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Gehlot passes muster, wins round 1

CLP backs CM, but crisis not over, another meeting today morning to win over 16-17 MLAs loyal to Pilot; Priyanka likely to mediate

DEEPAK KUMAR JHA ■
NEW DELHI/JAIPUR

The round one of the Rajasthan political crisis went to Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot on Monday after he mobilised nearly 106-7 MLAs, including those from Independents, but the threat to his Government remained real with no sign of any climb down by Deputy Chief Minister Sachin Pilot.

The party has called another round of meeting of legislators on Tuesday in its last effort, hoping that some of the supporters of Pilot would this time attend the CLP meeting. As of now, all the Gehlot supporters MLAs are residing at a resort at the outskirts of Jaipur where they were taken soon after the CLP meeting.

Congress General Secretary Priyanka Gandhi is likely to reach Jaipur to solve the dispute between Gehlot and Pilot.

Pilot has been camping in Delhi with 16-17 MLAs and is reported to be also in touch with BJP leaders, though the saffron party has denied such speculation. Congress leaders have claimed that party chief Sonia Gandhi, senior leader Rahul Gandhi, Priyanka Gandhi, Ahmed Patel, and P Chidambaram have spoken to Pilot several times over the last 48 hours, but so far he has not given any indication of a thaw.



Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot (C), with senior Congress leaders Randeep Surjewala, Avinash Pandey, Ajay Maken and KC Venugopal, flashes a victory sign during a meeting with the party MLAs at his residence in Jaipur on Monday PTI

Congress chief spokesperson and AICC nominee Randeep Surjewala said 109 MLAs of the Congress led Government in Rajasthan under Gehlot have given their letter of support.

However, sources said smaller parties and a couple of Independents who have supported the Gehlot Government so far may abstain in case there is a floor test.

Surjewala in a late night media briefing at Jaipur said

MLAs gave their support letter and thus they have failed BJP's attempts to topple the Congress Government.

He said another Congress Legislative Party (CLP) meet will be at 10 am on Tuesday to discuss the political situation and that party had again requested Pilot and all MLAs with him camping in Delhi to attend the meeting at Jaipur.

"They (MLAs) are requested to come and discuss how to strengthen Rajasthan and serve

the eight crore people together. If there are some differences with someone, then they should say that with an open mind. Sonia and Rahul are ready to listen to everyone and find solution," Surjewala said.

Rajya Sabha member and a close aide of Rahul, Rajeev Satav, has also been deputed to initiate talks between the two factions even as Ajay Maken and Surjewala are already making attempts.

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Cong has failed to keep its house in order: BJP

Says blaming others for the instability of its Government not good

DIPAK UPRETI ■ NEW DELHI

Approaching a "wait & watch" approach towards the Rajasthan political crisis triggered by rebellion by Deputy Chief Minister Sachin Pilot, the BJP on Monday said the Congress has completely failed to set its house in order in the State and blaming others for the instability of its Government would not do any good to it.

The BJP has demanded that the Gehlot Government prove its majority in the Assembly at the earliest.

Pilot, who has not been able to muster enough support of MLAs to count on the BJP to topple the Gehlot Government, has maintained that he will not be joining the saffron party in a fashion done by Jyotiraditya Scindia, who facilitated ouster of the Congress Government in Madhya Pradesh in March and crossed over to the BJP.

According to sources, BJP leaders are in touch with Pilot but awaiting the full unfolding of the numbers game.

Union Minister

Dharmendra Pradhan has held consultations with Union Home Minister Amit Shah on the Rajasthan crisis a day before Pilot moved to Delhi making public his opposition to the State Chief Minister.

Sources, however, denied that Pilot met BJP Central leaders saying "rumours were spread by the Gehlot camp" to discredit the Deputy CM.

Asked about the BJP's move on the developing situation in the State, sources said, "Situation is not ripe for the BJP to step in directly." As about Pilot doing a Scindia, they said, "In Rajasthan rebel numbers need to swell up to 50 or more before opposition party takes the challenge of forming an alternative."

The BJP is hopeful that sooner or later it can replicate its MP template in Rajasthan too, given the "unbridgeable differences" within the Congress and trusts that a "bigger split" in the Congress is expected any day soon.

Responding to the charges that the BJP was engaged in the toppling game, BJP's Rajya Sabha MP and senior leader from Rajasthan Om Prakash Mathur said, "Congress should look within as what it has done with the mandate given by the people."

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I-T raids on Gehlot's 2 aides amid tussle

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Amid the crisis in Rajasthan over power tussle between Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot and his deputy Sachin Pilot, two of the CM's aides were raided on Monday morning by the Income Tax Department in a signature measure of the Central agencies alleged meddling in such political turbulence.

Similar moves by the Central probe agencies were initiated during the recent crisis in Manipur and in the run up to the toppling of the Congress Government in Madhya Pradesh. The probe agencies were similarly active in Karnataka before the political crisis that led to the fall of Congress-JD(S) alliance Government last year.

"The BJP has three front agencies and two of them, Income Tax and ED, have swung into action and it's a matter of time when the third one, the CBI, will also come into play. It's nothing but murder of democracy," said senior Congress leader Randeep Surjewala.

Rajasthan Government chief whip Mahesh Joshi condemned the Income Tax raids on premises linked to two Congress leaders. Joshi was

speaking to reporters outside the residence of the Chief Minister where a meeting of the Congress Legislature Party has been convened.

"I condemn this. The raids are uncalled for and intended at threatening but we are not going to be distracted or scared by this," he said. "Entire country is watching this," Joshi added.

The IT Department raided Rajiv Arora, vice president of the party's Rajasthan unit, and Dharmendra Rathore and the searches yielded cash, jewellery, property documents and lockers. The searches were also extended to Bhilwara and Jhalawad besides Delhi.

In Delhi, the searches were conducted on the premises of Kothari brothers who were allegedly awarded a mega irrigation project in Rajasthan and faced complaints of irregularities in the dam construction. The searches were also conducted on the premises of Om Metals Infra Projects Ltd in Saket and Sainik Farms area here.

The ED teams carried out searches at Hotel Fairmount in Jaipur promoted by Ratan Kant, close to Gehlot's son Vaibhav.

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Big B, Bachchan junior better, stable in hospital

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

The condition of Bollywood superstar Amitabh Bachchan and his actor-son Abhishek Bachchan, who were admitted to Nanavati Super Speciality Hospital at Vile Parle in north-west Mumbai on Saturday night after they tested positive for Covid-19, is "better" and "stable".

Quoting the doctors attending on the father-son duo, informed sources at the hospital said that the two actors did not need any "aggressive treatment" for now. "Both Amitabh and Abhishek are better and clinically stable. They do not need any aggressive treatment," the sources said.

"Get well soon" message continued to flood various social media platforms from the Bachchan fans and well-wishers for the third consecutive day on Monday.

Earlier in the day, an overwhelmed Amitabh tweeted: "It shall not be possible for me to acknowledge and respond to all the prayers and wishes



expressed by them that have shown concern towards Abhishek, Aishwarya, Aaradhya and me... I put my hands together and say.. Thank you for your eternal love and affection."

Later in the evening, Big B put out one more tweet, this time in Hindi, thanking his fans and well-wishers for their messages wishing him, his son Abhishek, daughter-in-law Aishwarya and granddaughter Aaradhya.

While Amitabh and Abhishek were admitted to the Nanavati Hospital on Saturday, Aishwarya and Aaradhya, who tested positive for coronavirus on Sunday, are under quaran-



tine at their home.

Confirming that his wife and daughter had tested positive for Covid-19, Abhishek had tweeted on Sunday evening: "Aishwarya and Aaradhya have also tested Covid-19 positive. They will be self quarantining at home. The BMC has been updated of their situation and are doing the needful. The rest of the family, including my mother, have tested negative. Thank you all for your wishes and prayers."

"My father and I remain in hospital till the doctors decide otherwise. Everyone please remain cautious and safe. Please follow all rules!" Abhishek had said in another tweet.

Bengal BJP MLA found hanging with hands tied, party seeks CBI probe

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

In yet another case of an Opposition leader dying a mysterious death, a BJP MLA from Hemtabad constituency in North Dinajpur district was found hanging in the small hours of Monday.

Even as the local police suspected "a prima facie case of suicide", the saffron outfit called it "a cold-blooded murder" ahead of the next year's Assembly elections and demanded a CBI probe into the alleged assassination. The saffron outfit has also called "North Bengal bandh" on Tuesday.

Debendranath Roy, a former CPI(M) MLA from Hemtabad who had in 2019 joined the BJP, was found hanging from a wooden bar at the verandah of a shop about a km from his house, his relative Kshitish Roy said, adding "he was called out from his house about 1 am post midnight...

when he did not return for several hours a search was launched and he was found hanging from a bar outside a shop about a mile away with his one hand tied to the rope."

Roy's wife said that "my husband seems to have been killed first and then hanged or why should his hands be tied."

It was a clear case of murder, Roy's other family members alleged adding he had a long unblemished political career. However, police claimed a suicide note was found inside his pocket. Inside sources said Roy's death could be linked to his financial dealings with two persons named in the suicide note. He had recently sold 6-7 bighas of land due to financial crisis.

Superintendent of Police Sumit Kumar said, "The police found the hanging body of Roy the local MLA who prima facie seemed to have committed suicide."

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Google to invest ₹75,000 cr to boost India's digital economy

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Google will invest ₹75,000 crore (\$10 billion) in India to boost the digital economy over the next five to seven years. The investment will be done through a mix of equity investments, partnerships, and operational, infrastructure and ecosystem investments.

The development comes after a virtual meeting between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Google CEO Sundar Pichai on Monday. According to Google, this investment will help realise PM's vision of a Digital India.

"Today at #GoogleForIndia we announced a new \$10B digitization fund to help accelerate India's digital economy. We're proud to support PM @narendramodi's vision for Digital India — many thanks to Minister @rsprasad & Minister @DRPNishank for joining us," Pichai, the 48-year-old Indian-American Google CEO, wrote in a tweet.

Calling India's digital journey far from complete, Google



CEO Sundar Pichai announced the Google for India Digitization Fund that will invest nearly \$10 billion in India over the next five to seven years. "We'll do this through a mix of equity investments, partnerships, and operational, infrastructure and ecosystem investments. This is a reflection of our confidence in the future of India and its digital economy," wrote Pichai.

"This is a reflection of our confidence in the future of India and its digital economy," Pichai said on a webcast during the annual 'Google for India' event. "Investments will

focus on four areas important to India's digitization," Google said in a statement.

"First, enabling affordable access and information for every Indian in their own language, whether it's Hindi, Tamil, Punjabi or any other. Second, building new products and services that are deeply relevant to India's unique needs. Third, empowering businesses as they continue or embark on their digital transformation. Fourth, leveraging technology and AI for social good, in areas like health, education, and agriculture," it said.

Earlier in the day, Prime Minister Narendra Modi tweeted that he had "an extremely fruitful interaction" with Google CEO Sundar Pichai. "We spoke on a wide range of subjects, particularly leveraging the power of technology to transform the lives of India's farmers, youngsters and entrepreneurs," the Prime Minister wrote on Twitter. The Prime Minister also shared pictures of the virtual interaction.

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Record spike, over 9 lakh Covid cases

New Delhi: India saw yet another record single-day jump of over 28,000 Covid-19 cases, pushing its tally to over 9 lakh on Monday, while the death toll climbed to 23,727.

This was the fourth consecutive day that Covid-19 cases in the country have increased by more than 26,000. According to the ICMR, 1,18,06,256 samples had been tested for COVID-19 till July 12, of these 2,19,103 samples were tested on Sunday.

