometimes the shots you play in T20s don't look good. But Rahul bhai told me not to bother about what the shots look like, whether it's bad or looks bad from outside. He said it does not matter. He said in T20 cricket, one needs to watch the ball and hit it," he added.

Azam has skills to reach Kohli's level: Aakash

NEW DELHI: Former India cricketer Aakash Chopra feels Pakistan's white-ball skipper Babar Azam has the ability to reach the level of India captain Virat Kohli.

The two modern-day greats are time and again pitted against each other, by fans and critics alike, for their impeccable playing styles and incredible consistency.

Chopra stated that Azam is an incredible talent but it will take time for him to reach that level where Kohli has been operating for a long time now.

"Babar Azam is an exciting talent. There is no doubt about that. It is also true that Virat Kohli is very far ahead in this race. He is older and started cricket before Azam. Virat's name is already included in the conversation of all-time greats," Chopra told former Pakistan cricketer Tanvir Ahmed on the latter's *YouTube* channel.

"Azam has the necessary skills to reach that level. But the real question is whether he will be able to reach those



heights as it depends on many things such as discipline, injuries, form and several other factors which will come along as time moves on.

"Talent can only take you to a place but you ought to have incredible passion that drives you forward. Virat didn't have that from the start but gained it along the way," he added.

Eden Gardens to be used as quarantine centre for police

KOLKATA: Kolkata's iconic Eden Gardens stadium is to be used as a quarantine centre for police who have the coronavirus, officials said on Saturday. With the city's hospitals under growing pressure, hundreds of beds are to be set up in the 80,000 capacity stadium.

Nearly 550 Kolkata police have tested positive for the coronavirus and two have died. "It is our duty to help and support the administration in this hour of crisis. The quarantine facility will be used for police personnel who are Covid-19 warriors," said Cricket Association of Bengal president Avishek Dalmiya.

The beds will be put in galleries around the seating and not on the pitch that was last used by India for their first-ever day-night Test, which was against Bangladesh last November. "Such areas would be thoroughly segregated as a safety measure," added Dalmiya.

Dhoni won so many trophies because of Ganguly's hardwork: Gambhir



FIANS ■ NEW DELHI

Former India captain MS Dhoni was lucky in the way that he inherited teams consisting of great players when he took over the Indian captaincy in all formats of the game, according to former batsman Gautam Gambhir.

As Test captain, Dhoni is credited with being the first to lead India to the top of the Test rankings and Gambhir said that it is because of fast bowler Zaheer Khan that the team managed to be so successful.

"The reason Dhoni became such a successful captain in Test cricket is because of Zaheer Khan. He was a big blessing that Dhoni got, for which credit goes to Sourav

Ganguly. According to me, Zaheer has been India's best world-class bowler," Gambhir said on the *Star Sports* show *Cricnet Connected*.

The 38-year-old was involved in two of India's greatest achievements during Dhoni's captaincy — the 2007 T20 World Cup and 2011 World Cup wins.

"Dhoni has been a very lucky captain because he got an amazing team in every format. Captaining 2011 World Cup team was very easy for Dhoni because we had players like Sachin, Sehwag, Mysief, Yuvraj, Yusuf, Virat, so he had got the best teams, while Ganguly had to work very hard for it, and as a result, Dhoni won so many trophies," said Gambhir.

Trinidad and Tobago to host entire CPL

PORT OF SPAIN: The entire Caribbean Premier League 2020 will be played in Trinidad and Tobago from August 18 to September 10 as the organisers got the approval from the local Government.

Though international cricket has already begun, CPL will be the first T20 league to take place after the Covid-19-forced break.

Strict safety procedures will be in place for the tournament to minimise the risk of virus transmission to the local population and among those who will be travelling to Trinidad and Tobago from overseas.

All teams and officials will be housed in one hotel and everyone will be subject to strict quarantine protocols for the first two weeks they are in the country.

Teams and officials will be put into "households" where social distancing will need to be in place.

There will be smaller clusters within each household where these measures can be relaxed.

"However, if any member of this cluster display signs of Covid-19 at any time during the tournament all members of that cluster will be expected to self-isolate for a period of 14 days from the time that a member of that cohort first shows symptoms," the statement read.

"All members of the CPL party will be subject to regular temperature checks and will be re-tested for the virus throughout their stay in Trinidad and again before departure," it added.

The CPL will feature overseas and Caribbean players including Rashid Khan, Chris Lynn, Carlos Brathwaite, Dwayne Bravo, Alex Hales and Kieron Pollard.

SINGLES

ASIAN BEACH GAMES IN CHINA POSTPONED

KUWAIT City: The Olympic Council of Asia on Saturday postponed the sixth Asian Beach Games, scheduled from November 28 to December 6 in the Chinese city of Sanya, due to the Covid-19 pandemic. "The Olympic Council of Asia and the Chinese Olympic Committee are in discussion to reschedule the dates of the Sanya Asian Beach Games due to the Covid-19 pandemic," the OCA said in a statement. "The three parties have been in constant contact all year regarding the Asian Beach Games in Sanya and are closely monitoring the situation on a daily basis and working together closely to adjust the dates, if required."

TT WORLD TEAM C'SHIPS DELAYED TO 2021

Seoul: The Table Tennis World Team Championships have been delayed to early next year amid lingering concern about the Covid-19 outbreak across the world, the International Table Tennis Federation (ITTF) announced on Saturday. The ITTF executive committee met on Friday and reached the outcome that the Hana Bank 2020 World Team Table Tennis Championships in Busan will be staged between Feb 28 and March 7, 2021. It was originally scheduled to be held in Busan from March 22-29, but it was postponed to June 21-28 and once again to Sept 27-Oct 4 due to the virus outbreak.

CONMEBOL WC QUALIFIERS TO START IN OCT

Rio: The start of the South American zone qualifiers for the 2022 World Cup in Qatar has been postponed to October, world football governing body FIFA. The 18-round qualifying tournament was suspended just days before its scheduled start in March. CONMEBOL subsequently earmarked FIFA's September 2-10 international window for the start of the competition. However ongoing coronavirus lockdown measures and travel restrictions across South America have prompted CONMEBOL to change its plans again.

CITY TO LEARN CAS DECISION ON MONDAY

LONDON: English Premier League club Manchester City will learn on Monday the decision of Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) over their appeal against the two-year UEFA ban, announced CAS late on Friday. In February, UEFA confirmed that Manchester City has been banned from European competitions for the next two seasons and fined 30 million euros (32.5 million US dollars) after being found guilty of "serious breaches" of UEFA's financial fair play rules. The club denied any wrongdoing and appealed to CAS.

Bolt open to comeback if his coach insists

AFP ■ JAMAICA

Jamaican sprint king Usain Bolt has hinted he could be tempted out of retirement if former coach Glen Mills asked him. The world 100m and 200m record holder and eight-time Olympic champion told *Variety* magazine he had no plans to resurrect his sprinting career.

However the 33-year-old told *Variety* magazine in a video interview he would at least consider a comeback if veteran coach Mills asked him.

"If my coach came back and told me, let's do this, I will, because I believe so much in my coach," Bolt said. "So I know if he says we're going to do this, I know it's possible. Give Glen Mills a call, and I'll be back."

Bolt, who last competed internationally at the World Championships in London in 2017 where he won Bronze in the 100m, said he does not visit the track any more. "My coach gets too excited when I come to the track, so I stay away," he said.

'Serena will have fresh perspective when tennis returns'

FIANS ■ NEW YORK

Tennis great Chris Evert feels Serena Williams can make the most of this Covid-19 induced lockdown and aim to clinch a 24th Grand Slam title. "Maybe she will be calmer out there," she was quoted as saying by *BBC*.

"I think she will have a fresh perspective and approach."

At 38, Serena lost her last four major finals. "She looks really fit and in great shape and she seems to be really eager to get back," the 18-



time Grand Slam singles champion told *BBC Two's Wimbledon: The Best of the Championships*.

"So that's the danger zone for a lot of the other players because if anyone can get through these difficult times and these challenges it's Serena Williams, with what she's had to go through in her life. This will be a like piece of cake for her, so watch out for her."

Twenty three-time Grand Slam champion Serena recently committed herself for the 2020 US Open which will be played at the Flushing Meadows from August 31 to September 13 behind closed doors in New York.

'Pro League will help team gain momentum for Olympics'

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Indian men's hockey team skipper Manpreet Singh is delighted with the revised schedule for FIH Pro League, saying back-to-back matches next year will help them gain the "right kind of momentum" ahead of the Tokyo Olympics.

The Indian team will resume its Pro League campaign in April with an away tie against Argentina, according to a revised fixtures announced by the International Hockey Federation on Thursday.

"I feel after the four-week gap between our matches against Argentina and Great Britain, we will play back-to-back matches almost every weekend right until the end of May and that's the kind of momentum we are looking for ahead of the Olympic Games," Manpreet said.

"We will test our body and mind during this time to see how we can cope up with the pressure of playing back-to-back high-



intensity games and manage the load. This will be an ideal test for us before the Olympics," he said.

To start with, India will play Argentina on April 10 and 11.

India will then face Great Britain away from home on May 8 and 9 before travelling to Spain to play matches on May 12 and 13. The team will take on Germany in

away matches on May 18 and 19 before finally playing a home tie on May 29 and 30 against New Zealand.

Chief coach Graham Reid too said tough competition against top nations will help his team prepare well for the Olympics.

"It's very encouraging to have international competition restart-

ing and the Hockey Pro League will give us that top level competition in the lead-up to the Olympic Games next year," he said.

"We are also working at the moment to ensure that we have enough competition throughout the latter part of 2020 and the early part of 2021.

"We have the Asian Champions Trophy still planned for November 2020 and a trip to Malaysia to play the Netherlands and a 4 Nations Tournament in New Zealand in February 2021 which are all in the planning stage at the moment as part of our ACTC."

The Indian team had made an emphatic start to its maiden Hockey Pro League campaign earlier this year with a 5-2 and 3-3 (3-1) win against the Netherlands followed by a 2-1 victory and 3-4 loss against world champions Belgium and a 3-4 loss and 2-2 (3-1) win against Australia before the Covid-19 pandemic halted all sporting events.

BWF seeking 'more clarity' before deciding on events in China

NEW DELHI: The Badminton World Federation on Saturday said it was waiting for "more clarity" from China before it takes a call on the World Tour Finals scheduled in December.

China's General Administration of Sport on Friday said the country will not host any of its planned international events this year except the trials for the 2022 Winter Olympics in Beijing to stop the spread of coronavirus.

The decision has put in doubt events including the World Tour Finals in Guangzhou, which was pushed back by a week to December 16 to 20 in the revamped 2020 calendar.

"The BWF is aware of the directive announced by the General Administration of Sport of China regarding the restriction of international sports for the rest of 2020," the badminton governing body said in a statement. "BWF is in close contact with its relevant partners including the Chinese Badminton Association (CBA) to get more



clarity on the situation and how this affects the BWF Tournament Calendar 2020."