Covid-19 IN INDIA

TOTAL CASES: 9,06,617

DEATHS: 23,727

RECOVERED: 5,71,578

ACTIVE: 3,10,928

STATES	TOTAL CASES	DEATHS	RECOVERED
Maharashtra	2,60,924	10,482	1,44,507
Tamil Nadu	1,42,798	2,032	92,567
Delhi	1,13,740	3,411	91,312
Gujarat	42,808	2,056	29,806
Karnataka	41,581	759	16,249
Uttar Pradesh	38,130	955	24,203
Telangana	36,221	365	23,679
West Bengal	31,448	956	19,213
Andhra Pradesh	31,103	365	16,464
Rajasthan	24,936	518	18,630
Haryana	21,929	308	16,637
Madhya Pradesh	18,207	663	13,208
Bihar	17,421	134	12,364
Assam	16,807	45	10,895
Odisha	13,737	91	9,255
Jammu & Kashmir	10,827	187	6,095

Two antibodies from llamas can neutralise coronavirus: Scientists

London: Scientists have demonstrated that two small, stable antibody variants derived from South American mammals llamas can neutralise the novel coronavirus in lab-cultured cells, an advance which may lead to the development of new cure against Covid-19.

The study, published in the journal Nature Structural & Molecular Biology, noted that the "nanobodies" can prevent infection with the novel coronavirus SARS-CoV-2 by blocking its interaction with the protein ACE2, which it uses as a gateway to enter body and infect cells.

RUSSIA 1ST NATION TO FINISH TRIALS FOR COVID-19 VACCINE

Moscow: Russia has become the first nation to complete clinical trials of Covid-19 vaccine on humans, and the results have proven the medication's effectiveness. Chief researcher Elena Smolyarchuk, who heads the Centre for Clinical Research on Medications at Sechenov University, told Russian news agency TASS that the human trials for the vaccine have been completed.

Royals hold Padmanabhaswamy temple's shebait rights, rules SC

It's game-changer verdict: Ex-chief of SC Committee on temple treasure

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Monday upheld the rights of the Travancore royal family in the administration of historic Sree Padmanabhaswamy Temple in Kerala, considered to be one of the richest temples in the country.

It set aside the Kerala High Court's 2011 verdict which had directed the State Government to set up a trust to take control of management and assets of the temple.

A bench headed by Justice UU Lalit said as an interim measure, the District Judge of Thiruvananthapuram will head an administrative committee to



manage the temple's affairs.

The top court delivered the verdict on a batch of appeals, including the one filed by legal representatives of the Travancore royal family, challenging the January 31, 2011 verdict of the high court.

Former chairman of the Supreme Court Committee on Sree Padmanabhaswamy Temple treasures, CV Ananda Bose, said on Monday told PTI the verdict is "landmark", and "A game changer which will value faith and religion, rituals and will respect heritage". The sprawling temple, an

architectural splendour in granite, was rebuilt in its present form in the 18th century by the Travancore Royal House which had ruled southern Kerala and some adjoining parts of Tamil Nadu before integration of the princely state with the Indian Union in 1947.

While pronouncing the judgment, the apex court held that the death of earlier ruler of Travancore royal family does not affect the right of 'Shebaitship' (the right to manage the deity and the temple as a priest) of Marthanda Varma, the brother of last ruler of the royal family, and his legal heirs.

The SC said death of the last ruler does not entitle the State Government to take over the management of committee as law of escheat does not apply in this case and the management of the temple continues to vest in trust of the ruler of Travancore.

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CAPSULE

CBSE 12 EXAM RESULTS: GIRLS OUTSHINE BOYS

New Delhi: Girls outshine boys in the Class 12 examination, results of which were announced by the CBSE on Monday, recording an increase of over 5 per cent in pass percentage.

'TAHIR USED RIOTERS AS HUMAN WEAPONS'

New Delhi: Suspended AAP Councillor Tahir Hussain used rioters as "human weapons", who on his instigation could have killed anybody, a Delhi court said on Monday while dismissing his bail plea in the murder case of IB official Ankit Sharma.

PLEAS TO DISQUALIFY 2 UP CONG MLAS NIXED

Lucknow: In a major relief to rebel Congress MLAs Aditi Singh and Rakesh Singh, Uttar Pradesh Legislative Assembly Speaker Hriday Narain Dixit on Monday rejected their party's pleas to disqualify them. The speaker dismissed the petitions against both the lawmakers saying they "lacked substance", a Vidhan Sabha spokesperson said.

CORONAVIRUS SPREAD

Increase testing to get real picture: CM Yogi

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Directing officials to ramp up Covid testing to 50,000 per day, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath ordered that sample collection in Varanasi, Ballia, Ghaziabad and Jhansi be increased so that the real picture of the coronavirus infections could emerge.

"Of the 50,000 tests, at least 30,000 should be done by RT-PCR, 18,000 to 20,000 by rapid antigen method and 2,000 to 2,500 by TrueNat machines. This distribution will speed by testing," Yogi said while chairing an Unkoff review meeting at his official residence in Lucknow on Monday.

The chief minister stressed on cleanliness and sanitation drives on every Saturday and Sunday with the aim to control COVID-19 as well as other vector diseases.

"Nodal officers for districts should monitor the progress in their earmarked



Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath speaking at a podium during a review meeting.

districts from headquarters," he said. Yogi further said that markets would remain open from Monday to Friday while weekly off would be observed on Saturdays and Sundays so that these days could be used for sanitisation. He directed door-to-door screening by surveillance teams.

"People with symptoms of the infection should be subjected to medical testing and coronavirus positive patients should be sent to proper medical facilities. Senior doctors should take rounds in hospitals and all precautions should be taken to save police personnel from the infection," the chief minister said.

Yogi called for extra caution in districts of Varanasi, Jhansi, Kanpur Nagar, Bareilly, Deoria, Gorakhpur, Ballia and Azamgarh that have high infection rates and said that mobile testing vans be pressed into service there.

The chief minister also laid stress on using masks and maintaining social distancing and told officials to create awareness among people about this.

Yogi also directed Health department and Medical Education department to keep a tab on works by maintaining regular communication with the chief medical officers.

Kanpur admn sets out to free land grabbed by Dubey

PNS ■ KANPUR

After the elimination of a prime accused in Kanpur carnage, Vikas Dubey, on the outskirts of the city last Friday, the Kanpur district administration set about on a drive to free land tracts of several villagers forcibly occupied by the slain gangster and his aides.

On Monday, a team of tehsil officials visited Bikru village and recorded the statements of the victims and heard their saga of the unauthorised possession over their land. The team also carried out demarcation of land owned by different people. During interaction, inhabitants of Bikru village informed the officials about illegal occupation of their land for the last two decades by Dubey and his henchmen.

Villager Abdul Jalil said that Dubey took away his three-bigha land and gave it to his servant Gayadin. Several complaints made to Dubey and also to officials failed to get the land freed, he added.

Similarly, Ramji informed the officials that Dubey forcibly wrote out a sale deed (bainama) of his grandfather Sitaram Kashyap's land in favour of Lallu for pittance.

Jalaluddin said that the gangster's nephew Anurag forcibly got the sale deed of his 10 biswa land in his name.

Justice (Retd) Agarwal visits Bikru village

Kanpur (PNS): Justice (Retired) Shashi Kant Agarwal reached Bikru village on Monday afternoon and visited the spot of the ambush in which eight police personnel were killed in the early hours of July 3. He also talked to the villagers living there to ascertain the facts of the incident. The Yogi Adityanath government had on Sunday set up a judicial commission headed by retired judge of High Court, Justice (Retired) Shashi Kant Agarwal, to look into all the issues related to the ambush and later the encounter of most wanted criminal Vikas Dubey. The commission would also suggest measures to avert any similar incident in future, particularly due to police-criminal unholy nexus.

Justice (Retired) Agarwal was flanked by District Magistrate BR Tiwari and SSP Dinesh Kumar P apart from other senior officers of the police and district administration. Thereafter, he may visit the spot where gangster Vikas



Judicial Commission Member Justice (Retd) Shashi Kant Agarwal discussing about Bikru ambush with DM BR Tiwari and SSP Dinesh Kumar P on Monday.

Dubey was killed in encounter. Justice (Retd.) Agarwal reached the village around 12:30 pm. He visited the spot and collected detailed information about the incident and demolition of Vikas Dubey's house from the DM and the SSP for about 25 minutes.

He also heard the complaints of six persons, including Dinesh Dubey's son Manoj Dubey, and quizzed the villagers. After inspecting the spot and quizzing villagers for about an hour, he returned from the village around 1:30 pm.

He also heard the complaints of six persons, including Dinesh Dubey's son Manoj Dubey, and quizzed the villagers. After inspecting the spot and quizzing villagers for about an hour, he returned from the village around 1:30 pm.

The commission has been given two months' time to complete the investigation. The commission is empowered to look into any aspects which arise during course of investigation along with any further directions given by the government in this regard.

Speaker rejects Cong plea for disqualification of two MLAs

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Uttar Pradesh Assembly Speaker, Hriday Narayan Dikshit rejected the petition of Congress seeking disqualification of Aditi Singh and Rakesh Singh from the House.

Both are MLAs from Rae Bareilly, the Lok Sabha constituency of interim Congress chief Sonia Gandhi.

In his brief ruling on Monday, the Speaker said that the petition was rejected due to lack of evidence of anti-party activities by the two legislators.

Hearing of the case of Aditi Singh was completed on June 30 and that of Rakesh Singh later on. While Aditi, the daughter of former MLA, late Akhilesh Singh, is an MLA from Rae Bareilly Sadar, Rakesh is a legislator from adjoining Harchandpur seat.

Supreme Court lawyer KC Kaushik appeared on behalf of the Congress to press for their disqualification.

Aditi Singh started rebelling against the Congress from October, 2019 when she defied party diktat and attended a special Assembly session, boycotted by the Congress. The Yogi Adityanath government had organised a 36-hour special Assembly session from October 1 to commemorate the 150th birth anniversary of

Mahatma Gandhi.

Besides, Aditi also periodically issued statements in favour of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath.

The Yogi government recently upgraded her security and Aditi removed 'Congress' from her social media handles, making it clear that she did not wish to remain in the party.

Rakesh Singh, along with his elder brother and MLC Dinesh Pratap Singh, openly revolted against the Congress brass. Dinesh Singh in fact contested against Sonia Gandhi on a BJP ticket in Lok Sabha polls even after being a Congress MLC. A disqualification petition against Dinesh Pratap Singh by the Congress is also pending in the Legislative Council.

The Congress had also moved the Allahabad High Court demanding the disqualification of all three legislators and the petition will come up for hearing on Tuesday.

Congress leader in Legislative Council Deepak Singh said on Monday that they would approach the court during the hearing about the biased verdict of UP Assembly Speaker. He said that the party would also raise the issue of the dilly-dallying attitude of Chairman of Legislative Council in deciding the case of Dinesh Pratap Singh which has been pending since the last Lok Sabha polls.

DGP 'stops' IG, his wife from visiting site of Dubey encounter

Lucknow (PNS): In a surprise move, DGP Harish Chandra Awasthi reportedly stopped IG (Civil Defence) Amitabh Thakur and his social activist wife Nutan Thakur from visiting Bhauti area of Kanpur, where Bikru village carnage mastermind Vikas Dubey was killed in an encounter with the STF last Friday.

The Thakurs were on way to Bhauti and also had plans to visit Dubey's native village at Bikru, where the eight Kanpur police officers and personnel were trapped and fatally ambushed, when they were asked by the DGP to return to Lucknow.

Reacting to the development, Nutan Thakur said that her husband Amitabh, who is posted as IG (Civil Defence), was called by the DGP back to

Lucknow, saying that he could not visit the spot. She said that they would now soon visit the two spots together.

Earlier, Amitabh Thakur hogged news space after tweeting last Thursday that Vikas Dubey might probably try to escape from police custody and end up being shot dead.

Thakur's tweet proved prophetic as the gangster was shot dead near Kanpur for allegedly trying to escape while being escorted from Ujjain to Kanpur on Friday morning.

Besides Thakur, another senior IPS officer also raised doubts over the encounter. "No doubt it is a big embarrassment for UP Police that Dubey managed to reach Ujjain and manage his surrender. But it would be a bigger

embarrassment if Dubey reaches Kanpur alive. The police should eliminate him once he enters the UP border," the officer has said on Thursday night.

After Dubey was killed on the outskirts of Kanpur the next morning, the officer said, "Friday morning saved the police from that big embarrassment."

Aiming to clear all doubts over the encounter, the UP government has set up a one-member judicial commission chaired by retired judge of High Court, Justice (Retd) Shashi Kant Agarwal. The commission would probe all issues related to the July 3 ambush of eight policemen in Bikru village and later the encounter of wanted Vikas Dubey.

Jilted youth kills lover, ends life

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Irked at being spurned, a youth brutally killed his lady interest and later ended his own life in Chitrakoot on Sunday night.

Ajay aka Pattu Verma (22) of Chipni hamlet of Karvi (Chitrakoot) was having an affair with his neighbour Neelam Kataria. The girl's family was opposed to the liaison but they kept on meeting secretly.

Late on Sunday night, when the girl went to meet Verma, the couple had a heated argument after she refused to marry him. Irked at her decision, Verma whipped out a knife, fatally attacked her and escaped.

The injured girl somehow rushed back home in a critical condition and was taken to the district hospital. Before breathing her last, the girl wrote the name of her assailant with her blood on the prescription pad.

Later, the parents informed the police alleging that Verma had killed their daughter.

The police raided Verma's house but found him missing on Sunday evening. However, on Monday morning, the villagers saw a body hanging from a tree barely 100 metres away from where the girl was attacked. On closer look, the deceased was identified as Verma.

The police recovered a five-page letter from his pocket in which he narrated his love story and that she was not ready to marry him.

The bodies were sent for autopsy. Meanwhile in Ghaziabad, a middle-aged couple ended lives possibly over a money-related dispute.

As per reports, Mangat Singh Pal (50) of Arthala area of Sahibabad used to live with his wife Sheela (47), his son Yogesh, daughter and Yogesh's wife. After running a dairy for some time, Mangat suffered huge losses as a result he had to close it down. In the mean-

time, Yogesh started working as a guard in a factory.

On Monday morning, Yogesh left for his workplace. When the couple did not come out of their room till late in the morning, Yogesh's wife and his sister went to enquire.

On finding the door locked from inside, they knocked but no one responded. Suspecting foul play, they peeped through a window and were shocked to find Mangat and Sheela hanging from the ceiling.

They later broke open the door with the help of neighbours but by then the couple had died.

After investigation, the police said that Mangat borrowed Rs 12 lakh over a period of time for the dairy project, which failed.

Recently, he sold his 50 square yard plot at Chitrakoot colony in Arthala for marrying of his daughter. The purchaser gave half the money in advance and promised to pay the rest after registration of the sale deed but later reneged on his promise. As a result, the couple slipped into a depression which probably led them to end their lives.

The bodies were sent for autopsy and investigations were on.

CLASSIFIEDS

NOTICE
This is to inform everyone that I Ajit Kumar Shukla husband of Deepthi Shukla would like to change my wife's name to Dipti Shukla in future she should be known by her new name Gram & Post - Bawan, District & Tehsil - Hardoi, UP.

NOTICE
I, Gulshan Kumar Arora, House No. 414 Vayu Vihar, Hajindar Nagar, Kanpur - 208007 have changed my name old name Gulshan Kumar Paul to New Name Gulshan Kumar Arora. I should be known as Gulshan Kumar Arora in future.

आवश्यकता है

आवश्यकता है
मदरसा अरबिया मदीनतुल उलूम, घुआवीन, सौरह बुजुर्ग कोरान्बी में एक प्रधानाचार्य एवं एक सहायक फौकानिया की आवश्यकता है।
प्रधानाचार्य पर हेतु शैक्षिक अर्हता फाजिल अथवा अरबी / फारसी / दीनियत से स्नातकोत्तर उपाधि न्यूनतम 50 प्रतिशत अंको सहित तथा आलिया कक्षाओं का पाठ पुरा का शैक्षणिक अनुभव / आयु न्यूनतम 30 वर्ष, वेतन संरचना 47600-151100 (पूर्व ग्रेड वेतन 4800) तथा सहायक फौकानिया हेतु शैक्षिक अर्हता फाजिल अथवा 50 प्रतिशत अंको सहित स्नातक तथा आलिय अथवा उर्दू सहित इन्टरमीडिएट का प्रमाण पत्र आवश्यक है। आयु न्यूनतम 20 वर्ष, वेतन संरचना 44900-142400 (पूर्व ग्रेड वेतन - 4600)।
उपरोक्त पदों हेतु अर्हता अथवा आवेदन पत्र प्रमाणित प्रमाण पत्रों / अंकों पत्रों एवं रजिस्ट्री लिफाफा मध्य रजिस्ट्री टिकट को दिनांक 05-08-20 तक मदरसे के पते पर डाक से या व्यक्तिगत रूप से मदरसे के समय मदरसे में दे सकते हैं। सलाकार हेतु चयन समिति द्वारा रजिस्टर्ड डाक से सूचित किया जायेगा।
(शं मुस्ताक अहमद) प्रबन्धक

Priyanka chides govt for 'baby pack' lockdown

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Terming the two-day weekly lockdown in UP a puzzle and a 'baby pack', Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra charged that the government was playing games to hide its failure.

Attaching a graph of coronavirus cases in UP, Priyanka tweeted on Monday, "Nearly 5,000 cases of coronavirus were reported in the last three days, including 1,347 cases on July 10, 1,403 cases on July 11 and 1,388 cases on July 12."

On the two-day weekend, the Congress leader said, "The logic behind weekend lockdown's 'baby pack' has not been understood by anybody till now. Playing games to hide failure continues."

Further, she took to 'shayari' to corner the UP Government and tweeted, "Marz badhta gaya, jyo jyo dawa ki (Illness kept on getting worse as the medication was administered)."

In Uttar Pradesh, the first 5,000 cases were reported about 75 days after the first case came to light and the pace of infection has been increasing by the day. However, the testing for coronavirus infection too has been increased manifold during this



"THE LOGIC BEHIND WEEKEND LOCKDOWN'S 'BABY PACK' HAS NOT BEEN UNDERSTOOD BY ANYBODY TILL NOW. PLAYING GAMES TO HIDE FAILURE CONTINUES"

time. The Yogi Adityanath government has decided to impose lockdown on weekends — Saturdays and Sundays — for effective control over the viral infection and sanitisation.

Meanwhile, UP Congress chief Ajay Kumar Lallu termed the UP government's claim to provide 1.25 crore jobs as a lie and alleged that the government cheated unemployed and migrant workers. "At the ground level, the situation is so bad that

migrant workers are committing suicide," he said.

Expressing anger over suicides being committed by migrant workers, Lallu said that over 15 migrant workers had committed suicide in Banda alone after returning from different parts of the country due to lockdown.

"Only recently, a migrant worker took the extreme step for not being able to deal with financial hardships arising out of job loss," he said.

Kalyan accuses Cong of setting him up in Babri demolition case

Lucknow (PNS): Claiming that the Ayodhya case was politically motivated, former chief minister of UP and accused in Babri mosque demolition case, Kalyan Singh, accused the then Congress regime in Delhi of implicating him in the case.

Appearing before a special CBI court to record his statement on Monday, Singh told media persons that all charges against him were with-

out any basis and were politically motivated. "As a chief minister of UP, we had made elaborate security arrangement to protect the structure and had given orders to strengthen its security from time to time," he said.

Singh (88) gave his statement 28 years after the demolition which took place in Ayodhya on December 6, 1992. Singh was the chief minister of UP when the structure was brought down.

He had submitted an affidavit to the Supreme Court for protecting the mosque and after its demolition he was sent to one-day imprisonment.

Sources said the court recorded the statement of Singh, who is also the former Governor of Rajasthan, under Section 313 of the Criminal Procedure Code.

Singh is among the 32 accused who have been charged by the CBI for the

SP eyeing Dubey episode as a campaign flavour

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Samajwadi Party brass felt that the killing of gangster Vikas Dubey in an encounter in Kanpur last Friday had the much-needed window to launch the party's campaign for the 2022 Assembly polls.

The killing of eight Kanpur police officers and personnel followed by the dramatic arrest of Dubey in Ujjain and his death in an encounter with the police in Kanpur caused a churning in Samajwadi Party and its chief Akhilesh Yadav identified this as a window for the party's poll campaign.

Akhilesh had been eyeing a tailor-made opportunity to hit back at the Yogi Adityanath government ever since his party's abysmal defeat in 2019 Lok Sabha elections.

"Like the first BJP regime led by Kalyan Singh in 1991, the BJP's main plank was 'Bhaimukt Samaj' (society free of fear). In 2017 too, the BJP targeted the then SP government with barbs like 'jungle raj'. Now it is the time to pay them back in the same coin," said a SP leader.

"Besides tearing into the good governance plank of the BJP, our campaign will also help the party to reach out to the electorally significant

Brahmin community across the state," the leader added.

Besides issuing daily statements and his presence on the social media, the SP chief has been silent since he lost the 2019 Lok Sabha election. The SP defended the strategy saying that he did not want to waste his political energy and money so much ahead of the next elections in UP.

"The present government has completed more than half of its term and it would be the right time for him (Akhilesh) to become politically articulate and loud," the SP leader said.

Under Akhilesh Yadav's stewardship, the Samajwadi Party has been facing an existential crisis and is faced with an identity crisis after three back-to-back electoral defeats at the hands of the BJP in 2014, 2017 and 2019.

"The defeats are behind us. The SP has finally found a legitimate issue to rake up before the public to shame the BJP. This is why Akhilesh is insisting on making Dubey's five-year call detail records public. This makes sense politically and automatically puts him on a higher pedestal from where he can try to pitch his upright image," said a former minister in the previous Akhilesh Yadav government.

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196 patients detected as spike continues



Health workers collecting samples of a suspect at Indira Nagar community health centre on Monday

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

In continuation of the spike in the number of Covid-19 patients, 196 people tested positive for coronavirus in the city on Monday while three succumbed, included one at KGMU. Once again, Lucknow ended up with the maximum number of people testing positive for coronavirus in the state. CMO Dr Narendra Agarwal said one patient died at private medical college while another tested positive after his death in Para. KGMU media spokesperson Dr Sudhir Singh said a 69-year-old patient died on Monday.

"The man died of acute respiratory syndrome and he was suffering from diabetes too," he said. He was admitted to the hospital on July 11. The CMO said those who tested positive included 17 from Cantt, 12 from Indira Nagar, eight from Gomti Nagar, six from Mahanagar; three each from Mohanlalganj & Bazaarkhala; two each from Alambagh, Banthra, Maal, Rae Bareilly road, Chinhat, District Jail, Chowk, Rajajipuram and

Kaiserbagh; and one each from Ansal, Mall Avenue, Aliganj, Bangla Bazaar, Hazratganj, Dubagga, Kursi Road, Mohnipurwa, Wazirganj, KGMU, Model House, Ashiyana, BKT, Aryanagar, Kakori, Pan Dariba, Omaxe, Sadar, Krishnanagar, Faizabad and Sitapur road.

As many as 43 patients recovered and were discharged while 64 new containment zones were made and 12 removed. A total of 1,103 samples were collected and sent to KGMU for testing.

In the state, 1,664 people tested positive for coronavirus, including 57 from Meerut, 90 from Noida and 120 from Ghaziabad, taking the tally of positive cases to 37,922.

There were 21 deaths in the state, including three each in Lucknow & Prayagraj, two each in Varanasi & Etah and one each in Ferozabad, Saharanpur, Meerut, Bareilly, Hardoi, Kannauj, Ballia, Jhansi, Mirzapur, Kushinagar and Mahoba, taking the toll to 955. As many as 869 people recovered in the state, taking the figure to 24,203. Meanwhile,

Ayurvedic, Unani and homoeopathic doctors will be roped in at Covid care centres in the city to help check the increasing number of deaths, CMO Dr Narendra Agarwal said on Monday. They will assist the team of doctors already taking care of the patients. The total number of deaths in the state capital has climbed to 28.