Among other events to be held in the country, China Masters which was scheduled in August has already been called off, while the China Open World Tour Super 1000 event (September 15-20, Changzhou) and the Fuzhou China Open World Tour Super 750 (November 3-8) are still scheduled later in the year in the revised calendar.

Champions suffer setback

Pope stars between sticks as Burnley end Liverpool's home run with 1-1 draw

AFP ■ LIVERPOOL

Jürgen Klopp was frustrated by Liverpool's lack of killer instinct as Burnley became the first visiting side to avoid defeat at Anfield in the Premier League for 18 months in a 1-1 draw on Saturday.

Andy Robertson's first-half header had the champions on course to maintain their perfect home record this season and close in on a record points tally for the English top flight.

But the Reds were made to pay for a host of missed chances when Jay Rodriguez's fine finish earned a point to further Burnley's late push for a place in Europe next season.

"We left the door open, we didn't close it. We should have scored two, three, four goals at least," said Klopp, who was also irked by referee David Coote's lenient attitude to Burnley's physical approach.

"The ref let all these challenges today happen. When the ball comes in the box, Burnley are always dangerous."

"They stayed completely in the game, they just did what they wanted to do. It is frustrating because we should have scored much earlier."

Liverpool can still break Manchester City's record points haul of 100 two seasons ago, but will now need to win all three of their remaining matches against Arsenal, Chelsea and Newcastle.

Klopp has insisted he is not looking to rewrite the record books, but there was no sign of the German easing up with a first title in 30 years long since won.

Robertson and Sadio Mane were recalled from the side that won 3-1 at Brighton on Wednesday with only injured captain Jordan Henderson and Trent Alexander-Arnold missing from Klopp's



Liverpool's manager Jürgen Klopp, left speaks to Burnley's goalkeeper Nick Pope after the end of the match AP

FIGURATIVELY

23 Liverpool had 23 shots in this match, their most in a PL game they failed to win since December 2017 (23 vs Everton)

4 Jay Rodriguez has been directly involved in a goal in each of his last four PL games (three goals & one assist), one more goal involvement than he managed in his previous 19 matches

14 Andrew Robertson is the 14th Liverpool player to score a league goal at Anfield this season, only in 1992-93 (15, excluding own-goals) have they had more different players score at home in a Premier League campaign

5 Norwich City have become the first team to be relegated from the Premier League on five separate occasions

4 Michail Antonio is the first West Ham player to score four goals in a league match since David Cross against Spurs in September 1981

strongest XI.

Salah's double in midweek kept him in the running for a third Golden Boot in as many seasons at Liverpool and only Nick Pope in the Burnley goal prevented the Egyptian closing in on Jamie Vardy at the top of the scoring charts.

Pope turned a fiercely struck Salah volley over before spreading himself well to deny Liverpool's top scorer in another one-on-one.

The opening goal came from a much more unlikely source as Fabinho picked out Robertson's run and the Scotland captain looped a header into the far corner for his first goal since November.

Pope and Liverpool's Alisson Becker are battling for the Golden Glove and the

Antonio's 4 relegates Norwich

AP ■ NORWICH

Michail Antonio scored all the goals as West Ham beat Norwich 4-0 to relegate the Canaries from the Premier League on Saturday.

Antonio has been a standout since the league restarted amid the coronavirus pandemic. Since July 1 he's scored six out of his eight league goals this season and assisted another.

Norwich is 13 points from safety with a maximum nine points possible. "I feel really sorry, especially for our supporters and everyone connected with this amazing club, that we were not able to work another miracle," Norwich manager Daniel Farke said.

"I'm in the responsible role so I am disappointed I was not able to work another miracle."

Farke said his team was "more or less the same" as the squad which won promotion from the second-tier Championship last season, so relegation was "not the unexpected outcome."

Antonio opened the scoring with a tap-in at the far post after Issa Diop flicked on Jarrod Bowen's corner in the 11th minute.

He made it 2-0 at another set-piece when he headed in off Mark Noble's free kick in first-half stoppage time.

A simple pass over the top from Noble found Antonio in plenty of space on the counterattack for the third. Tim Krul saved his first shot but



the rebound was at the ideal height for Antonio to head in.

Noble had a hand in the fourth goal as well, finding Ryan Fredericks in space on the right. Fredericks sent in a low cross through Norwich's static defense for Antonio to apply the finish.

Norwich started the season brightly with a rash of goals from Finnish forward Teemu Pukki and a stunning upset victory at home over Manchester City.

But the good form soon faded and the club had bad fortune with injuries.

Since English football restarted last month in empty stadiums, Norwich has lost every match it's played — six in the league and one in the FA Cup.

England international showed why he is in the lead with 14 clean sheets as he kept his side in the game once more before half-time to turn Mane's powerful shot over the bar.

Chances continued to come and go for the hosts after the break. Remarkably, despite Liverpool's home form, their number nine is still yet to score at Anfield in the league this season as Roberto Firmino hit the post to extend his wait for a home goal.

Liverpool's profligacy was punished 21 minutes from time when Rodriguez's bril-

liant finish from James Tarkowski's knock-down beat Alisson from the edge of the area.

Burnley then had the best chance to win the game in the final stages as Alisson flapped at another set-piece and the ball fell for substitute Johann Berg Gudmundsson, who hit the crossbar.

A prized point moves Dyche's men up to ninth, with eighth possibly good enough for a place in the Europa League should Manchester City's two-season ban from European competitions be upheld.

Real can almost touch title

AFP ■ MADRID

Real Madrid could win La Liga on Monday after a routine 2-0 win over Alaves on Friday put them within touching distance of the title.

With suspended skipper Sergio Ramos sitting in the stands, Karim Benzema took over the armband and then penalty duties, firing in from the spot before teeing up Marco Asensio to add a second at the Alfredo di Stefano Stadium.

After restoring their four-point advantage at the top of the table, the pressure is back on Barcelona. If Barca fail to win away at Real Valladolid on Saturday, Madrid will clinch the title with two games to spare by beating Granada on Monday at Los Carmenes.

Yet even if Madrid have to wait, it seems inevitable they will hoist the trophy given they also boast the superior head-to-head record against Barcelona with three games left. Madrid can afford to draw two of those, even



if Barcelona manage three victories out of three.

"We still don't know what is going to happen," said Real coach Zinedine Zidane. "La Liga is very hard and we have three finals still to go." "We have to stay focused," added Raphael Varane.

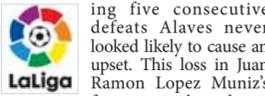
After sacking their coach Asier Garitano last week follow-

Zidane will be relieved all the same, particularly as he had to do without a string of key players. Ramos and Dani Carvajal were both banned while Marcelo was injured, taking out three of Madrid's regular back four. Eden Hazard was unable to start but came on in the second half to ease concerns about niggling problems with his ankle. A makeshift defence, including Lucas Vazquez at right-back, chalked up another clean sheet, Madrid's fifth in a row for the first time in 12 years. It is also their sixth in eight games since the restart.

MARCELO OUT OF SEASON

Real Madrid's defender Marcelo is expected to miss the rest of the La Liga season after the club confirmed he has an adductor injury.

Tests showed Marcelo has a problem in his left adductor muscle and while Madrid have not given a recovery time, the Brazilian looks set to play no further part in the run-in.



Ibra reveals possible Milan departure

AFP ■ SARAJEVO

Zlatan Ibrahimovic has announced that his days in Milan are likely over since the club is not performing at the level he would like, Bosnian media has reported.

The 38-year-old striker, who returned to Milan from LA Galaxy in January and scored six goals since, said that neither he nor Milan belong in the Europa League.

"They told me that retiring in America was too easy, so I came back to Milan. I am here purely for passion, because I'm basically playing for free...Then the Covid-19 situation stopped everything and I thought, maybe there's something trying to tell me that I should retire."

"We'll see how I feel in two months. We'll also see what's happening with the club. If this is the situation, to be honest, it's unlikely you'll see me at Milan next season," he added.

Ibrahimovic further said he is not sure if there will be another club after Milan but added that he still has too much passion for football.

I can bring silverware to Spurs: Mourinho

AGENCIES ■ LONDON

Spurs vs Arsenal
Live from 9:00pm IST
STAR SPORTS SELECT

Tottenham Hotspur manager Jose Mourinho is confident that he can deliver trophies at the Premier League club if he is given time like Jurgen Klopp at champions Liverpool.

Mourinho, who took over from the sacked Mauricio Pochettino in November, is used to battling for silverware at his previous clubs but his ninth-placed Tottenham are struggling to qualify for Europe this season.

But the Portuguese pointed to Klopp, who joined Liverpool in 2015 and guided them to the Champions League, UEFA Super Cup and Club World Cup last year before ending their 30-year wait for an English league crown this season.

"How long it took for Jurgen and Liverpool? Four years, four seasons. Buying one of the best goalkeepers in the world, buying one of the best centre backs in the world and so on," Mourinho told reporters.

"I'm focused on my three-

year contract. I believe that in my three-year contract we can win trophies. If we don't, but the club does it in the new era if I stay here only for three years, I'll be happy with that.

"I work for the club. I'm not thinking about myself. I keep saying my ambition is the same, my DNA is the same, but probably I'm in the stage where I look less to myself and my records and I look more to the club."

Mourinho said that Spurs, who have not won a trophy since the 2008, when they won the League Cup under then-manager Juande Ramos at the expense of Chelsea, do not need to invest heavily on players in the close season.

"I'm optimistic because I start working from day one... I believe we're going to make some changes in our squad, and for that we don't need a huge investment like the club made in the past summer," Mourinho added.

Tottenham host Arsenal in the league on Sunday.



East Bengal will 'surely and soon' join ISL

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

East Bengal will "surely and soon" follow traditional rivals Mohun Bagan into the Indian Super League, a top official of the legacy club asserted on Saturday as it navigates its way through a few hurdles, primarily financial.

Hours after the merged ATK Mohun Bagan's first board meeting, passionate fans of the century-old club got excited following Bengaluru FC owner Parth Jindal's invite to East Bengal to join the ISL at the earliest.

"We are going to be there in the ISL for sure, I can say you this much," one of East Bengal's most influential executive committee members, Dababrat Sarkar, said.

Jindal had earlier tweeted, "Come on @eastbengalfc come in to the @IndSuperLeague now already — your the only thing missing from the league now."

The club has been grappling with financial woes following the premature pullout of its former investor Qess Corp, who were its title sponsors for two seasons.

The club is currently in talks with a few investors and, after a final settlement with Qess, is hopeful that it will find takers and make its way into the ISL.

Ranjit Bajaj, former owner of Minerva Punjab FC, reportedly expressed his willingness to buy 70 percent of Qess East Bengal FC shares and bag the club's sporting rights.

Since last edition I-League winners Mohun Bagan's merger with reigning ISL champions ATK, all eyes have been on East Bengal to follow suit.

Lazio title bid hit again

AFP ■ ROME

Lazio's title dream suffered yet another setback on Saturday as Francesco Caputo's injury-time header grabbed Sassuolo a 2-1 victory at the Stadio Olimpico to hand Juventus the chance to move 10 points clear at the Serie A summit.