The CMO said that in this way, they will strengthen the team of the doctors by integrating professionals from other medical streams. "We have to ensure that when patients need oxygen, they should be provided the same," he said.

District Surveillance Officer KP Tripathi pointed out that the increased number of deaths was because patients were arriving late for treatment.

"People should report earlier if they are short of breath or breathless. There are many people who do not want to get admitted to the hospitals because they do not want Covid-19 testing done, hence they do not speak about their problems and only complain when it is too late," the CMO said.

Telecommunication outreach at SGPGI of great help to patients

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Based on his experience gathered in utilising telemedicine facilities for contacting and treating with hepatitis and liver cirrhosis patients in Chandigarh, SGPGI director Dr RK Dhiman has initiated telecommunication outreach programme along with the support of dean and head of Endocrine Surgery department Dr SK Mishra, who is also the nodal officer of the Institute of Telemedicine and Biomedical Informatics.

In this endeavour, they secured support from the government and Principal Secretary (Medical Education) Rajneesh Dube, Special Secretary (Medical Education) Markandey Sahai and the Director-General of Medical Education KK Gupta.

"The aim of the programme is to provide standard-of-care facilities via telemedicine and other telecommunication modalities so that remote clinical decision support may be administered throughout Uttar Pradesh from level 1 to level 3 hospitals. The programme caters to patients suffering from Covid-19 and other diseases," the media spokesperson of SGPGI said.

She said health support is being provided to 15-20 per cent of patients with coronavirus infection who develop severe illness, Covid-19 patients with multi-organ failure and cardiac or respiratory compromise or arrest, requiring an intensive care and ventilatory management, symptomatic patients who are suspected to be having coronavirus infection, patients with non-Covid, medical and surgical emergencies who are not able to come to tertiary care hospitals and patients with other ailments being managed in peripheral hospitals.

"The telecommunication support is in two forms: The Electronic Covid Care Support (eCCS) network is a hub-and-spoke model in which doctors as well as patients from primary health care centres, community health centres, district hospitals and medical colleges can communicate with doctors in

SGPGI using tele-consultation services. Four doctors, one each from Surgical, medical, intensive care and paraclinical speciality are on duty by rotation," she said.

She added that the critical care management, neonatology and maternal and child health departments also provide a 24-hour service with a mobile phone network.

"The Radiology department provides exclusive services during the hospital hours. Every Wednesday and Saturday, utilising the telemedicine network, the doctors in SGPGI communicate with western UP spoke hospitals to understand their difficulties and suggest solutions. They also provide short educational lectures by the staff," she said.

The eOPD services include 26 departments of SGPGI providing telemedicine outreach services to new as well as follow-up patients of their respective departments.

"Patients requiring a detailed examination, investigations, or any intervention are then asked to come to the hospital for further management. The data from these telecommunication services is being provided to the government on a daily basis," she pointed out.

Giving details of the data, she said that two-and-a-half months since its inception, a total of 21,220 patients have been benefited by this telecommunication network.

"This successful endeavour would not have been possible without the sincere contribution by all hub centres, spoke centres, medical colleges of the state, divisional hospitals and primary health centres, the heads of departments and faculty members of the institute, the computer wing of the institute, the telephone services, electricity and air conditioning services, the nodal officers for execution of OPD services, the medical illustration team and the telemedicine team. We hope that this endeavour will continue to expand and provide telemedicine services to our patients even after the Covid-19 pandemic is over," she added.

SGPGI director takes additional charge as KGMU Vice-Chancellor

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Director of Sanjay Gandhi PG Institute of Medical Sciences Dr RK Dhiman on Monday took additional charge as Vice-Chancellor of King George's Medical University. Dr Dhiman has been appointed for a period of three months or till a full-time VC is appointed, whichever happens first. He has taken over from Dr MLB Bhatt, who had retired on April 14 but was given a three-month extension by Governor Anandiben Patel in view of the current circumstances.

Railway contractor's SUV peppered with bullets

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

In a daring incident, around five unidentified miscreants opened a fusillade of fire on the SUV of a railway contractor and former zila panchayat member, Surendra Kaliya, near a hospital in Alambagh on Monday evening. Kaliya's driver-cum-private security guard Roopram of Etah was injured in firing. He was rushed to KGMU Trauma Centre where his condition was said to be improving.

Later, Kaliya lodged a complaint, alleging the role of former mafia-turned-politician Dhananjay Singh. He said he had visited the hospital to see a railway contractor, Zubair, around 7.28 pm and came out of the hospital. He said he was about to sit in the SUV when 4-5 persons opened fire with automatic assault weapons on him and his men. He alleged that Singh had threatened him in the past as well, asking him to quit.

Senior police officials reached the scene to take stock of the investigation but sought to avoid media queries. JCP (Crime) Nilabja Choudhury said it was an attempt to murder. "The

CBSE: City girl scores a perfect 600/600

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Divyanshi Jain of Navyug Radiance Senior Secondary School at Naka scored a perfect 600/600 in CBSE Class XII examinations, results of which were declared on Monday. Her scorecard reads like a dream with 100 marks each in English, Sanskrit, History, Geography, Insurance and Economics. Divyanshi met Deputy CM Dinesh Sharma after the results were announced and he felicitated her for her achievements.

Daughter of a shopkeeper in Aminabad, Divyanshi said she was surprised and happy. "I tried to maintain consistency throughout the year and understand the overall concept. I practised everyday and tried to test myself on the subject matter before going further. Revising and recalling was my style of study," she said.

A student of Humanities, the topper said she had still not decided what she wanted to become, but she was keen on pursuing History. "I want to go in the research field. I have not planned too much because there are many things which I will come to know in the coming days, so I have not decided on a particular goal. I want to understand the history of the country and the world. I want to know my country. I like the critical thinking aspect of history and I do not know what I want to become, but it will have to do with History as the subject," she said, adding that she wants to join Delhi University.

She admitted that she was surprised with a perfect 100 in English. "Even I don't know how I managed to score 100 in English," she added.

Divyanshi said consistency was the key to her success but she did a lot of things other than studies. "I read books other than the syllabus and I participated in co-curricular activities and did not just get stuck to academics," she said.

Sudhir Halwasiya, whose father founded the school, said it was the first time that they have produced an all-India topper. "Though the board has not released a merit list this year, I had tried to confirm from the board at Prayagraj if there was any other student who scored a perfect 600/600 and to the best of my knowledge, there is none," he said.

He said when a CMS student became the topper some days back, he felt that the percentage was very high, but now his own student had scored a perfect score.

School principal Bhopinder Singh said Divyanshi was very focused and would go into the depths of subjects. "She has scored a perfect hundred even in non-scoring subjects such as History and Insurance. She goes into details while studying English and she is an avid reader. She has been a consistent topper and we expected no change. Her sister also studied from our school and she was also a good student," Singh said.



Divyanshi Jain felicitated by Deputy Chief Minister Dinesh Sharma after CBSE Class XII results were declared on Monday

Achievers overjoyed but rue cancelled papers

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The sudden declaration of CBSE Class XII results on Monday took the students by surprise but soon afterwards, there were smiles and joy all around. There were several who did their schools proud with high percentage. However, many of them said if they were allowed to appear for the exams which were cancelled, their results would have been even better.

Shreea of RLB School (C-Block), who got 97.8 per cent marks, was overwhelmed. "I was so nervous when the results were announced and I was not expecting more than 95 per cent marks. I am so happy that I got marks which one can dream of," she said. Daughter of a review officer at Secretariat, Shreea had taken up Commerce in Class 12. She said she was undecided about her future and would take a call after exploring all options.

"I won't settle for a conventional job. There are so many new jobs to explore and I want to go and interact with people and get their feedback for the choice which I want to make," she said. She added that she would take admission to a college in Lucknow itself because of the current pandemic and her family also wants her to be with them due to the same reason.

She said she wanted to work towards eradicating poverty and casteism. "I would like to move around the world and then work towards a solution for these problems plaguing

India," she said. Hritik Verma of RLB (Chinhat branch), who scored 97.6 per cent marks, was also overjoyed with his result. Son of a farmer, he said his father barely studied beyond Class X, but always encouraged him. He said he was aspiring to be a doctor to serve the people. However, he said he felt bad that some papers were cancelled. "If I had appeared for those papers, I would have scored 98 per cent," he said. About his success mantra, the key to success is regular studies.

Muskaan Kumari of SKD Academy, who scored 96.8 per cent marks, said she was panicky and nervous when the results were announced. "It was only when I was told that I scored 96.8 per cent marks that I was relaxed and overjoyed," she said.

A resident of Alambagh and daughter of an Army officer, Muskaan said she wants to become a maths professor. "I am not interested in engineering and want to take up pure mathematics," she said. She said the lockdown period was helpful because the entire family came together and it was a rarity, but the disadvantage was that everything got delayed. She said she would be studying in the state capital because her mother would be left alone as her father also stays outside of the city.

Astha Tripathi of RLB, who scored 97.4 per cent marks, said she was happy but if the papers were not cancelled, her percentage would have been higher. She said she

wants to become an engineer from a reputed college. "I am keen on becoming a computer engineer and want to do something that would prevent the students from leaving the country and stay here to study," she said.

Aditya Dube of SKD, who scored 92 per cent, said he wants to take up astrophysics. "I am aiming to get into one of the prestigious IITs and I am preparing with crash courses," he said. He added that success mantra is dedicating quality time to studies.

As for the school-wise performance, 84 students secured above 95 per cent marks and 360 students above 90 per cent marks at Rani Laxmi Bai Memorial School. Thirty-three students of Red Rose Senior Secondary School secured above 90 per cent marks even as the result of schools was 100 per cent.

In Science stream at Delhi Public School (Indira Nagar), Shriya Kumar topped with 98.6 per cent marks, followed by Aditya Singh with 95.8 per cent marks and Manjish Deo and Shreyanshi Rai with 95.4 per cent each. In Commerce, Mariyam Ahmad achieved the highest aggregate of 95.4 per cent, followed by Yashna Sharma with 94.4 per cent.

At Lucknow Public Schools and Colleges, a total of 1,156 students appeared for the exams. As many as 21 students got 95 per cent or above marks while 120 students scored 90 per cent or above marks. As many as 507 students got 75 per cent or above marks.

With 97 per cent marks,

Dev Singh Rana topped LPC (Gomti Nagar).

At SKD Academy too, the result was 100 per cent. At school's Vrindavan branch, Muskaan Kumari scored 96.8 per cent marks and secured first position, followed by Arushi Yadav with 96.4 per cent and Anubhav Paul with 96 per cent. Sahil Yadav secured fourth spot with 95.4 per cent marks, followed by Simpal Verma with 95 per cent marks.

In Vikrant Khand branch of the school, Ananya Singh got 96.8 per cent marks and secured first position, followed by Kajol Agarwal with 96.2 per cent, Priya Jaiswal 95.6 per cent, Priyanka Sarkar 95.2 per cent and Ananya Dwivedi 95 per cent.

At Amity International School, a total of 47 students appeared for the exams and all passed with first division. As many as 42 students scored distinction marks. Anisha Singh and Saumya Ray secured 97.2 per cent marks and ended up as toppers, followed by Ibrahim Siddiqi and Anushka Singh with 95.6 per cent.

At The Lucknow Public Collegiate, Prerna Ratwani secured 97.6 per cent and ended up as the topper.

At DPS (Eldeco), Arushi Gupta from Commerce stream scored 99 per cent, Satwik Sinha of Science stream 98.8 per cent and Neha Pal with 97.4 per cent. Satwik Sinha from Science stream secured 100 in Maths while Arushi Gupta 100 in Psychology and Lavanya Yadav 100 in Economics.

Woman found hanging, parents allege murder

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

A woman was found hanging at a marriage hall in Bazaarkhala on Monday morning. Her brother suspected foul play and demanded a probe into the case alleging involvement of her husband and in-laws over dowry demands.

Police said the woman ended her life after being subjected to torture by her husband and in-laws for dowry. They said further investigation was underway.

As per reports, Shalini aka Rose Merry (21) of Aishbagh Manoranjan Kendra, close to her house, on Monday. Her father-in-law Sanjay Masih works as a peon at the marriage hall. Her husband Aman Masih said Shalini went to the marriage hall to attend nature's call in the morning. As she did not return, Aman went there and found her hanging from a hinge fixed on the wall inside a hall. He called his parents who took her off the noose. Shalini was rushed to a private hospital from where she was referred to KGMU Trauma Centre. However, she died on the way. Aman and other members

in his family took her back to the house and informed the police. They later called Shalini's brother Shailendra Kumar of Kanpur and he reached her house by afternoon. Shailendra said Shalini married Aman Masih of Aishbagh in 2019.

"I was informed over phone that Shalini hanged herself from the ceiling," he said, adding that his sister could not commit suicide. Shailendra said Shalini was being harassed for dowry ever since she got married. "Aman and his parents did not allow Shalini to talk to me or my parents. We invited her for Rakshabandhan but Aman and his parents did not give her permission," Shailendra said.

Suspecting foul play, Shailendra said Aman and other members in his family hanged her to death over dowry-related issues and demanded a probe into the incident.

The police agreed to register a case after initial hiccups and the investigation file was referred to ACP (Bazaarkhala). A police spokesman said Aman is a flower decorator. "The body has been sent for autopsy and the police are waiting for the report to proceed further," he said.

Man arrested on charges of murderous assault

Lucknow (PNS): A team of Sarojinagar police, led by inspector AK Sahi, nabbed a man for the alleged murderous assault on a man. The accused was identified as Saket Gupta. The police recovered a double-barrel gun and 32 cartridges from his possession. Saket and his family members had allegedly opened fire on Jitendra Yadav for throwing garbage in a vacant plot on Sunday morning. The police said they had launched a manhunt for others named in the case.

Meanwhile, thieves broke into a house in Kudrat Vihar Colony in Sarojinagar some time on Sunday night. The house is owned by Satish Chandra Yadav, who along with his family, has gone to his native house in Azamgarh. The police said since they had not received a complaint, no FIR was registered in this connection so far. In another case, a police team arrested a youth who was accused of eve-teasing on Monday. He was identified as Diwakar Mishra of Jankipuram (Sector-F). Diwakar was accused of stalking a 22-year-old girl, passing lewd comments and attempting to waylay her. The girl's family had lodged a case after which the police conducted a probe and arrested Diwakar.



Devotees going to offer prayer at Kashi Vishwanath temple on Second Monday of Shrawan month in Varanasi

Pioneer

Thousands offer prayer at KV temple

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

After two days of statewide lockdown when the places of worship were reopened, thousands of devotees offered prayer at one of the dwadas jyotilingas, Kashi Vishwanath temple here on the auspicious occasion of Second Monday in the month of Shrawan amidst tight security arrangements and several COVID-19 restrictions. Unlike previous Monday when most of the other Shiva temples except a few including Jageshwar Mahadev at Ishwarganji remained closed, this time the doors of Till Bhandeshwar Mahadev were

also reopened and many were seen offering prayers at some Shivalingas at various ghats, especially at Kedar Ghat. Right from the morning hours, there were continuous lines of devotees on both sides of the temple including Maidagin and Godowlia but rush was not the same as generally seen on the auspicious occasions as the devotees were asked by the security personnel to maintain physical distance. No devotees were allowed to enter the temple premises without wearing masks and sanitising their hands as automatic sanitising machines were installed at many places. To

check the rush, the devotees were allowed to enter the premises through three routes. Due to restrictions, it took more time for the devotees to reach the sanctum sanctorum (garbhgrih) to offer jalabhishek. At a time only five persons were allowed to reach there. However, no one was allowed to touch the Shivalinga. The outside Kanwaris were not allowed to come here. Elaborate security arrangements were made and no vehicles were allowed to move between Godowlia and Maidagin throughout the day. Besides, from time to time, the devotees were stopped in view

to sanitise the premises and outside areas. To maintain law and order situation, the devotees were checked at many places through metal detectors and the senior police officers were present there to keep watch on the stock of situation in Gyanvapi premises. All the activities were also watched through various CCTV cameras. To avoid congregation the devotees were asked to move towards Gyanvapi only through barricading and Rapid Action Force (RAF), para-military and PAC jawans were deployed both inside and outside of the Gyanvapi premises.

Jubilation among CBSE Class XII students

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

In wake of all the fears prevailing due to increase in corona cases, there was jubilation among the students of various schools affiliated to the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) when the results of Class XII were announced on Monday. With this, uncertainty especially among the 12th students came to a halt when the results were announced. About 20,000 students of the district appeared in the Class XII examinations this year. It is expected that the results of Class X would also be announced on Wednesday in which about 24,000 students of 135 CBSE-affiliated schools appeared. Before the lockdown, all the examinations of Class X were completed but for Class XII, about 20 per cent students could not appear in the examinations of three papers, while 20 per cent of two papers and about 30 per cent of one paper. As the examinations of pending papers could not be held from July 1, the students got marks on the basis of their pre-board examinations and internal evaluation basis.

According to Chairman of Sunbeam Group Deepak

Madhok, Ananya Dey (Humanities) of Sunbeam Bhagwanpur topped school with 99.20% followed by Shriya Agarwal (Commerce) 98.20%, Avishi Goyal (PBC) 97.60% and Ritwik Singh (PMC) 97.20%. Besides, Aastha Rai (Humanities) of Sunbeam Lahartara secured 99% followed by Vanshika Agarwal (PBC) 97.4%, Akash Sinha (PMC) 97.20%, Saurabh Kumar Singh (PMC) 97.20% and Vinayak Agrawal (Commerce) 96.80%. In Sunbeam Varuna, Anandita Awasthi (Humanities) with 98.20% topped school followed by Arshita Singh and Tenzin Oser, both of Humanities with 98.20% each, Mayank Tandon (Commerce) 98%, Mayank Shekhar Singh (PMC) 97.80% and Vatsala Kiran (PBC) 96.80%. In Sunbeam Suncity, Rishav Khetan (Humanities) topped with 97.40% followed by Avni Agrawal (Commerce) 97.20%, Simran Jain (PBC) 96.40% and Rohit Kumar (PMC) 96.20%.

Academic head of Rohan Madhok of Sunbeam Academy group informed that Arpan Khanna, a student of PCM stream topped with 98.4 per cent marks, followed by Harsh

Bhaskar 98%, Swadha Agrawal 96.4%, Ayushya Kumar Singh 96%, Ambresh Singh 96%, Supriya Rania 96%, Neha Kumari 95.6%, Pratyush Pandey 95.6%, Ritu Rai 95.6% and Pranshu 95.2%. According to the Principal of KV BHU Dr Diwakar Singh, the results of both the first and second shifts were 100 per cent. Among first-shift students, Soumya Parasher (Arts) topped with 96.8% marks, followed by Sanjana Shikhar (96%), Tanya Singh (95.8%) of Commerce stream and Divyanshi Upadhyay (94.6%) of Science. In the second shift, Manya Pandey (92.8%) of Science topped, while Gaurav Singh (89.6%) of Commerce was placed second. The manager of Arya Mahila Nagarmal Murarka Model School Puja Dikshit informed that Farhiya Shahjad topped the school with 96.4% marks followed by Keshar Tripathi 95.4%, Priyanka Yadav 95.4%, Anjali Kushwaha 95.2%, Shakshi Yadav, Riya Bhatreja and Jyoti Keshari all 94% each. The Principal of Seth MR Jaipuria Schools, Babatpur, Sudha Singh informed that Harshika Choubey (95.8%) topped the school followed by Vishal

Yadav (94.8%) and Latika Singh (94.6%). Vice-Chairman of DPS Kashi Ayush Poddar and Principal Snil Kumar Rawat said that Anshika Singh (Humanities) topped school with 97.4% marks followed by Gaurav 95.6% and Ayushi Singh 95%, both are of Science stream.

Besides, there was a jubilating mood among the students of various other groups including Sant Atulanand, Swami Hardevanand, DPS, CHBS and CHGS, all KVs, DALIMSS and many others as all the schools fared well in the examinations. Out of three main secondary education boards, UP Board took the lead by declaring its all results much earlier and just a couple of days, CISCE declared its both the results of Class X and XII in which Tanishqa Gupta and Dipesh Kumar Singh of St Joseph Convent School, Shivpur stood first with 98.67% and 98.80% marks respectively. A total of 1754 and 1116 students of local schools affiliated with CISCE appeared in Class X and XII examinations respectively because the maximum number of students appeared in UP Board examinations followed by CBSE and CISCE.

30 new COVID-19 patients found

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

As many as 30 new COVID-19 cases have been detected here on Monday, giving some relief as a day ago there were double the number of patients found in the district. With this, the district has inched further close to cross 900-mark as the total number of cases has increased to 888. During the last five days, the situation has turned worse as 203 cases were found. According to Chief Medical Officer (CMO) Dr VB Singh, 14 patients were discharged from the hospitals during the day. With this, the total number of recovered patients has increased to 452, leaving 409 active patients and 27 deaths.

Meanwhile, the initiatives taken by the District Magistrate (DM) Kaushal Raj Sharma for starting plasma therapy has brought a fruitful result as two recovered COVID-19 patients



Sanitisation being done in hotspot Saket Nagar in Varanasi on Monday

Pioneer

reached Blood Bank of Banaras Hindu University (BHU) here and got them tested for donating their plasma which was done under the supervision of in-charge of BHU Blood Bank Dr SK Singh and Dr Sandeep

Kumar. Besides, 12 more recovered patients have shown their willingness to donate the plasma. The CMO said that plasma therapy is very important in view to save the lives of serious COVID-19 patients. He said

that the recovered corona patients can register their names for plasma donation at Indian Red-Cross Society or BHU Blood Bank and when there would be need for the same, they would be contacted.

Earlier, the members of an expert health team, Joint Director (Malaria) Dr Swadesh Kumar Yadav and Prof Anupam Bakhalu of King George Medical University (KGMU) held a meeting with all the nodal officers, additional chief medical officers and incharges of community and primary health centres at the office of CMO. The team reviewed the progress made in the district in collecting sampling, arrangements in containment zones, line listing of patients, discharge process and others and instructed the medical officers to follow the guidelines issued by the government regarding COVID-19 from time to time.

Five Covid deaths reported

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ ALLAHABAD

With a total of 45 persons being infected with coronavirus late on Sunday night and Monday morning, the Prayagraj city witnessed five COVID deaths in the last 24 hours. This included a former IG.

On the other hand, there were 45 new positive cases reported till late Sunday night. This included two junior doctors of SRN Hospital and two RPF personnel among these infected patients. The infected patients have been admitted for treatment at COVID-19 Hospital.

As of late Sunday night, of the 507 samples, 45 reported positive. It also includes two junior doctors of SRN. There is one orthopaedic and other surgery department. There have also been positive reports of two employees living on SRN campus. Dr Rishi Sahai, the Nodal Officer for COVID-19, said that along with four members of a family living in Triveni Dam, two RPF personnel have also been found

infected.

Other patients included Old Cantt, Kydganj, Jhansi, Tagore Town, Mundera, Darbhanga Colony, Chowk, Thornhill Road, Shantipuram, Attarsuiya, Sahason, Chakgandagar, Rani Phulpur, Pitambar Nagar Telianganj, Jasra, Reserve Police Line, Leader Road, Manda, Kareli, Meja, Old Katra, Naya Purva, Tularam Bagh etc.

It may be pointed out here, five people died of corona also. On July 10, a patient was tested in a private hospital. He died before the report came. His report came positive on Sunday. Similarly, a middle-aged resident of Puramufti was admitted to SRNH on July 9. He also had many other complaints. He died on Sunday.