The midweek loss at lowly Lecce appeared to signal the end of Lazio's title challenge, but Juve's implosion en route to a 4-2 defeat by AC Milan kept the gap at only seven points.

But a third straight loss for Lazio means that when Juve host in-form Atalanta later on Saturday, Juve could either stretch their lead or the Bergamo outfit



could climb into second.

Lazio were only one point behind Juventus when the Italian top flight resumed following the coronavirus lockdown, but they have been beaten four times in six matches since.



Hosts Lazio survived an early scare when Sassuolo striker Giacomo Raspadori was denied an early goal for offside.

But Simone Inzaghi's men grabbed the lead against the run of play 12 minutes before half-time as

Alberto's blocked shot bounced back off his shin and looped into the top corner.

But Sassuolo continued to be the better side and deservedly levelled seven minutes into the second period as Mehdi Bourabia won the ball high up the pitch and fed Caputo, who squared for the 20-year-old Raspadori to cap his first Serie A start with a simple tap-in.

Lazio rarely looked like grabbing an all-important victory and was vulnerable at the back, though, and Caputo pounced to nod home in the second minute of injury-time after the Lazio defence fell apart after failing to clear a corner.

Earlier, Gowda and Madhya Pradesh's Gurjar also became social media sensations for their running

said: "There was this young girl who under very difficult circumstances during this Covid-19 pandemic carried her father on a cycle from Gurgaon to Bihar. It was a tragic thing but imagine some of my colleagues said she will bring Gold medal for India in cycling."

"See how lack of knowledge makes people think like this, without knowing what are the formats of cycling and what standards you have to reach to win Gold medal in Olympics, just pouring of information will not do."

Earlier, Gowda and Madhya Pradesh's Gurjar also became social media sensations for their running

Hamilton storms to Styrian pole

AFP ■ SPIELBERG

Defending six-time world champion Lewis Hamilton delivered one of his greatest qualifying performances in treacherous rain-swept conditions on Saturday when he stormed to pole position for the Styrian Grand Prix.

The Mercedes driver, who struggled in practice on Friday, bounced back to his best with a fastest lap in one minute and 19.273 seconds, outpacing nearest rival Max Verstappen of Red Bull by a stunning 1.2 seconds.

His performance confirmed his enduring class on a day when heavy rainstorms had delayed the session by 45 minutes and forced the cancellation of third practice.

It was his third pole success at the Red Bull Ring circuit, the 89th



Styrian GP (Main Race)
Live from 6:30pm IST
STAR SPORTS NETWORK

of his career and confirmed his reputation as a great driver in the wettest conditions.

"What a tricky day," said Hamilton.

"It was so difficult for all of us with this weather and some of the time you can't see where you are

going, but I loved it — though I did have a big aquaplane and had my heart in my mouth."

Ferrari-bound Carlos Sainz was third for McLaren ahead of Valtteri Bottas, winner of last Sunday's season-opening Austrian Grand Prix at the same circuit, in the second Mercedes, Esteban Ocon of Renault and Lando Norris in the second McLaren.

Norris, however, will drop three places on the grid after taking a penalty on Friday for ignoring yellow flags in opening practice.

That will elevate Alex Albon, who was seventh in the second Red Bull, Pierre Gasly of Alpha Tauri and Daniel Ricciardo, ninth in the second Renault, but leave Sebastian Vettel 10th in the leading Ferrari on another difficult day for the Italian team.

His team-mate Charles Leclerc qualified 11th.

There is hardly any understanding of sport among people in India: Rijiju

NEW DELHI: Sports Minister Kiren Rijiju on Saturday rued that people in India, including some of his colleagues in Parliament, have limited understanding of sports and emphasised on the need to create a sports culture in the country.

Rijiju was amazed that his colleagues felt that people like Jyoti Kumari, Kambala jockey Srinivas Gowda and Rameshwar Gurjar — who became social media sensation — were Olympic prospects.

"Knowledge in Indian society about sports is very minimum. I don't want to degrade my own colleagues but even in Parliament there is no knowledge," Rijiju said during the

online launch of High Performance leadership programme organised by ELMS Sports Foundation and Abhinav Bindra Foundation.

"Everybody knows about cricket, the English people have put that in our mind. They play the game and we had to beat them. But other than that, there is no knowledge, all just want Gold medal."

In May, the 15-year-old Kumari hit national headlines after she cycled down 1200 km from Gurugram to her native place in Bihar in eight days with her father. She was offered a trial by the Cycling Federation of India, which she turned down.

Talking about Kumari, Rijiju

exploits in the slushy and dusty fields and were eventually called for trials. Gowda was believed to have completed 100m sprints in about 11 seconds and was dubbed by some in social media as the next Usain Bolt, the Jamaican multiple Olympic Gold medalist sprinter.

"There was also a case in Karnataka, a bullock cart running competitions where there was somebody called Srinivas. For a better traction so that people don't feel we are not aware of the situation, our SAI people had invited him," Rijiju said.

"...I was told he was not fit for a world class sprinter but that is not important. People started saying

that we have got a man who is faster than Olympic champion Usain Bolt. We have to identify talent but look at the lack of knowledge, people don't know"

He also stressed on the lack of sports culture in the country, saying there is a need to change the entire sporting atmosphere to ensure that India win more Gold medals at the Olympics.

"What was bothering me all these years is why we are not able to create a sport culture in India. Abhinav Bindra got the Gold at Beijing. In Moscow, our Indian men's hockey team won a Gold medal. It generates celebration but

there is no collective effort to have more such momentous occasions," he said.

"India definitely has a sporting tradition but unfortunately we don't have a sports culture. It has been so many years since Bindra got the Gold. Fortunately since 1996 Olympics we have not drawn a blank in medal tally but it is not a good sight for a country of India's size."

"We have to change the entire atmosphere in the country to ensure that such moments come more often. We can't afford to have just one or two icons, to be celebrating one or two medals." PTI

'I'm enjoying working on OTT platforms'



Talktime

JIMMY SHEIRGILL

The actor who has never failed to impress the audience with his stupendous performances in films like Mohabbatein and Tanu Weds Manu to name a few, speaks with Musba Hashmi about his latest project Your Honor, among other things

■ What made you say yes to Your Honor?

It has a great script. Also, I ended up watching the original Israeli series *Kvodo*. The director, producer, the Applause Entertainment's team and of course the amazing cast convinced me to take up the project. And last but not the least, the character that I am portraying is full of dimensions and it left no reason for me to turn it down.

■ Being a father in real life, how did it help to explore the depth of the character?

My character is very well etched out already. But yes, because I have a son almost the same age as my on-screen son, it somewhere did give me that extra edge in emoting out the scenes. At times, I was

able to put myself into a particular situation to understand how I would react to it, to bring in that reality into the scenes. Hence, it did give me a little edge as an actor.

■ Is there a checklist that you follow before taking up projects?

Not at all. I rely completely on the script. The script and the story has to excite me and the character of course. As for my OTT outing, I got to play a brilliant character in both *Rangbaaz* and *Your Honor*.

■ Was there a project that you were initially apprehensive about, but it turned out well?

I don't think that you are apprehensive about anything that you have gone ahead and signed. Because you are sure about it, have done your homework, heard the narration, read the script and met the team. So you know what exactly you are getting into. It can be the other way round. When you like a story and script, you start shooting for it and you find out that it was not the way you thought it would be and that the team are compromising on many elements.

But I have a memory of *Yahaan*, a film that I did with Shoojit Sircar.

Because I have a son almost the same age as my on-screen son, it somewhere did give me that extra edge in emoting out the scenes. At times, I was able to put myself into a particular situation to understand how I would react to it, to bring in that reality into the scenes

It was his directorial debut. The shooting started in Manali and it was my first day on the sets. The shot was done and we saw it on the monitor, which I usually don't do except for the first day of the shoot just to make sure my looks are okay and stuff. After we saw the shot, everyone was blown off and I was shocked too. People said that Shoojit was making a Hollywood film, because I had my introduction in the film from behind the back, which was not very common back then. And till now people tell me it was way ahead of the time in the way it was shot and executed. It is one of my favourites.

■ What is the best thing about working on OTT platforms?

As an actor, I have thoroughly enjoyed it. If I get good stories, I would love to carry on working on the platforms. An actor or for that matter a director gets more time, more layers and a lot more to emote on OTT platforms. Until and unless I have some bad experience of working on this medium, the strike rate is 100 per cent. (laughs)

■ A show from the good old days that you would like to see a remake of on OTT platforms.

Sab ke to ban gaye. However, there is a British series — *Hustle*. It is fantastic and can be made into a show.

■ A change that you would like to see in the industry for actors and other working professionals.

I have seen a lot of change already. When I came in the industry in 1993 or so and when I got *Maachis*, at that time four-five producers were there with the same number of TV channels. Everything else was C-grade. The great stuff was in limited number and those were the only options that you had. And everybody couldn't be casted with these five-six directors and big banners. So from there, there has been an extensive growth in everything. There are a lot more TV channels with humongous shows, web series are being made, so many films are being made, there's so much happening now. It kept happening, from single screen theatres to multiplexes, the growth is unstoppable. You have to adapt to changes gradually. I think we should go a little slow, everything is breakneck. Also there is work for everyone, even if they don't they will get it. Just run a bit slow, stop for two seconds, catch a breath and then start again.

Many of us laughed and forwarded the diamond studded mask image on WhatsApp which said that was Neeta Ambani's.

However, with COVID-19 raging and peaking, many designers have come out with their exclusive lines and today designer masks have become one of the hottest selling items.

From the swish ultra modern Fastrack masks made out of polyester, polypropylene and cotton, to Blackberry's 99 per cent bacteria filtration with adjustable nose wire, from organic cotton masks to breathing mouth gear, protectors — sundry designers have caught on to the demand arising out of fear of the disease as well as the Government guidelines.

Such has been the craze that a Pune-based businessman, Shankar Kurhade, is proudly flaunting a mask made of Gold. Ever since the netizens came across his image on social media, they were quick to praise the viral photo. Adding to this, is a jewellery shop owner in Surat who came up with an idea of selling diamond-studded masks ranging between ₹1.5 lakh to ₹4 lakh. All this because people want something extraordinary at all times.

Not to mention that all the sought-after brands are putting their best foot forward by coming up with their exclusive lines of masks. While some say they offer comfortable breathable masks, the other's focus on the style quotient.

Kanwalpreet Walia, Head Marketing Fragrance and Accessories Division — Titan Company Limited tells you that Fastrack has rolled out its Super Shield Masks, which is currently in the youths list of favourites.

"We have attained the right blend of protection, breathability and comfort — which is unique. It enables the user to wear it for long hours at ease," she says and adds that the brand will keep updating the assortment.

Like the sanitiser, corn flour and starch, now masks are quickly running out of shelves. But all thanks to the increased supply, they are back to the shelves as quickly, if not more.