On the other hand, reports of 24 corona-infected patients came negative on Sunday. Chief Medical Officer Dr GS Bajpai said that 44 corona patients have been admitted in Kotwa Bani COVID Hospital, 70 in L2 Beli COVID Hospital and 70 in L3 SRN COVID

Hospital. Two corona patients are placed on a ventilator when their condition is critical.

Sampling of 19 infected patients at Kotwa Bani COVID Hospital was sent to Motilal Nehru Medical College Lab for testing. In this, the reports of 15 patients came negative but the report of four patients has come positive again. Now they were not discharged from the hospital. Samples will be taken again after two days.

A tremendous outbreak of coronavirus has spread in the district. While the number of infected patients is increasing, the number of deaths is also increasing continuously. By Sunday night, two patients had died, while three more infected died by Monday afternoon. Those who died today include former I.G. Along with him, the other two infected patients were undergoing treatment at Swaroop Rani Nehru (SRN) Hospital.

Three corona virus-infected people have died at the COVID-19 Hospital SRN on Monday. It also includes retired IG. He was admitted to a pri-

vate hospital in the city. After testing there, his report came positive on July 10. He was then admitted to COVID-19 Hospital SRNH. He died at around 3 o'clock on Sunday night. However, its information could be found on Monday.

According to the doctor of SRNH, the former IG was also infected with diabetes, blood pressure and heart related issues. Similarly, the second death occurred to a 60-year-old old woman living in Lalapur police station area. She came positive on July 11 in the coronavirus test. She died at around 4 o'clock on Monday morning. Elderly woman was also suffering from COPD disease.

In this context, the third death due to coronavirus was a 72-year-old resident of Barai village under Kunda in Pratappur district. He was admitted to COVID-19 Hospital SRN on July 9. He died at around 11 am on Monday morning. The death has been confirmed by SRN Nodal Officer Dr Sujit Verma.

19 test positive in Kaushambi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ ALLAHABAD

In the neighbouring district Kaushambi, district administration and Health department are also in a fix over the increasing number of patients infected with the coronavirus. A total of 145 were tested in Prayagraj's lab of them, 19 people were confirmed with infections.

Among the infected are Deputy Chief Minister Keshav Prasad Maurya's niece and sister-in-law of Chail MLA Sanjay Gupta. After the report, the team of doctors have admitted everyone to L-1 Hospital,

Manjhanpur PHC for treatment. The history of people coming into contact with the infected is being traced.

CMO Dr PN Chaturvedi said that in the testing of samples conducted on Sunday, the report of six people of the town including the niece of Deputy CM Keshav Prasad Maurya and her husband, mother-in-law, has come positive. At the same time, three people have been infected in Municipal Council Bhurhari. It includes Chail MLA Sanjay Gupta's sister-in-law, servant and a neighbour.

Apart from this, two

patients have been infected with COVID-19 in Manjhanpur. All the infected have been admitted for treatment. Samples of a total of 8,200 people have been tested so far, of which 179 have been found infected. Six people have recovered on Sunday. A sample of 285 people has been sent from various places of the district for testing. The Health department team is visiting villages and towns and making people aware of the disease.

Meanwhile, District Magistrate Bhanuchandra Goswami called a meeting of the Health department. The

officials of health and other departments present in the meeting were asked to make the public aware of corona infection. They should also inform people about precautions to be taken to contain the spread of deadly virus.

The District Magistrate said that among the people whose samples are being taken and the reports of those which are coming negative should be informed through mobile phones so that their family can be cautious. The meeting was also attended by the CMO, ADM City and Health department officials.

Singh visits garbage disposal plant

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ ALLAHABAD

The Nodal Officer and Director, Mandi, Jitendra Pratap Singh visited Prayagraj and inspected the garbage disposal plant at Baswar, Naini and took first-hand information regarding its functioning. The Nodal Officer saw huge dump of garbage and directed the concerned officials for its disposal at the earliest.

He also enquired regarding the functioning of machines for weighing of garbage. On being informed, that one of the machines is non-functional, he asked the concerned officials to get it rectified soon and make it functional.

He further enquired about the regarding the quality of biological wastes produced from the disposal of garbage and its uses. He asked the concerned officers to make the people aware about the benefits of biological wastes in farming.

The Nodal Officer also visited the Community Health Centre at Kaurihar for inspection and saw the Covid Help Desk and the register used for the maintaining the records of Covid patients. He enquired about the progress of door-to-door inspection, medical tests and sampling. Thereafter, he took round of the community health centre and directed the concerned officials for proper cleanliness and sanitisation in

and outside the premises. **AU ASKS INMATES TO VACATE HOSTEL ROOMS:** Allahabad University (AU) has asked inmates who have returned from other cities during the lockdown and been staying in its hostels without informing the varsity or the district administration to vacate the rooms with immediate effect.

In a letter issued by AU's Dean Students' Welfare (DSW) KP Singh and countersigned by Chief Proctor RK Upadhyay, the varsity has directed warden and superintendents of all hostels to immediately get the rooms vacated. If the inmates fail to vacate the rooms on their own, they will have to be evic-

ted forcibly. AU Public Relations Officer Shailendra Mishra said there were a number of complaints about students coming from other cities and living in their allotted rooms. If they found that their rooms are locked by university authorities, they would enter after breaking the lock. As per norms, students coming from outside should be quarantined for at least two weeks. Their disobedience puts the rest of hostel inmates at risk. As no classes are scheduled for July and August, the students would be informed well in advance when they can return, be it for exams or when university reopens, said the PRO.

BDU set up at NCR HQ

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ ALLAHABAD

Business Development Units have been set up at North Central Railway Headquarters besides all three divisions—Prayagraj, Jhansi, and Agra.

Indian Railways is working towards increasing share in transport of conventional commodities and capturing transport of non-bulk items to double the freight transport volume by 2024. With this intent Railway Board has directed formation of multidisciplinary business development units at Zonal Railway and at Division level consisting of functionaries from all concerned departments besides already constituting a Business Development Unit at Railway Board consisting of executive directors from concerned departments.

Accordingly, with approval of General Manager North Central and Northern Railway Rajiv Chaudhry Business Development Unit have been constituted at NCR HQ.

Business Development Unit formed at HQ level will meet minimum once every month and as and when required to discuss new proposals, progress of existing proposals, issue related to goods sheds, wagons, freight customers and any other relevant item.

The HQ level BDU will also provide guidance and approval to divisional BDUs and will seek approval from Railway Board level BDU in case of need.

Specific roles assigned to HQ level BDU includes fre-

quent interaction with trade and industry to increase freight loading, looking into all goods shed/siding and freight related infrastructure matters, all freight matters related to wagons, rolling stock to seek, examine and process approval of proposals from prospective customers, to widely publicise freight incentive schemes and various transportation schemes available with Railways and any other matter related to freight loading.

In line with NCR HQ, BDUs have been formed in Prayagraj, Jhansi and Agra divisions with similar mandate for increasing freight transportation volume.

RESULT CHALLENGED: The Allahabad High Court has asked state government and UP Secondary Education Services Selection Board to file counter-affidavit in a petition challenging final result of TGT-2016 physical examination.

Justice VK Birla passed the order in a petition filed by Vimal Tiwari, a candidate who participated in the examination but was declared unsuccessful in the final result.

Petitioner had challenged the result on the ground that the reservation policy was wrongly implemented by the authorities as the benefit of reservation policy was given at each stage of the recruitment process to the candidates belonging to reserved categories.

Advocate Pratik Chandra appearing for petitioner argued that giving benefit of reserva-

tion during preliminary examination and then again at the time of final selection was against the reservation policy.

'Candidates belonging to reserved categories were unduly benefited because of wrong implementation of policy as benefit of reservation can not be given at each stage of recruitment process', argued Advocate Chandra. In the petition, requests were made to apply reservation policy afresh and issue revised results for TGT, physical examination. It is to recall that in 2016, advertisement of TGT examination was issued. Preliminary written examination was conducted on March 8, 2019. Later, the interview was conducted on February 18, 2020 and on March 19 final results were declared for the posts.

IIIT-A ACHIEVES A MILESTONE: Indian Institute of Information Technology, Allahabad (IIIT-A) has achieved a milestone in maintaining its academic activities despite peer pressure caused by Covid in the country.

The institute, after successfully completion of its end semester examination and declaration of result on time, has declared new academic session starting from July 30.

Dr Manish Goswami, Associate Dean (Academic, Assessment and Award), on Monday declared the academic time table for July to December 2020 session. The online classes will start from July 30 as mentioned in the calendar. The institute has geared up completely for beginning of

Garg stresses on checking new Covid cases, deaths

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Covid nodal officer for Kanpur Nagar, Anil Garg, stressed on keeping a check on coronavirus spread and COVID-19 death rate in the district.

Addressing a meeting at the Circuit House here, the nodal officer said that identifying problems was certainly appreciated but the priority should be on keeping a check on the Covid death rate and the coronavirus positive cases which were increasing alarmingly in Kanpur.

Garg said it was a matter of concern that despite the best efforts of the government, the Covid death rate continued to rise alarmingly and this could not be overlooked.

He said if there was any shortage or any problem in waging the fight against the pandemic, it should be brought to the notice of authorities but every effort was needed to control the Covid death rate.

The nodal officer said the death of 4-5 COVID-19 patients and detection of over 60 coronavirus positive cases every day in the last few days



Highest single-day spike in Kanpur as 87 more test +ve

KANPUR (PNS): Kanpur Nagar recorded its highest single-day spike in coronavirus cases with 87 more people testing positive.

Chief Medical Officer Dr AK Shukla said with 87 more people testing positive between Sunday evening and Monday evening, 1,836 coronavirus infections had been detected in the district so far. He said with 23 COVID-19 patients being discharged from hospitals in the past 24 hours, 1,133 infected persons had been cured in the city and at present 613 active cases were undergoing treatment in various hospitals. Dr Shukla said with four more COVID-19 patients dying in hospital, the death toll stood at 90 on Monday evening. He said 1,018 samples had been taken — 526 from surveillance and 301 other samples — for testing.

was a cause of concern not only for the government but also for

the people. He said it had been brought to the notice of the administration that coronavirus positive cases were brought to hospital after much delay and this was the reason for the constant rise in the death figures.

The LLR Hospital doctors blamed Chief Medical Officer Dr AK Shukla for this, saying the delay was from his end and that the very critical COVID-19 patients were being referred to the hospital in ambulances that did not have life support system or oxygen facility. They categorically said that some deaths were on account of acute crisis of oxygen.

Garg said this was a grave charge and directed the CMO to attend to it at the earliest, adding that there should be no complaints in this regard in future.

The nodal officer pointed out that the government was liberal in providing funds for modern equipment and thus no laxity would be tolerated at any level.

Over two dozen doctors and health officials took part in the meeting.

Chaudhary asks BJP cadre to focus on grassroots level

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Panchayati Raj Minister Bupendra Singh Chaudhary has asked party members to gear up for the Assembly elections and start working at the grassroots level.

Addressing a virtual meeting of the Bharatiya Janata Party's north unit, Chaudhary said the party workers need to focus mainly on two things — the successful handling of border issue with China and the successful and excellent handling of the COVID-19 pandemic.

He said it was the joint

efforts of the Centre and the state government that had kept the COVID-19 mortality rate low and this was the biggest achievement of the BJP government.

Chaudhary asked all party leaders to hold meetings at the booth level and work out ways to reduce shortcomings and further streamline the functioning at the booth level.

He said the booth level workers were the strength of the party and unless the whole organisation was successfully managed, all the efforts made by the partymen would not be much effective.

Chaudhary said at the for-

eign policy level, the Narendra Modi government had been brave enough to ignore the threats of China and continue its road construction works.

He said everyday there should be a meeting and booth and ward levels should be mainly in focus. He advised the party workers to focus on people's problems.

Chaudhary said that bringing millions of labourers back to their homes and providing them employment at their home towns was a major achievement of the Modi government and it was no exaggeration to state that no other party could have managed

things successfully as was done by the BJP government.

He said the mood of the state was upbeat and the people were all praise of the Yogi Adityanath government for handling the coronavirus epidemic so efficiently.

Chaudhary said on July 16, a meeting would be held in the Govindnagar Vidhan Sabha constituency and it would be presided over by BJP state president Swatantra Dev Singh.

Prominent among those who took part in the meeting included Sunil Bajaj, Santosh Shukla, Arun Pathak, Suresh Awasthi, Shobha Srivastava and Viresh Tripathi.

OFB orders probe into OEF hospital purchases

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

The Vigilance Department of Ordnance Factories Board (OFB) has instituted a probe into the alleged embezzlement of funds for purchase of surgical products at the Ordnance Equipment Factory (OEF) hospital here.

In his letter dated July 1, the Director (Vigilance-North) has asked the complainant to furnish evidence in support of his allegation of misappropriation of funds within 21 days.

The hospital management had purchased surgical prod-

ucts and equipment even when no surgeon was appointed there.

State Minister for Industrial Development Satish Mahana had also sent a letter to the Chairman of Ordnance Factories Board, in this regard.

Republican Mazdoor Mahasangh's national president Ashish Pandey had also demanded a probe into the matter and had sent a letter to the chief vigilance officer of OFB, Kolkata, and the general manager of Ordnance Equipment Factory on June 11.

In his complaint, Pandey

had informed the officials that there was no surgeon in the hospital. He had also pointed out that no surgery was performed in the hospital for the past several years yet the hospital had purchased surgical gowns and kits in huge quantity at very higher rates.

The Republican Mazdoor Mahasangh leader alleged that surgical mask available in the open market at the rate of Rs 180 per piece was purchased by OEF hospital at Rs 243 per piece. He also said the hospital had also purchased surgical gowns on March 25 despite

having no surgeon.

Pandey alleged that for making these purchases, the hospital management did not invite tender or follow other set norms. He said this was a clear indication of misappropriation of government funds.

Pandey said he had again sent a letter to the OFB chairman, urging him to transfer the chief medical officer of the hospital till the probe was completed to prevent him from influencing the investigation.

An OFB official confirmed that a probe had been ordered in the matter.

SPSEC students excel in CBSE

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Sir Padampat Singhania Education Centre Principal Bhawna Gupta said that the school once again proved its mettle by getting 100 per cent results CBSE exams.

This time the school had 25 students who score 100/100 in various subjects and 125 scored 90 per cent plus.

She said the school topper in humanities stream was Devanshi Jain with 99 per cent marks in best five, followed by Vanshika Dubey with 98.2 per cent marks and Fatima Roomi with 97.8 per cent marks.

In commerce stream, Geshnaa Kalsi secured 98.2 per cent, Ujwal Mitta 97.6 per cent and Tanishka Shukla with 97 per cent marks.

In Science stream Medhashree Verma secured 97.2 per cent, followed by Mohammad Ashhar with 96.8 per cent marks and Kashish Tandon with 96.4 per cent marks.

WOODBINE GARDE-



SPSEC meritorious students assemble at school to celebrate success with social distancing.

Pioneer

NIA: Woodbine Gardenia principal Sumita Mukherjee said that this year also students of the school had come out with flying colours both in science and commerce stream.

She said in science stream Aashita Saxena and in commerce stream Vivek Patel

secured the highest marks to top the school with both securing 96.17 per cent marks.

She said apart from this, in science stream, Varun Anshwani, Lovey Dwivedi, Divyanshi Katiyaar, Eksh Thakur, Abhijeet Gautam,

Harshita Srivastava and Vedanshi Tiwari scored high marks.

She said 43 students of the school ranked between 75 per cent and 90 per cent.

Chairman of the school, Shahid Rehman, congratulated the successful students.

'Balance between professional and domestic life a must'

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Noted corporate lawyer Jia Modi and daughter of noted ex-Attorney General of India, Solee Sorabjee, while addressing a webinar organised by FICCI Flo, said in the present race for survival it was very essential to strike a perfect balance between professional life and domestic life.

She said if any one of these was not properly handled it would lead to stress in life.

She said people who were successfully able to maintain a balance between professional and home fronts were happy and prosperous.

She said to enter into the corporate world was her father's ambition but to carve a niche for herself she had worked very hard. She said after the education abroad she returned to India and got married and started working on both the fronts. She said her better half was also successfully striking a perfect balance between the two.

She maintained a balance between the two was a big challenge but she had picked up the gauntlet and with perfect planning and time management she had successfully reached at the top rung of success ladder.

Modi said she had worked with corporate giants like Tata Group, Reliance Industry, Vedanta Group and several others also with a few foreign firms. She gave a mantra to women on how they could prove their mettle and wrest their position in the male-dominated society. She said if a woman had determination then she could fulfil her dreams.

She said success did not come easily but it had to be achieved with hard work and added that women had all the qualities to be successful on the home front and the professional front.

Prominent among those who took part in the webinar included organisation's national president Janhvi Phukan, Aarti Gupta, and Kanika Ved.

Innerwheel Club members plant Tulsi saplings

KANPUR (PNS): The Innerwheel Club of Kanpur Angel extended all possible help to the district administration in planting saplings and promoting tree plantation in the city.

The club members planted basil (Tulsi) at Ashok Vatika on the closing day of the week-long drive on Monday.

Innerwheel Club president Poonam Gupta said in Kanpur was recognised more as a concrete jungle with poor greenery on account of the apathy of the citizens who felt tree plantation was the sole responsibility of the district administration.

She said unless a united effort to plant trees was made, pollution could not be brought down.

She said trees controlled climate by moderating the effects of tsun, rain and wind. She said the foliage absorbed and filtered the sun's radiant energy, keeping things cool in summer.

Addressing the session, Dr Sumita Singhal said it was necessary that apart from ornamental and fruit bearing trees one planted trees that heal the environment and one such plant was basil or Tulsi.

She said Tulsi had many medicinal properties and it strengthened kidney and was considered as anti-stress agent and was a good medicine for headache. She said Tulsi was widely used to treat numerous health as well as beauty problems. She said it had high nutritional value and worked as a great health supplement to keep body healthy and fit.

Addressing the gathering Rekha Agarwal said trees reduced carbon dioxide. She said humans breathe oxygen and exhale carbon dioxide while trees breathe in carbon dioxide and exhale oxygen and this carbon dioxide becomes sugars that can then be eaten, burnt for fuel, or simply enjoyed in its leafy form.

Seema Agarwal and Kusum Gupta also addressed the gathering.

NTPC Singrauli excels

CORRESPONDENT ■ SONBHADRA

NTPC Singrauli unit 1, oldest unit of NTPC has emerged as the top-performing unit in the country in the first quarter of the financial year, as per the data released by Central Electricity Authority (CEA). The first unit of the station started generating on February 13, 1982, and continues to serve the country with outstanding and reliable performance. NTPC Singrauli has an installed capacity of 2,000 MW with five units of 200 MW each and two units of 500 MW each. Three units (1, 4 & 5) of 200 MW have achieved Plant Load Factor

(PLF) of 101.96 per cent, 101.85 per cent and 100.35 per cent respectively in Q1 FY 20-21 among the coal-fired units in



the country. NTPC Singrauli is the flagship power station of NTPC Ltd, India's largest power generation company. With a

total installed capacity of 62,110 MW, NTPC group has 70 power stations comprising of 24 coal, seven combined cycle gas/liquid fuel, one hydro, 13 renewables along with 25 subsidiary and JV power stations. CGM (S) Debasish Chattopadhyay congratulated GM (O&M) SC Naik and all other employees for their dedication and hard work and motivated them for maintaining the above record. Meanwhile Sonbhadra DM S Rajalingam and Singrauli Collector Rajeev Ranjan Meena congratulated team NTPC on this achievement and appreciated their efforts.

NER achieves 100% punctuality target for passenger trains

CORRESPONDENT ■ GORAKHPUR

The North Eastern Railway (NER) is making concerted efforts at various levels to bring about qualitative improvement in its functioning, which is yielding the desired results. Punctuality is a key measure of excellence of the railway system and an important factor of passenger satisfaction. Performing better in the area of punctuality since July 12 the NER succeeded in achieving the ideal target of 100 per cent for operation of passenger trains. Similarly efforts are being made to increase the speed of goods trains to attract industry and business towards rail transport, said Chief Public Relations Officer Pankaj Kumar Singh. The average speed of goods trains on July 12 was around 50 km/hour which is an achievement in itself.

Out of the 26 trains being operated by Varanasi division, 20 reached before time, four ran at the right time while one train made up for the lost time. One train was received late by NER yet it was run on its system on time. Major trains operated by Varanasi Division are 02559/02560 Manduadih-New Delhi-Manduadih Shivganga Special Express, 02791/02792 Patna-Secunderabad-Patna Special Express and 02565/02566 Darbhanga-New Delhi-Darbhanga Saptakranti Express. Out of 23 passenger trains operated by Lucknow division, 15 were run before time and one at the right time. Similarly, two trains made up for the lost time while five others were received late by the NER yet they were run on its own system on time. The major trains operated by Lucknow Division

are 01015/01016 Saharsa-New Delhi-Saharsa special train, 02555/02556 Gorakhpur-Rohtak-Gorakhpur Special train, 02533/02534 Lucknow-Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus-Lucknow Special train and 02557 Muzaffarpur-Delhi Special Express train etc. The 01092 Kathgodam-Dehradun Special Express train operated by Izzatnagar division was operated at the right time while the 02091 Dehradun-Kathgodam Special Express reached Kathgodam before time. The average movement speed of goods trains was 50 km/hour on July 12 which is a remarkable achievement. The average speed of goods trains in Izzatnagar division is around 67 km/hour. It may be pointed out here that the average movement speed of goods trains in the month of June 2020 was 35.5 km/hour.

Doubling work being done at fast pace

PNS ■ VARANASI

Even during this difficult time in view of Covid-19 infection the North Eastern Railway (NER) is providing employment to migrant workers under the Garib Yojana besides accelerating construction projects.

In this sequence under the doubling of 59 route kilometres on the Aunrihar-Jaunpur rail section of Varanasi division the



challenging work of blanketing

from Aunrihar to Kerakat has been completed by engaging 10 migrant labourers, said Public Relations Officer (PRO), Varanasi, Ashok Kumar.

Along with it doubling work of Aunrihar-Ghazipur City rail section is being done at a rapid pace by engaging 26 migrant labourers. At Ghazipur City a rest room for labourers engaged in construction is being built besides a traders' rest room.

Thieves target house, flee with booty

CORRESPONDENT ■ GORAKHPUR

A gang of unidentified thieves sneaked into a locked house situated in Vastu Vihar Colony under the Khorabar police station by breaking open its lock and took away cash and costly items from there. The landlord came to know about the theft when he reached the house. He reported the theft to the police

following which they reached the spot and started investigating the matter. According to information received here, Ravindra Mishra, a resident of Vastu Vihar Colony, Siktur Square, works in Bahraich. In the complaint lodged with the Khorabar police he said that he locked his house on July 5 and gone to Bahraich. On reaching the house he was stunned to see the lock of the house broken.

He immediately informed the police about the theft following which they reached the spot and after carrying out necessary investigation launched a search for the thieves. In his complaint lodged with the police, he said that the thieves had taken ₹50,000 in cash besides jewellery comprising a necklace, an earring, a ring, a 'mangalsutra' etc from his house.

Criminal apprehended

CORRESPONDENT ■ MIRZAPUR

Ahaura police arrested a criminal while he was planning to commit a crime at a picnic spot. On the directive of the SP to keep a watch over the picnic spots Ahaura police was on patrolling at Lakhania fall on Sunday. During patrolling the cops saw a suspicious person roaming there. The police intercepted him and recovered a country-made gun and two cartridges. After registering a case the police sent the accused, Akash Maurya of Koiripur village under Badagaon police station in Varanasi to jail.