"The response has been extremely encouraging for the masks in the last one month. We would attribute this to the responsibility that citizens are showing towards self and others. We would be happy to sell and participate more as that would be an indication that the entire community is understanding the importance of the usage of the product," Walia says.

When a thing is in trend, it's luxury variants are not far behind. So is with masks. And when one talks about luxury and style, there is no way to evict Taneira. The brand has introduced an in-house collection of handcrafted protection masks made from 100 per



MASK YOUR STYLE

Designer masks are trending and becoming the new normal. MUSBA HASHMI speaks with industry experts to tell you how the demand for them has increased manifold

cent pure and natural fabrics.

"Ranging from hand-woven and extra weft designs to embroidered ones, the masks boast of weaves and crafts from across the country like Ajrakh, Dabu, Ikat, Sangneri and hand block prints. Available in both, pleated and snug-fit variety, these masks are designed to go effortlessly

with western work-wear as well as casual ethnic wear. Designed with a universal fit, the masks are intended for men, women and kids," Raghuvir Seth, Head of Marketing, Taneira, Titan Company Limited, explains.

The masks are triple-layered and offer wider face coverage to ensure maximum protection. They are made from pure and natural cotton &

can be comfortably worn using elastic ear loops/easy-to-tie fabric string to keep you at ease for longer hours. The masks entail fine stitching quality to ensure surface softness to avoid any kind of skin irritation.

"Some of the variants are reversible and can be used the other way after wash. These non-surgical fabric masks are meant for general protection and are not intended for medical use," Seth tells you.

The best sellers, he says, are definitely the hand block printed ones.

"However, men prefer solid masks in darker shades. Women are quick to pick up the lighter shades with smaller prints. Delicately embroidered masks are also something that customers have shared their liking for. We are observing that customers are not just buying for self-use but are also picking it up for family & friends. It is also being considered a thoughtful accessory to gift — safe and fashionable," he adds. Since, this time used to be the wed-

ding season, of course before the pandemic, but there are people out there who are getting married in small private affairs. And to not let them feel left out, Taneira is offering customised bridal masks as well and why not because bridal masks are now a thing. "There is demand for customised masks and the brand is extending this facility to all the brides for a mask that perfectly complement their bridal and wedding wear," Seth tells you. The cotton face masks are priced at ₹100, while the exclusive ones crafted in silk are at ₹300.

Not only the big players, but also a lot of homegrown brands are here offering as much variety as possible.

"We are manufacturing stylish and trendy 100 per cent cotton masks with three layers. Apart from this, we also manufactured a mask made from the scrap material, in order to reuse the fabric which is generally discarded by the designers/manufactures. The masks are available in different colours and prints like floral print, zebra print, and mosaic print which will complement women's attire," Nidhi Yadav, Co-founder-CEO, AKS Clothings, tells you.

Satpal Yadav, Founder, AKS Clothings says that people are now seeing masks as a fashion statement, more so because it has become an integral part of their daily lives.

"The demand of mask is increasing day by day. We are selling around 1000 units per day. One of the reasons is that now people are carrying it as a style statement and they are hunting for stylish and designer masks," he says.

There are superheroes all dressed up in fancy costumes with capes like the ones we have seen in Hollywood or even in some of the Bollywood films. Then there are the other superheroes who are not dressed to the nines but are no less in super powers than any of our favourite hero.

A case in point is a 23-year-old IT specialist, a developer and designer, Sarthak Verma. The growing gap in plasma donors and recipients affected Verma, so much so that he kept aside all his work to come up with an app that can help fill the void.

From the burqa-clad woman sanitising temples to a Class XII boy dealing with Corona patients' bodies to buy medicines for his mother, there are so many unsung warriors rising from every nook and corner of the country. But what needs Verma a special mention is his will to be able to do something all by himself, without looking up to any financial support.

"Pertaining to the current

Connecting lives

There are hundreds of COVID-19 warriors who are doing their bit, some sanitising their city and others saving lives. MUSBA HASHMI speaks with one such warrior — SARTHAK VERMA, the founder of Plasma Connect, about what makes the app so pertinent in the present situation

crisis, I observed that people were and still are having problems connecting to plasma donors for COVID-19 patients. My social media accounts were full of pleas for plasma donors. This got me thinking. That is how I came up with Plasma Connect, an app to connect the donors and recipients in seconds," Verma tells you.

It took Verma not more than 15 days to come with the app, all thanks to his proficiency in the IT sector. "I realised the urgency, so I kept aside all my ongoing work and



worked day in and out for around 15 days to build the first version of the app, since then I am working on every

feedback that I get and constantly trying to upgrade the app," Verma says.

The app that was launched on June 30, 2020 on Play Store has seen 52 registered members till date, both donors and recipients. Some of the features of the app are that it is easy to use, not only the donors but anyone can register in the app, donors can view nearby recipients and vice versa, the donors and recipients are sorted by their blood groups in order to process requests faster and make it easier for people.

"To add additional security the mobile numbers of donors is only shown to the recipients after they have submitted a request form providing the necessary details of the patient and the hospital he is admitted in," Verma explains. Apart from that people can also keep a count of total donors and requests made through the platform in real time.

However, there is much more on Verma's cards. "Like I said, I am constantly working to improve the application in every possible manner. There are a few feature additions in my mind. One, we can provide e-certificates to the donors so that they can feel proud and also share them on their social media handles which, in turn, will motivate more potential donors to step up.

Two, we can reimburse the travel cuts of donors through the help of project supporters. Three, this app can also be connected with the new Plasma Bank in Delhi so that

the whole process becomes more feasible. This will also allow us to manage, secure and visualise this sensitive data easily. Four, we can educate people about the details and know hows of Plasma Therapy through the app directly," he explains.

For many Corona survivors, registering on the app is the least they can do to help people in the time of crisis. Such has been the case with a Mumbai-based, healthcare worker, Pranay.

"Being associated with a hospital I have to visit the facility for work. You are not safe even after taking utmost precautions while visiting the hotspot and this might be the reason I contracted the virus. However, the only way to fight it is to keep your immunity primed at all times and be mentally strong. Once you have done both then there's nothing to worry about. That has been the case with me. By registering myself on the app as a donor, this is the least I can do to help save people's lives," he says.

'My childhood instilled love for poetry & music'



Indo-American singer-songwriter SUBHI recently released her song Naqaab. SHALINI SAKSENA chats her up on her plans and the person behind her musical journey

◆ From Delhi to Chicago, how would you like to describe your journey?

It's been an amazing journey. It has helped me grow as an individual and an artist. Living in Delhi, New York, Mumbai and then Chicago — each city has its own characteristic and I have gathered so many stories from my stay in all of them. These stories are reflected in my songs and music.

◆ Which language do you think is the most preferable either to converse or even in music?

I love speaking in Hindi because it makes me feel closer to people. Hindi for me has a certain nostalgia and warmth to it. In terms of music, I enjoy songs in both Hindi and English so I can't pick one over the other.

◆ What is the inspiration behind your achievements in this musical journey?

When I was eight years old, encouraged by my grandmother, I started learning Hindustani Classical music. Every evening, my grandfather would recite some of his favourite poems (Hindi and Urdu) and explain their meaning. My childhood instilled a love for poetry and music in me. Since then music has always been a part of my life. I am a storyteller and am inspired to tell people my stories and what I've learnt from life.

◆ You've sung solo songs, what about collaborations?

Collaboration is definitely something I plan on doing this year. I have done a lot of solo projects and am looking forward to learning and growing as an artist through collaborations with other indie artists and musicians.

◆ From Cage to now Naqaab. What made you choose such names and even write on it?

Every song I write has a story to tell and lyrics are a very important part of my story. That is why every song is very personal to me as I try to describe my experiences through it. My writing is inspired by Gulzar who always uses meaningful words in his poetry. I think subconsciously I tend to use meaningful words as well. Like my latest release, *Naqaab*, is a song about unfulfilled desires. The song talks about unmasking your desires and letting the world see the real you.

◆ Any future projects you would like to talk about?

I have a lot of exciting things coming up this year and next. I am currently working on my debut English EP with producers in LA and India. The EP will be out later this year.

the pioneer agenda

(To not have any hope is where things start to get really bleak. Things are possible. The impossible can be possible
— Sarah Paulson)

FROM THE INSIDE

Hope in the times of pandemic
Leaders have emerged because of their genuine interest in helping people out, their intellect, and by being proactive

2



4

Unlock the mind to heal
If we negotiate the challenges coming our way with fortitude and intelligence, we may be able to contain the damage



Automation will become the key driver of “Vocal for Local” narrative for the manufacturing industry in India, writes PRADEEP DAVID, as he explains how Collaborative Robots will be significant in proliferating businesses in the post Covid-19 era

A CASE FOR COBOTS

The world has come to a standstill and the global economy has taken the worst hit in history. Right from the negative pricing of crude oils to the worldwide lockdown, it has brought the global economy to its knees, looking for the road to recovery. With the global cases mounting up to 8 million, the impact of the grave pandemic can be witnessed across geographies. This has resulted in a major shift of leading lives and the whole world is coming to terms with the new normal. As the famous saying goes, ‘Every crisis brings an opportunity’ and this pandemic has provided an opportunity for businesses to be creative and adapt an innovative approach to sustaining the tide. Most of the countries — whether developed or developing — are actively pursuing opportunities to become completely self-reliant to battle the situation and also prepare for any future disruptions.

THE INDIAN SCENARIO

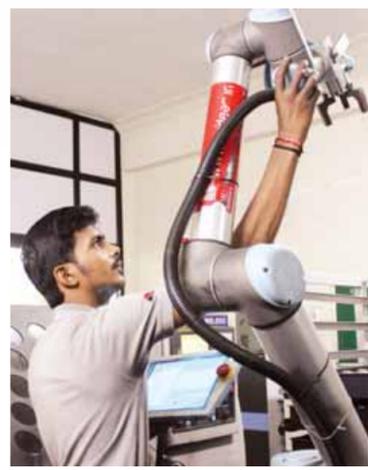
The labour-intensive manufacturing sector has been one of the hardest-hit due to the coronavirus. According to a business publication, the seasonally adjusted IHS Markit India Manufacturing Purchasing Managers Index (PMI), a reflection of the health of the manufacturing economy, fell to 27.4 in April, from 51.8 in March this year.

Like the rest of the world, India, too, is experiencing a major outbreak of the Covid-19 virus and has slowly reached the second phase of the pandemic. According to the World Bank, India was the world’s sixth-largest manufacturer at the end of 2018. However, having a labour-intensive manufacturing sector has resulted in the sharpest deterioration in business conditions in the last 15 years, with the seasonally adjusted IHS Markit India Manufacturing Purchasing Managers Index (PMI) — a reflection of the health of the manufacturing economy — falling from 51.8 in March 2020 to just 27.4 in April.

As the current unlocking phase across the nation takes place, social distancing, stringent hygiene measures, and remote working have all become a part of the new normal. The manufacturing sector, however, is one of the few places where online meetings can only do so much. After all, the majority of the nature of the work is on-site, physical, and time-sensitive, so work-from-home is not always an option.

OPPORTUNITY FOR INDIA

The ground reality is that Covid-19 is not expected to abate anytime soon, so our daily lives must instead incorporate the right measures to prevent the risk of contagion. According to Forrester analytics, we are stepping in the second stage of the pandemic, which steers us to ‘Adapt and Overcome’ the situation. To stay afloat, the industry needs to adjust to the new normal and strategise how to



accelerate recovery from the losses incurred so far, optimising efficiency and encouraging self-dependency.

THE NEW APPROACH: COLLABORATIVE ROBOTS, OR “COBOTS”

While the government’s Aatma Nirbhar Bharat Abhiyaan initiative is a significant step towards restart the operations and encouraging various sectors to stabilise themselves, it is vital that manufacturers recognise the need to join hands with technology and embrace automation. In fact, a study by EY found that 41% of employers across the world are fast-tracking automation plans in an endeavour to make up for lost productivity and also prepare for the post-crisis world. Normalising the allegiance of employees and technology will pave a path that will lead the sector to growth, stabilising Indian business and enabling self-sufficiency.

Rewiring an industry and making it tech-friendly comes with its own challenges. Some of the obstacles faced by the manufacturing industry include an abundance of unskilled labour, a lack of space on the shop floor, and the lack of technical expertise to operate complex new technology. Collaborative robots, or “cobots,” are a niche robot technology that present the perfect solution by addressing all these challenges, offering an easy automation solution for Indian manufacturers.

EMPOWERING MANUFACTURING THROUGH HUMAN ROBOT COLLABORATION

While industrial robots have been around for years, collaborative robots are a much newer technology. Cobots are an advanced robotic arm that — unlike their industrial robot predecessors — were created to share the same workspace as humans, without the need for any cumbersome caging or fencing

“COBOTS ALLOW MANUFACTURERS OF ALL SIZES TO AUTOMATE AREAS PREVIOUSLY CONSIDERED TOO SMALL OR TOO EXPENSIVE TO AUTOMATE, LOWERING THE BARRIERS TO AUTOMATION THROUGH USPS THAT TRADITIONAL ROBOTS AND AUTOMATION SOLUTIONS SIMPLY CANNOT PROVIDE”

(subject to application risk assessment). This is thanks to their advanced safety features, backed up by 65 patents, including a protective stop that is enabled when an obstacle blocks a cobot’s path of motion, ensuring that a person that may come in contact with a cobot is not harmed. By simply changing the end-of-arm-tooling on a cobot, it can be used for a variety of tasks, ranging from the tending of CNC and other machines, dispensing, quality inspection, pick and place, screwdriving, and much more. This makes them versatile to use in a multitude of applications across virtually every industry.

Cobots can handle tasks that require high repeatability, precision, and quality, as well as jobs that pose ergonomic risks. Humans are then free to cater to tasks that require mental efforts and human ingenuity, often leading to the upskilling of labor. In a crucial time like this, it has become a priority for industry leaders to not just utilise their workforce wisely to handle tasks that need human intervention, while cobot can handle work that could cause physical and mental stress to people.

Human Robot Collaboration is one of the key drivers of Industry 4.0 and, in fact, a study on a BMW assembly plant, conducted and published in MIT Technology Review found that there is a whopping 85% reduction in the idle time of workers when they collaborate with robots. Cobots, thus, can empower domestic production and facilitating the Make in India mission. In the Covid-19 era, when manufacturers are facing issues of labor uncertainty and recognising the need to automate but unsure how to start, cobots are one of the quickest solutions on the market, addressing many common barriers to automation faced by Indian manufacturers.

HOW COBOTS BOOST MANUFACTURING

Social Distancing: By allowing humans and cobots to work side-by-side, cobots reduce the need for contact between human workers, ensuring that they maintain safe social distancing standards. This is especially vital in crowded assembly lines and worker-dense factory floors, which will have to take measures to ensure that distance is maintained between individuals but no efficiency is lost. In essence, this enables businesses to optimise productivity while also helping flatten the curve of Covid-19 contagion.

Partial Automation: Complex automation with heavy machinery is expensive, space-consuming, and difficult for most manufacturers to carry out. Cobots, however, enable the automation of specific applications instead of an entire plant, thereby reducing capital expenditure significantly. This partial automation means that manufacturers can start small and identify applications that involve high precision, monotony, or potential ergonomic risk

for humans, and use cobots to handle these instead. For example, at Baxter Lab, one can see that the cobots are placing bottles in boxes, while the man is manually holding the boxes open for the cobot to do so. Both are thus, working together and the process is only partially automated to optimise efficiency.

Quick Deployment and Flexible Redeployment: Their ease of use and setup means that cobots are one of the fastest automation solutions currently in the market. While traditional automation solutions can take months to deploy, a cobot can be set up for a simple application within a single day, even by first-time robot users. Plus, a cobot can be programmed time and again for different tasks, functioning like a lightweight “tool” with many uses. In this uncertain environment, many manufacturers need to repurpose their assembly lines to focus on different products based on the urgency of requirements and changing consumer demands. Cobots are flexible and easy to re-assembly as needed, enabling high mix/low volume production.

DEMOCRATISED AUTOMATION

As you can see from the USPs highlighted above, collaborative robots are easy and quick to set up, have a low footprint, and enable flexible redeployment. This, combined with the Human Robot Collaboration facilitated by cobot, make it possible for manufacturers of all sizes to deploy this Industry 4.0 technology with ease. Cobots lower the barriers for automation faced by Indian manufacturers, allowing them to use robotic technology without having to make drastic changes to their existing shop floors. As SMEs are the building blocks of the Indian economy, it is vital that they are able to automate to meet global standards of quality to achieve their Make in India dreams.

To sum it up, the Covid-19 virus has caught the world unprepared, taking businesses by storm and showing no sign of abating anytime soon. If anything, the pandemic has shown us all the unpredictability of life and the need to invest in smart decisions to prepare for the possibility of any future disruptions.

With the spotlight on India as the new destination for global manufacturing, industries need to prepare for a prolonged recovery period where it has become of paramount importance to learn how to manage human capital and production capabilities. Cobots allow manufacturers of all sizes to automate areas previously considered too small or too expensive to automate, lowering the barriers to automation through USPs that traditional robots and automation solutions simply cannot provide. They enable manufacturers to increase agility to cater to rapidly changing demands.

The writer General Manager, South Asia, Universal Robots



I OFTEN THINK THAT THE NIGHT IS MORE ALIVE AND MORE RICHLY COLORED THAN THE DAY
— VINCENT VAN GOGH

HOPE IN THE TIMES OF PANDEMIC

We have role models who have led the fight against the pandemic in India. These leaders have emerged because of their genuine interest in helping people out, their intellect, and by being proactive.

STILETTOS



MINIYA CHATTERJI

You step out in Mumbai and humanity is at your feet, almost all revealed. There is much squalour with some glitz. There is chaos and also the calm of the sea. You either move or get pushed down by the crowds. People and constructed spaces in this city flow like opium, filling up your senses. I have found maximum city Mumbai to be as overwhelming as life can get. It is these crowds and deeply socialised nature of the city that eventually played a strong role in augmenting the reproductive ratio of Covid-19 here leading to winning the race in India that no one wants to win — of having the most number of active Covid-19 cases until recently.

Mumbai could have been more prepared. In a note authored by Professor Dhaval Monani and myself, that we submitted to the Prime Minister's Office on April 2, 2020, we had proposed the setting up of temporary hospitals within vacant community halls, marriage halls, office spaces. But it was not until end of April that BMC decided to take over vacant spaces to create temporary hospitals for Covid-19 patients and for quarantining those at risk. BMC's search also included the wrong spaces — *maid-aans*, warehouses — which are not only expensive to convert in to Covid-19 recovery facilities, but also dusty and therefore detrimental to the condition of the patients. For setting up facilities at scale, we needed to keep the per-bed cost as low as possible. Instead, most of the facilities used expensive steel beds and equipment that was not needed.

Never waste a good crisis — I was dismayed to see this as the motto of several government officials to make a quick buck in procurement, of politicians who would be more interested in press coverage rather than getting any work done, and people in the private sector who overnight became dealers of testing kits at huge margins. I also watched (furi-ously) how CSR was at times used as a garb for profiteering off the crisis. My team's efforts come free of cost. However, for-profit ventures for social good are also excellent as this builds in incentives to do good so that it is sustainable — but when doing so the model needs to be transparent. Mumbai, a city where dreams are realised as fast as they are crushed, was even during a pandemic using its elbows to get ahead in the crowd.

Large private sector companies have not stepped up. While elsewhere in cities like Pune, companies like Wipro set up temporary hospitals within their



MUMBAI COULD HAVE ADOPTED DIFFERENT POLICIES IN DIFFERENT DISTRICTS DEPENDING ON THE LOCAL CONDITIONS. THE EPIDEMIC COULD HAVE BEEN CONTAINED IN SOME AREAS WHERE IT WAS RAMPANT, AND CERTAIN UNAFFECTED DISTRICTS COULD HAVE BEEN OPENED UP

office buildings or the Serum Institute of India who is collaborating with universities to create a vaccine, where are the corporate giants of Mumbai? CSR is not enough, but even that has been inadequately spent to help Mumbai cope with the virus.

The city has woken up to randomised testing far too late. This week the BMC has removed the earlier order for the need of prescription to get a Covid-19 test and has introduced a new rule that does not require a prescription. People can now get a test done at any hospital. Right from the start of the spread of the pandemic, there should have been no need to make it so darned difficult to get tested! After the initial hic-

cup, Covid-19 tests were available in abundance. Numerous experts cried hoarse advising the government to make testing easier, but it was to no avail. Panic early, Mumbai.

Communications from the government has been confusing and damaging. At first, there was fear induced amongst people against Covid-19 which led to severe stigmatisation against patients. And then economic interests took over the concern for health, which suddenly made it alright for certain sectors to open up. Ironically, now as numbers of active cases of the Coronavirus soar, it has never been easier during this pandemic to be out and about in the city. There has been extreme short-sightedness on the part of

the government, in at first believing that social distancing would work in a country where 1 of 6 urban dwellers live in slum zones. In most cases — and more so in a health disaster — we can not copy-paste solutions that have worked for other countries on to the unique context in India. Economy and health needs to be balanced, but it should have been balanced very differently than done. Mumbai could have adopted different policies in different districts depending on the local conditions. The epidemic could have been contained in some areas where it was rampant, and certain unaffected districts could have been opened up.

There is hope. We have role models who have led the fight against the pan-

demic in India. These leaders have emerged because of their genuine interest in helping people out, their intellect, and by being proactive.

For example, I was introduced to Amin Patel when we were making our first Covid-19 quarantine centre in Mumbai in early May 2020. Those were the days when my team at my company Sustain Labs and at the Anant Centre for Sustainability a think-teach-do tank that I established two years ago, was manufacturing equipment and moving trucks across India amidst a complete nation wide lockdown. Amin is a three term MLA from the Mumbadevi constituency in Mumbai, but his concern was for all of Mumbai. He set up a 200 oxygen cylinder bank for everyone to use in Mumbai — this is refreshing as often the challenge for democracy is populism, and that too combined with a narrow vision of pleasing the constituency for votes.

When Covid struck, Amin's first reaction was to send rations to the Kamthipura area where overnight sex workers saw their incomes disappear due to social distancing rules in place. He once told me, "Even if one family anywhere in Mumbai needs ration I send a tempo with food." His sleep routine is highly unrecommended — he sleeps at 1 am; is awake from 3.30 am to 6 am answering distress calls that he would have received while asleep and taking action on them; then he goes back to sleep from 6 am until 8 am.

While setting up the Covid-19 recovery facility with the help of Amin, one of the partners in the project had a demand for 10% of project cost as management fee to which Amin's reaction is one that I will never forget. He was appalled at the demand and said, "10% of project cost can make 20 beds and save 20 lives every fortnight! We will refuse to pay that!" It is only too common for government officials and politicians to be in a hurry to get things done just to look good to the higher ups and the voters.

Why is it so difficult to help the government in India? This could well be the title of my next book as there is so much to reflect upon and write about this. In the meantime, all power to those government representatives on the frontline who are genuinely and effectively fighting for the rest of us.

The writer is CEO of Sustain Labs and Adjunct Professor at SciencesPo Paris. She is also a columnist and author of the 2019 bestseller Indian Instincts — essays on freedom and equality in India

Covid tales: The joy of homecoming

From keeping the various documents ready prior to the journey, to all the procedures and possible mishaps that could occur at the airport, travelling feels like a daunting mission nowadays. VANDANA SRIVASTAVA shares her first person account

Atense mood had surrounded our household, as our family braced up for a monumental change in their lives. My husband had just got his transfer order, which would entail us to move back to Delhi from Dubai in one of the repatriation flights, since we were diplomats. Undertaking such a massive transfer process along with the four hour journey in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic got me anxious for quite a few days. However I maintained my calm, and felt stronger by reassuring myself that this time would soon pass.

Finally, when all the boxes were packed and the rooms rendered empty, it was time for us to leave. As I started packing my final bags, I realised that it was time to say goodbye to Dubai, the place where I had spent 5 and a half golden years of my life. We were finally done with our final shopping in the region, and were getting braced up to travel during these trying times. Obviously, our main travel essentials were going to be Sanitisers, PPE, Masks, Face Shields, Disinfectant Sprays, and the like: as opposed to the usual earphones and a good book to read.

As advised by various acquaintances, we wrapped our entire check-in luggage in cellophane wraps. This would allow us to just open and discard them as soon as we reached our destination, allowing the main baggage to not be contaminated, and eliminating the need to disinfect the same. We reached the DXB airport at 10.00 hours (UAE time), and saw quite a meticulous arrangement of people waiting for their health checkup before moving on to the usual airport protocol. A vivid depiction of responsibility and unity was portrayed before our eyes as we saw every single person wear masks, gloves, maintain social distance, and follow all the new rules and regulations during the pandemic throughout the airport.

We passed our Covid health screening at the airport, and moved on to the usual airport procedure. We got our boarding passes, gave our check-in baggage, took care of some over-sized baggage since we were moving on a transfer basis, and moved on through the X-Ray area to the gates, where we would wait until boarding started. Air India also gave us Face Shields, Sanitisers, and extra Face Masks for use during the journey. They were also giving out PPE kits to everyone sitting in the middle seat. However, upon seeing two kids



traveling with me, they decided to give PPE kits to all of us. Even the security at the airport allowed all kinds of sanitisers and sprays to be taken on flights during this pandemic, which was strictly forbidden in the past.

Finally, our flight's announcement was called out and it was time for us to suit up in our PPE kits, Face Shields, Masks, and Gloves. We all resembled astronauts on a field mission in our face masks and shield combo. We boarded a bus and entered our airplane as usual, but were informed soon that there would be no food or drinks served in this flight. Contrasted with the old times, air hostesses were giving out hand sanitisers instead of refreshments. On top of all the security measures taken by the airport and the airline, we also made it a rule of thumb to spray disinfectant everywhere we went and everything we came in contact with.

A small box of food and a water bottle were already kept on everyone's seats, but we chose to keep it on the ground and ignore it. Owing to our fear and alertness, we did not eat or drink anything throughout the journey, and realised later on that it was everybody on the flight who did the same. It was pretty uncomfortable for all of us to wear masks and shields, and to add on to the inconveniences, the flight was already running an hour late. Living such a surreal moment, I was reminded of John Milton's poem, "On His Blindness", where he thought that god was testing him during every single moment of his life.

The 3 hour journey seemed much longer than it actually was, but we soon made it to the Indira Gandhi Airport in New Delhi. However, as opposed to what everyone believed, this was nowhere close to the end. We were told to remain

seated inside the plane until further notice, and to also download the Aarogya Setu app on our smartphones, which was a contact tracing app created by the Government of India in order for citizens to protect themselves from the Coronavirus. The plane was being sanitised from the outside, and soon the air hostess started calling out seat numbers on the PA system, upon which the respective passengers stood up and left the plane.

Upon entering the New Delhi airport, we were informed that a flight from Melbourne had just landed and the airport authorities were conducting their due procedures with passengers of the Melbourne flight first. Once all the passengers from that flight were cleared out, we proceeded to our checkups, and kept all our documents ready. Firstly, our temperatures were taken and our self-declaration health forms were checked, and

stamped. This allowed us to carry on to the next process, which was the standard immigration process, upon which our health forms were checked once again. Notably, they also kept a copy of the same for their own records. We followed the standard airport process since and moved to the conveyer belts, where the luggage was kept by the side of the belts instead of on the belt, owing to the very few amount of flights operating. We looked for our luggage and gathered it, all while maintaining social distancing and using disinfectant spray throughout.

After all standard procedures were over; we met yet another medical official at the airport who checked our Blood Pressure, temperature, and oxygen levels. Then, we went outside of the main airport building to a small makeshift office made by the airport authorities. The purpose of this office was to rule out if we had the Coronavirus or not, and would suggest the necessary means of precaution tailored to each person's health situation. We cleared all formalities, and were declared Covid negative. There was an SDM to check our quarantine documents, and we availed due permission to use our personal vehicle to get to our hotel, which was our designated quarantine center. It was now 21.30 hours (IST): almost 12 hours since we had started our journey from Dubai.

As soon as we reached, the hotel staff disinfected our luggage. We were taken to our room quickly, where we removed our masks, took a bath, and felt like we were in paradise. It was almost after 13 hours now, when we had the second meal of our day. It truly was pure bliss to finally see this journey come to an end successfully, and we were grateful that we made it safe.

To conclude, I would like to preface by saying that travelling anywhere during this pandemic is obviously not an easy thing to do. Ranging from the various documents needed to be kept in order prior to the journey, to all the procedures and possible mishaps that could occur at the airport, travelling feels like a daunting mission nowadays. However, throughout this experience, I would like to mention that the airports were well equipped and very cooperative, and all essential measures were taken to ensure that all passengers travel safely with the least amount of hassle possible.

The writer is a lawyer by profession and philanthropist by heart

Online education: Dispel fear of surveillance

In the wake of Covid-19 pandemic, online education has become a buzzword as some are eulogising its endless potential and others are casting aspersions, and predicting doom for the education sector in India. Of course, online education is not a substitute for face-to-face classroom interaction between students and teachers. However, we need to understand the apprehension of people about the "online education", which is fast emerging as the "new mode of education".

There is a widespread recognition that online education can become an additional tool, technique, opportunity, and avenue for further exploration of and experimentation with new ideas by both teachers and students. Online education should not be equated with the supply of more and more information, rather it is a process of retrieving relevant information, synthesising and critically analysing, and presenting them to students coherently and effectively. Online delivery of education requires re-learning not only on part of students but also on the part of teachers. In the "new mode of education", the role of teachers is going to become more important because they have to decide what is relevant information and how to critically analyse and deliver them; and it is challenging also because the students will have the opportunity to evaluate and scrutinise the teachers as all the sources of information are available at the click of the mouse.

Effective communication is one of the most essential characteristics of a teacher; how a teacher was teaching inside a classroom was very little known beyond the circle of the students who attended his or her classes. Online teaching, which may be recorded and put on a website, could be seen and compared with other teachers' methods. Online education is not passive broadcasting of news reports or entertainment channels, they also adopt different strategies and styles to connect with their audiences. This is the reason some channels and movies become very effective in communicating their messages and transforming people's ideas and thinking.

Teaching is an art, and teachers have to become an actor and performer; teachers need to learn new ways of performing on a digital platform, to connect with their students, to create curiosity among them, to



understand their requirements and help overcome anxiety and ambiguities perplexing their minds.

Resistance to technology is coming from two factors: Fear of mediating reality and psychological fear of surveillance. Opposition to online education emanates from people's apprehension about the safety of their data and the fear of being watched. The moment we enter online education, we leave behind digital footprints captured by smart digital devices and the Internet of Things. In a study, it was found that most of the people have limited knowledge about what types of personal data are collected and how they are used. Some scholars are apprehensive that "authoritarian administrators are attracted by online education as it offers centralised control and scaling at will". Contrary to their belief, internet-based online education is not centralised control and administered by an authoritarian regime, rather it provides an opportunity for the democratisation of education, both for teachers as well as for learners.

Another fear is that contrary "to face-to-face interaction where a teacher creates a communion with students and critically shapes their thinking and learning experience",

technology-mediated interaction distorts the form of communication. The fear of distorted reality emanates from the assumption that technology-mediated reality may not present the intended meanings or may even distort the meanings of reality. However, we know that we grasp reality only through the mediation of either our sensory perceptions or through technology. Even our sensory perceptions are shaped by the mental frame of our mind that we acquire through our upbringing and social experience. We do not have access to naked reality. All reality is mediated through technology and theoretical framework. Take the example of coronavirus, we cannot see it with naked eyes, we have to use an electron microscope to visualise it; technology-mediated image (reality) is presented to people through media and people construct their imagination about coronavirus. People who are sufficiently exposed to news, talks, discussion, and presentations on the coronavirus do acquire the level of understanding that scientists and doctors want them to acquire. Similar is the concept of online teaching: how effectively we are presenting our ideas.

Many studies have shown that it is little or no difference in students' performance between television education and face-to-face education or between video instruction and face-to-face instruction. In a study conducted by Allen & Seaman in collaboration with Pearson and the Sloan Consortium, it was found that most of the academic managers (75 per cent) recognise that learning outcomes in online courses are equal to or better than classroom courses. Although the findings of these studies could be contested, they indicate the heralding of "new mode of education".

It will not replace the traditional mode of education rather it will reinforce the "traditional mode" and exist in tandem with it. The educational institutions which are not going to get the reinforcement by adopting the online learning management system will face their existential crises. The new mode of education is not infringing upon the traditional mode of education, it is rather entirely a new way of making the education available to people anywhere, any time, at their own pace and convenience. Technology is not going to replace the need for a teacher but they do require to embrace the new paradigm of education.

It is the teaching style of the teacher and his ability to engage the students that makes a physical class

an interactive learning class. The same is true with the online delivery of education. The effectiveness of technology-mediated learning depends on three factors: easy and convenient access to technology, the willingness of the teachers, and the motivation of the students. The internet services are fast expanding in the country and the digital platform for delivery of education is becoming user-friendly day by day as they provide both synchronous and asynchronous communication and support the exchange of a variety of didactical elements such as texts, graphics, audio and video materials in real-time. Attitudes of a teacher, his/her teaching style, and his/her dexterity in dealing with information communication technology are important to make online education effective. It has been found that students attending a class of a teacher who has a positive attitude towards online teaching and learning and who encourages the use of technology are more likely to experience more positive learning outcomes. It is true that in online teaching students feel isolated as there is no classroom environment for interaction. This could be overcome, to a large extent, by adopting an interactive teaching style and encouraging students for more interaction among the class by engaging them in individual as well as group activities. Technology mediated interaction may pose, sometimes, technical problem, an effective teacher must be able to do some basic troubleshooting task, or be backed up by a technical team to support online delivery of education. Socio-economic and demographic characteristics of students do influence their learning outcomes. But this is true in both cases, online as well as in the traditional mode of education. The online mode rather provides better opportunities to design different levels of learning materials and allowing them to proceed with their own pace of learning.

Online education has been adopted globally to expand access to higher education and training needs of people as a supplement to the brick and mortar capabilities of their higher educational institutions. As the internet facility is expanding in India and the technology for online delivery of education is becoming user-friendly, it is the right time for Indian universities to embrace online education as an additional pro-

gramme lest they lose the opportunity to Western universities.

Many renowned universities have already started the online programme and many more are in the process of launching their graduate and postgraduate degree programmes to cater to the growing need of the students across the world. India is getting ready for the digital revolution. There are more than 600 million internet users, more than half of them are in rural areas and 90 per cent of users have 4G connection. The majority of internet users (70 per cent) are in the age group of 12-29 years, the main cohort engaged in education and learning programmes. Globally, India has the cheapest average 4G tariff at \$0.26 per GB. The Government of India has launched the National Broadband Mission intending to provide broadband access to all villages by 2022.

Online higher education is not only intended for the traditional cohort of (18-24 years of age group) people, rather it is open to any age group of people in the society. As the value of lifelong learning is greatly recognised, the need for online education will increase tremendously in the society. Many studies have shown that online availability of educational and training programmes have helped the working class in Ghana in improving their skills and career advancement and prospects of changing their career. There is indeed a digital inequality in terms of access to digital technology and the ability to use them.

There is also a substantive digital divide along with gender as there are only 35 per cent of women internet users in the country. However, the solution to these problems is not to reject the technology but to work for bridging both types of digital inequality and to capitalise on the opportunities thrown up by a new wave of the technological revolution. The recent step of the Government to allow 100 universities to start online education and separate TV channels for delivering education from Class 1 to XII is in the right direction. TV is accessible to more than 90 per cent of the population in the country and it will certainly help delivering the education to most deprived and marginal section of the society.

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MADHAV GOVIND

PERSPECTIVE

From an elected Prez to permanent leader!

Putin, who has been in power for 20 years, can remain in office until 2036 after parliament reset presidential term-limits. For Russians, the constitutional amendment makes no difference as they knew that Putin intends to stay in power as long as he stays alive



MAKHAN SAINIK

The unbridled power of Russian President Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin has grown over the last two decades. He enjoys enormous popularity. At its highest, his poll rating was close to 90 per cent.

Sensing the global public pandemic and home quarantining of millions in Russia, Putin affected amendments to the Russian Constitution. And the parliament of the country, Russian State Duma, has approved a slew of amendments, including the extension of his presidential terms (if he wants) up till 2036. This allows him to enjoy another two six-year terms starting from 2024, when his current term comes to an end. Without any iota of doubt, the Russian Legislature voted 383 to 0 to amend the Constitution. And Putin now holds the office of the President till he turns 83 years and that would be his 36th year in that office. This unusual parliamentary move was made by 83-year old former cosmonaut and now member of Duma Valentina Tereshkova, who said, "Putin knows much more than all of us. Why do we need to create some artificial constitutions? We should be honest, open, consider publicly and cancel all limitations on the number of presidential terms in the Constitution. Or, if the situation demands and people want that, let the current President run again for this position." This was more than sufficient to launch Putin to the orbit of power again by Tereshkova and thereby she has become a part of a deal that is gradually pushing Russia deep into the hands of Putin. In fact, the abolition of presidential term limits will make him the country's longest serving ruler since Joseph Stalin.

Meanwhile, the helpless Russian Opposition is furious. A former MP and Opposition leader Dmitry Gudkov aired his anger: "That was a Brezhnev era, poorly directed performance. Putin must be feeling almighty, and hopes to live forever." But how does it make any difference to Putin. His rule is passing on to a new era, wherein he is aging and his former KGB aides are fast proliferating to each sphere of administration around Russia.

When Duma has already approved the amendments, why Putin wanted the same to



Russian President Vladimir Putin chairs a meeting with members of working group to prepare proposals on amending the Russian Constitution via teleconference in Moscow, Russia, Friday, July 3, 2020

be passed in a public referendum at Covid-19 times? As it is too dangerous to gather in public, he should not have demanded approval from the people of Russia. Precisely, it is a traditional tactic used by the authoritarian rulers to marshal a stamp of legitimacy from the commoners. The aim is to be in the "Democracy Club". And Putin and his administration are successful in performing this act so far since he has come to power in 1999.

What disturbs the international community is that Putin is a fighter and he is a survivalist. Therefore, he needs to be considered seriously. If he says he will do something, then it is understood that he is prepared to do it. Further, he has the practice of finding a way to sort out difficult things by using every means available to him. Interestingly, he and his core team at Kremlin wanted the world to view him as a

street fighter, a low profile and possibly an underdog. But he is not. The way he has meddled with the US politics, he has made his mark. Over the decades, he has carefully crafted a system, wherein he has to deal only with a selected number of people, he has literally abstained himself from dealing with ordinary actors in politics and administration. This indeed allows him to strategise for every possible hurdle that might come on his way.

With Putin, Russia will be definitely heading for a stable political system. But the regime is only favouring a few, some allege. The desire for freedom and political mobility is completely bleak under Putin, the claim. If he stays till 2036, the answer to the question "who comes after Putin" is elusive. The reason is too simple: neither Putin has allowed an Opposition to thrive or even a successor to be groomed for a distant

future. This and a total control on all aspects of the Russian State have enabled him to virtually keep all probable political rivals at bay till date.

The big mystery is how he has risen to this stature? Looking at his roots, one can easily observe that he comes from a very humble family. His father worked in the Soviet Navy and mother was a factory worker. The family lived together in a lower income group community housing project. But somehow, he was sent to the college and finally to the law school. After graduating from the law school, he served as a KGB agent for about 16 years. In fact, KGB was the primary security agency for the USSR from 1954 until the historic collapse of the union in 1991. Basically, the KGB worked as a multi-faceted organ of the state, both within and outside the USSR. Clearly, the organisation was known for delivering its extra-

ordinary service for intelligence and as a wing of the "secret police". In 1988, the official White House photographer inadvertently spotted Putin spying on then US President Ronald Reagan in the guise of an ordinary Russian tourist in Moscow. After retiring from the KGB in 1991, Putin managed to get a job in the office of the mayor of St Petersburg and by 1994, he became the deputy head of city administration. In 1997, Putin was running a political party called "Our Home-Russia i.e. Nash dom-Russia", originally founded on May 12, 1995 by Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin of then President Boris Yeltsin. Initially a liberal and centrist political movement, the main objective of this party was to rally behind more technocratic and reformist supporters for the Government. Though the party was disbanded on 2006, Putin, the ever clever KGB guy had climbed the echelons of power from this unknown political platform. From here when he moved to Moscow, he was soon made the chief of the presidential staff of Yeltsin in 1997. Breaking all the political norms, an ailing and ageing Yeltsin, suddenly appointed Putin as the Prime Minister and named him as his successor. When he resigned unexpectedly on December 31, 1999, Putin became the acting President of the Russian Federation. Today, he has amassed more than \$70 billion worth of property. Probably his assets would also represent one of the largest personal fortunes ever accumulated by a sitting head of a state. This makes him much more powerful and helps him to sideline his rivals to make his way forward.

Russia has no longer the normal tools of democracy i.e. a free media, free election and an independent judiciary. A few independent magazines and papers that reach the outside world surely can't match what the state-owned Russian TV sends out to the world. A pure "manufacturing of consent" is practised. Another malaise of Russia today is that its people are hardly capable of electing the local governors and their parliamentarians.

(The writer is an expert on international affairs)



REALISE DEEPLY THAT THE PRESENT MOMENT IS ALL YOU HAVE. MAKE THE NOW THE PRIMARY FOCUS OF YOUR LIFE —ECKHART TOLLE



YOUR WEEK AHEAD

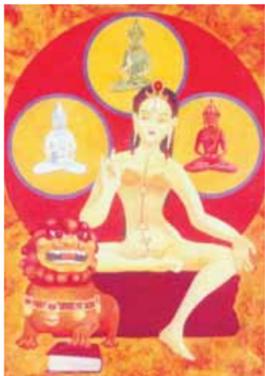
MADHU KOTIYA



ARIES March 21-April 19

This week you are likely to neglect your physical and emotional health. It is high time you change your lifestyle and choose a more healthy way of living. You need some time to rebuild your physical, mental and spiritual energies. Ensure a positive outlook in life to deal with health issues. On the career front, you will experience some negative energies that may cause mental pressure upon you. Be sincere towards your work and no harm will come to you. Financially, this is not a good time for a lot of you. Stay away from gambling as major loss is indicated. In love, a committed relationship may bring a new height of intimacy and joy. Singles, may soon find deep and true love in someone.

Lucky number 3
Lucky colour Peach
Lucky day Saturday



LEO July 23-Aug 22

Something big awaits you this week. You are full of enthusiasm and are adventurous to face the challenges life chooses to throw at you. Your health is at its best and you will experience high energy and vitality. Positive attitude and jolly nature will enhance your personality. In career, stay focussed and keep a positive outlook. Be careful about the rivals at your workplace and do not disclose your strategies and plans to anyone. The week is favourable for spiritual healers and medical practitioners. Utilise this time to enhance your knowledge. Listen to your inner voice to follow the right track. In terms of the relationship, committed couples will enjoy strong bonding this week. Your reputation and goodwill will fetch you rich dividends and this will help you lead a charmed life.

Lucky number 8
Lucky colour Camel Brown
Lucky day Friday



SAGITTARIUS Nov 22-Dec 21

Your health is likely to get affected due to stress and anxiety. A disappointing situation will leave you emotionally exhausted. Make sure you take some time out for meditation and proper rest. Be optimistic. On the work front, you are likely to face difficult circumstances due to your thoughts and perspective. Try to look at things with a different viewpoint and you may find many options available to sort out the difficulty. Those looking for employment may get a call for an interview. This week you may feel that your relationship is becoming boring. Therefore, you need to sit and openly discuss your feelings with your partner. Things will change for the better. Singles, analyse what you want from the relationship and then consider to enter into it.

Lucky number 13
Lucky colour Rose Gold
Lucky day Tuesday



TAURUS April 20-May 20

Your health will be good this week and you will be confident about your future. Explore new ideas to maintain good health. Stay away from circumstances that will make you lazy. Those suffering from some illness may expect a speedy recovery. It is important to be grateful to those who stood by you in the journey of your progress. Professional life looks good. Those who are employed are like to get the next position in line. Negotiating your value is worth your effort. A partnership proposal from an old friend or colleague is on the cards. Go for it as this will prove lucky for you. On the relationship front, express your feelings with passion. Singles may find love this week. A positive start will give you confidence.

Lucky number 10
Lucky colour Off-White
Lucky day Monday



VIRGO Aug 23-Sep 22

This week you will possess the inner strength to take up any physical and mental challenge. You should make some efforts to uplift your fitness level by following a workout regime. Follow a diet chart to ensure balanced intake. A legal issue is likely to cause worry and keep you a little tensed. You should work towards avoiding negative vibes, this will help you be a confident person. On the career front, you will not have any pending work. Those who have started a new venture may have a reason to worry, but this will be temporary. It is advised to stay calm this week. Relationship wise, love will bloom and so will you. Happiness and contentment in all relations are indicated. Your dream for a perfect relation may come true.

Lucky number 12
Lucky colour Yellow
Lucky day Wednesday



CAPRICORN Dec 22-Jan 19

This week your health will be good. Look out for new ways to maintain this — this could be by following a new fitness routine or a diet plan. Follow whatever suits you, as it will increase your vitality. Emotionally, you are content and will spend some good time with your family. On the work front, you will be successful in achieving your goals. Your efforts and hard work will be acknowledged. This week you will shine, but make sure that success doesn't get into your head as this will bring disappointment. Those seeking jobs may find one. In the love life, if things are not going well, then talk to your partner openly. Singles, before starting a relationship you need to be aware of your emotional issues and try to correct it.

Lucky number 16
Lucky colour White
Lucky day Sunday



GEMINI May 21-June 20

Be very careful about your health and at the same time, be observant as there are fine solutions for many health issues. Do not avoid situations where you have to decide on your health, as this can help you recover from your health issues. Maintain balanced behaviour and a positive outlook. On the career front, you will be overburdened and likely to be weighed down by responsibilities and commitments. You need to impose time management techniques to ensure that the work burden doesn't exhaust you. Ensure you take rest. Relationship wise, this week foresees happy family time, both for committed and single people. You and your partner will enjoy a peaceful time as you both are on the same page.

Lucky number 7
Lucky colour Brown
Lucky day Thursday



LIBRA Sep 23-Oct 22

This week you will be full of energy and vitality and this will further help maintain a perfect harmony with respect to your body, mind and soul. You know what you want from life and will maintain a balance between personal and professional life. You need to take some time out to relax. On the professional front, the week is satisfactory. Those in the field of finance will perform better. Trust your communication skills and listen to your inner voice. This will bring you desired results. You are likely to connect with important people who will play a role in your professional growth. On the relationship front, a fresh start is foreseen. This is a good time for love birds. Couples will experience a truly deep love in the coming days. Love is in the air.

Lucky number 9
Lucky colour Red
Lucky day Tuesday



AQUARIUS Jan 20-Feb 18

This week you will witness a sound mind and body connection. Consider your thoughts and behaviour while dealing with a health issue. Genetics and environment play an important role in creating such conditions, but negative thinking makes the situation worse. Seek help from a counsellor to deal with this negativity. At work, you need to think before acting on any situation, else it will lead to an unfavourable consequence. If required, re-evaluate your goals and change your priorities. There may be some turbulence in your love life. A relationship might end or have already ended. It will be an unpleasant situation as you will dwell in the memories of the past. You may heal by forgiving and learning from the mistakes.

Lucky number 11
Lucky colour Pastel Blue
Lucky day Thursday



CANCER June 21-July 22

You will work towards correcting the issues for the betterment of your health. If the issues become problematic, then it is advised to make some changes for a healthy lifestyle. Pay attention to your diet, exercise, and relaxation. If required, consult a health professional. On the career front, those looking for a new position will attain it. This week is a crucial time for you. You are likely to gain a new project. Work towards maximising your potential for a longer period. With hard work and persistence, you will leave a positive impact on senior management. Love life is not so rosy. A relationship has either ended or is on the verge of getting over. Don't let this situation dishearten you. You will overcome this situation.

Lucky number 1
Lucky colour Indigo
Lucky day Friday



SCORPIO Oct 23-Nov 21

You will enjoy good health this week. Therefore, invest your energy into something productive. This is the right time to start a new health regime like a fitness plan, a diet plan or an exercise routine. Those who are facing health challenges, are likely to recover soon with the help of their loved ones and people around them. Being optimistic will help you big time. On the professional front, things look favourable. You will be happy to help others and will make the working experience a pleasant one. The money will be in abundance. In the love life, you are likely to face conflicts. Therefore, try to have open communication with your partner to avoid any misunderstandings. Singles, this is not a good time to get into a relationship.

Lucky number 17
Lucky colour Silver
Lucky day Saturday



PISCES Feb 19-March 20

For a healthy life, you need to have patience and mental strength. Stay optimistic and spread good vibes around you. Share your motivation and inspiration with others. That might just as well heal them. Those who are dealing with bad habits, this is the right time to correct it. On the career front, uncertainties and confusions will dominate your mind and decisions and make your goals unclear. Colleagues and peers might try to limit your capabilities. Be confident and you will be able to overcome all opposition. In the matters of heart, you and your partner are likely to feel inspired and motivated. Spend time with each other and try to express your feelings. A new beginning is on the cards for singles. Use your creative energy productively.

Lucky number 20
Lucky colour Golden
Lucky day Sunday

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ASTROTURF
BHARAT BHUSHAN PADMADEO

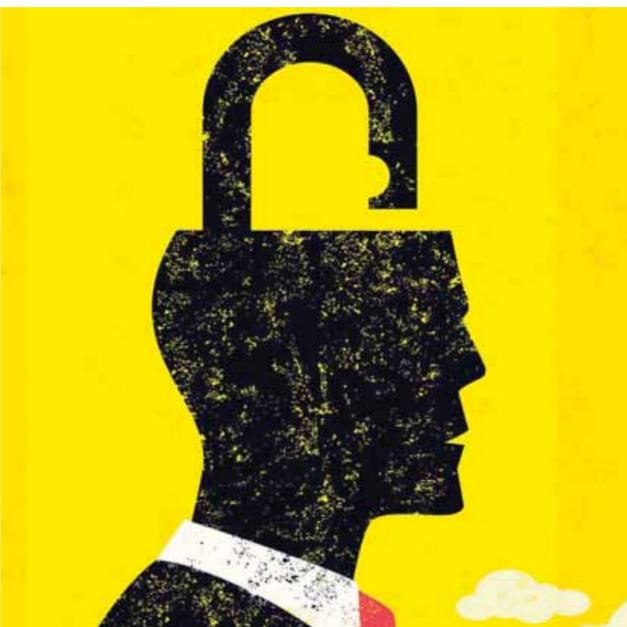
Unlock the mind to heal

Lockdown is being gradually eased out. People are trying to resume normal activities, but the problems confronting us are not yet over. It will take some time before things settle down. As nature goes through unforeseen twists and turns, we are faced with unprecedented situations. We can't change nature's course. But how we respond is definitely in our hands. If we negotiate with the challenges coming our way with fortitude and intelligence, we may be able to contain the damage. We faced similar pandemic during 1918-1920 in which more than 50 million people lost their lives, which included 2.25 million Indians. This time, however, the recovery rate is higher and death toll so far has been much lesser. It is not that world's destiny has taken a different turn. It needs to be appreciated that it is the result of human endeavour that medical science has grown substantially and we are better equipped today.

In life too, we are often confronted with challenging situations, many of them beyond our control. Many of us become a victim of our own making also because of our flawed perceptions. But here again, what matters the most is how

we respond to the situation. Some amongst us are able to face the situation bravely, intelligently negotiate the challenges and keep marching ahead in strength. But many, particularly the weak, come under great pressure, that is difficult to withstand, often at times calling for medical intervention. The question now is: Why given a similar situation, different people respond varied ways?

The answer lies in the unique character of each being, coming as it may as one's karmic carryover from the past. In one's life time, we would have learnt and unlearned many a things, acquired skill sets, developed habits and attitudes, acquired virtues and attributes, and also have unfulfilled desires left. Their imprints get carried over in the form of thought seeds to our successive incarnate body-mind organism. As and when the thought-seeds get a congenial ground, they come into play involuntarily. That may be to our advantage or detriment, depending on the character and content of the thought-seeds. To sum up, we are all invariably born with a preconditioned mind, which sets the premise of one's thought process — the basic fabric of individual mind-frame — on which our



future life takes off. Accordingly, each mind involuntarily develops its individual specific defining principles that guide all actions on our part — the desires nursed and pursued, the initiatives we take, or how we respond or react to a particular situation. That, of course, is subject to further modification as we go through learning lessons during ongoing life. With such a preconditioned mind, our scope of vision comes under restriction. That doesn't let us look at the issues in hand with an open mind, and so often fail to perceive things in the right perspective due, and evidently to our detriment.

The beauty of human mind, however, is that it can self-reflect upon its own trends and could respond to fresh educative inputs also. That empowers us to watch our thought-trends and make necessary amends through conscious efforts. The paradox, however, is that seldom do we remain conscious about using the above exclusive privilege. Often, our ego also plays spoil sport, as it doesn't let us identify and acknowledge our fault lines. Here comes the role of Astrology, which can dispassionately read your personality trends. For, it reads your individual energy signature with a fair amount of precision. And energy knows no bias.

Here is the case of a person who came seeking guidance on how to come out of acute stress he is undergoing. Look at his astrological pointers. The Sun conjunct Saturn in the *lagna*, a fixed sign, both opposed to Jupiter conjunct mischievous Neptune. That speaks of a hardened negative mindset. Second, he is stuck to his self-defined delusory beliefs and perceptions. Third, has a swaggering ego, who wishes to live exclusively on his own terms. All the more because mind signifying Moon occupies a dual sign Gemini and afflicted by both the sign lord Mercury and *lagna* lord Venus. That clouds his vision and interpersonal relationship skill. If all that would not be enough, fiery Mars conjunct erratic Rahu, lock horns with both Mercury and Venus. He, thus, has a restive and a cynic mind, who habitually finds fault with others for all the wrong happening. I wish, he unlocks his preconditioned mind, and things will definitely turn better.

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