Meanwhile the Padari police arrested Lalbahadur, a resident of Devapur Pathkhali, who was at large since a case was lodged against him in February this year. The police announced a reward of ₹15,000 for his arrest. On being tipped

off by an informer the police raided Mohanpur village and nabbed the accused on Sunday.

Another report said that during patrolling Jamalpur police nabbed one person along with a country-made gun and two cartridges. The policemen during patrolling saw a suspicious-looking person near Deoria village. On seeing the police he tried to flee but was caught. On frisking him the police recovered a country-made gun along with two cartridges his possession. The suspicious was identified as Rajesh Yadav, a resident of Krishna Nagar Colony, DD Upadhayaya Nagar, Chandauli. After registering the case in relevant sections the police sent him jail.

MEETING: Nodal officer Anurag Yadav said that defeating pandemic like Covid-19 was only possible with the cooperation of people. At a

meeting held at Ashtabhuj guest house on Sunday, he said that the entire machinery was working with dedication to combat Covid-19. He said that on so many occasions suggestions given by people had proved helpful. On the occasion Amardeep, chairman of a chain of schools, was praised for his role during the lockdown who not only donated food kits among the needy throughout the period but also extended full support to the administration. The meeting was attended by the DM, ADM, CMO, city magistrate along with some respectable persons of the society.

Meanwhile the nodal officer had directed the DM to ensure completion of the solid waste management plant under the Nagar Palika Parishad (NPP) Mirzapur and send a proposal for Chunar Nagar Palika.

Bid to help widows

CORRESPONDENT ■ BANDA

Members, Orphans In Need, Dr Makbool Ali Khan and Dr Zareena Khan, said their chairman Aneesh Musa was helping the widows in several ways. Giving details they said that they were working for the organisation, Orphans In Need, since 2005. They added that a sum of ₹2,000 each was transferred into the accounts of 300 widows through NEFT by chairman, Orphans In Need, Aneesh Musa, recently. Member Dr MA Khan said that chairman Aneesh Musa was helping the widows in several ways by transferring money into their accounts through NEFT and providing them things of daily need. Khan said that he had made special arrangements for free treatment of widows in Banda Para Medical College. More than 500 widows were being given free treatment and medicines there, he added. Member, Dr Zareena Khan said that chairman, Aneesh Musa, was providing best possible support to the widows of Banda for past many years and added that he had also visited the district many times.

Suicide case

CORRESPONDENT ■ MIRZAPUR

A young woman, Aarti (25), daughter of Rama Shankar Gupta, committed suicide in Mahauria locality under City Kotwali police station. Her family members were taken aback when they saw her body hanging in her room on Sunday morning. They said that after dinner on Saturday night she had gone to her room to sleep. When she did not wake up they knocked at the door but did not get any response and were stunned when they somehow managed to open it. The police took the body into custody for taking necessary legal action and said that no complaint had been lodged regarding her death.

Army chief visits forward areas in Jammu-Pathankot

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU



Amid rising incidents of cross border firing especially in the Hiranagar sector of Kathua district, Chief of Army Staff (COAS), General MM Naravane on Monday reviewed the current security situation and operational readiness of the troops deployed on ground in Jammu-Pathankot region during his visit to the forward areas of the Rising Star Corps.

During his interaction with the field formation commanders, Gen Naravane reinstated the fact of 'Zero tolerance' against the ceasefire violations by Pakistan and infiltration attempts by terrorists.

In Jammu, Defence PRO Lt-Col Devender Anand said, "the army chief was separately briefed by Lt Gen Upendra Dwivedi, GOC, Rising Star Corps on the operational preparedness, upgradation of security infrastructure and the internal security matters."

According to official sources, for the last couple of days Pakistani rangers have been regularly targeting several border outposts of Border Security Guards in a bid to divert

their attention while pushing groups of heavily armed infiltrators via the Hira Nagar sector.

This route is considered the traditional route of infiltration by the handlers of infiltrators. Kashmir bound trucks ferry arms consignment and even terrorists in small batches via the same route. So far two such attempts have been foiled by the alert security personnel and on both the occasions the terrorists were neutralized before they could reach Kashmir valley.

Earlier, on his arrival in Jammu, the Army Chief was received by Lt Gen RP Singh, GOC-in-C Western Command, Lt Gen Upendra Dwivedi, GOC Rising Star Corps, Maj Gen VB Nair, GOC Tiger Division and Air Cmde AS Pathania, AOC, Air Force station, Jammu

Defence PRO, Lt Col Devender Anand in a press statement said, "After attending a briefing, the Army Chief accompanied by GOC Tiger Division reviewed operational preparedness in forward areas. He interacted with the field formation Commanders and troops on ground during the forward area tour. The General also visited the forward areas of Gurj Division and was briefed by Maj Gen YP Khanduri, GOC Gurj Division.

The Army Chief also addressed all ranks of Western Command through video conferencing and lauded the morale of the troops. He expressed complete confidence in Indian Army's capabilities to thwart any misadventure by the enemies of our country and handle any situation.

KERALA GOLD SMUGGLING CASE

Swapna, Sandeep sent to NIA custody for 8 days

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

Swapna Suresh and Sandeep Nair, who were arrested by the National Investigation Agency on Saturday from Bangalore in connection with Gold Smuggling through Thiruvananthapuram Airport were on Monday sent to NIA Custody for eight days by a Special Court at Kochi.

The NIA officials informed the Court that both of them have to be questioned in custody as the charges against them were grave and of national importance. The duo have been smuggling gold into the country using diplomatic channel and the smuggled gold was being used for anti-national activities like terrorism and to subvert the country's economy.

The Agency also told that Swapna, who was a former employee of the UAE Consulate had got counterfeit diplomatic seals and certificates to smuggle the gold through diplomatic channel. She was helped in the operations by Sandeep, said the agency.

The Special Court judge P

Krishnakumar asked the NIA to produce the duo before the court on July 21. The agency told the court that it was in possession of all documents and evidences to prove their charges.

The smuggling route was happening since 2019, said the agency officials. Swapna was a former staff of the UAE Consulate at Thiruvananthapuram but her services were terminated following charges of improper conduct. She got the diplomatic seal of the UAE Consulate made through the contacts she developed during her tenure in the Consulate.

Meanwhile there are reports that the NIA is likely to interrogate some prominent persons including film personalities in connection with gold smuggling.

Earlier in the day, Rameez, a Malappuram based Muslim League leader who was held by the Customs officials in connection with the smuggling case was sent to the custody of the Customs for seven days by a special court in Kochi.

First senior Govt officer dies of virus in Bengal

Kolkata: The dreaded virus has claimed its first victim in State civil services rank with senior WBCS officer Debdatta Roy succumbing to the disease on Monday, Government sources said adding Ray was tasked with the handling of migrant workers.

"After contacting the disease she was asked to remain in home isolation. But as her condition deteriorated she was hospitalised where she finally succumbed," Health Department sources said.

33-year-old Ray, who was posted as a Deputy Magistrate at Chandannagar in Hooghly district, died at a private hospital in Serampore. She was a 2010 batch WBCS (Executive) officer.

Meanwhile even as corona situation worsened in Bengal a dead body of a corona victim was found lying for hours on the sidewalks of a street in Liluah in Howrah, sources said adding the elderly woman was taken away from the municipal staff after about five hours.

Bengal had recorded about 30,000 positive cases with a recovery rate of about 64 per cent. The State has thus far witnessed 932 deaths. **PNS**

No respite in Kerala's cases as 449 more +ve

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

Notwithstanding the fact that 449 persons were diagnosed with Covid-19 on Monday, Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan said that Kerala has the best coronavirus management programme in the country.

"There are attempts by some sections to portray the covid-19 management in the State in poor light. Kerala has the lowest Case Fatality Rate which is even better than the World Average. The Global case fatality rate is 4.38, while that of India is 2.67. But Kerala's CFR is 0.39 per cent," said the Chief Minister in his interaction with the media.

He also said that while the national average in the number of deaths per million was 17.1, Kerala's average is 0.9 per cent.

"Even in Test Positivity Rate, Kerala is ahead of all other States and that of the world," claimed Vijayan.

He also disclosed that 144 persons were infected through social transmission on Monday. "The day also

saw 713 persons getting admitted to the hospitals and this is the highest number to be recorded on a single day. As on Monday, there are 4,376 undergoing treatment in hospitals in the State," said the chief minister.

Vijayan said a sense of ennuhi has set in among health workers and volunteers due to the repetitious nature of the kind of work.

"We are in the process of intensifying People's Defence against the pandemic," he said. Without naming the Opposition, the chief minister repeated the charge that there are attempts by some section to derail the Government's good work in containing the covid-19 preventive measures.

As on Monday, there were 223 hotspots in the State. Vijayan said that till date 2.44 lakh samples have been sent for testing.

The Chief Minister also said that the health department was making all arrangements to face any situation arising out of further surge in the number of covid-19 cases.

2 terrorists killed in Anantnag encounter

Jammu: In another successful operation, the joint teams of security forces on Monday gunned down two more terrorists of Pakistan based Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) terror outfit in Srigufwara area of Anantnag district.

This is the second successful operation in the last 48 hours in Kashmir valley. Three Lashkar-e-Toiba (LeT) terrorists including two Pakistani nationals were earlier gunned down by the security forces in Rebban area of Sopore in Baramulla district.

Since July 1, a total number of 11 terrorists have been neutralised by the security forces in six encounters.

According to a police spokesman, "One of the killed terrorists has been identified as Nasir alias Shabbaz alias Baz Bai, a Pakistan resident. He was listed as 'A' category terrorist,

while the identification of the other killed terrorist is being ascertained.

Police spokesman said, the operation was launched in the area on the basis of a specific input generated by Anantnag Police regarding presence of terrorists in Srigufwara area of Anantnag.

"During the search operation when the first contact was established with the hiding terrorists they were given the opportunity to surrender, however they fired indiscriminately upon the joint search party, which was retaliated leading to an encounter", police spokesman said.

"In the indiscriminate firing by terrorists, one woman received gunshot injuries. She was shifted to hospital for treatment where her condition is stated to be stable", police spokesman said. **PNS**

Travancore Royal family, devotees happy over Supreme Court verdict

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

The Travancore Royal Family, erstwhile rulers of Kerala, expressed their satisfaction over Monday's Supreme Court verdict that quashed the 2011 Kerala High Court verdict which had removed the Family's hold over the management of the Sree Padmanabha Temple, the centuries old shrine at Thiruvananthapuram. "This is the blessing by Lord Padmanabha and I don't have words to express our gratitude to the lakhs of people who had prayed for us. We are the servile of Lord Ananthapadmanabha and will remain so in future.

This is a victory for Lord Ananthapadmanabha and he has blessed his devotees with this verdict," said Aswathi Thirunal Gowri Lakshmi Bayi, eminent writer and a member of the Travancore Royal Family. Kadakampalli Surendran, Kerala Minister for Devaswom (temple administration) said the Government welcomed the Supreme Court. "We will take the future course of action after studying the verdict," said Surendran at Thiruvananthapuram.

Govind Bharathan, senior advocate, Kerala High Court, said the Supreme Court verdict

delivered on Monday is a victory of not only the Travancore Royal family but the Hindus in the country too. "A secular government does not have the right to meddle with the rituals associated with the temple and this verdict substantiates and underscores that tradition. With this judgement the Supreme Court has spoiled the designs of the Kerala Government to take control of the temple properties," said Bharathan who was in the forefront of agitations against the attempts by various governments to take over the temple.

K Ramkumar, senior advocate, Kerala High Court welcomed the verdict. "The Supreme Court has upheld the rights of the Travancore Royal Family in the administration and management of the Temple. This is a victory for Hindus and all believers in the State. The Kerala High Court had taken the rights of the Royal Family by its 2011 verdict, a painful chapter in Kerala's history. The Royal Family had dedicated everything under its possession for the welfare of the people but the so called democratic governments were trying to usurp the treasure stored in the chambers of the Temple. The Supreme Court has atoned for the action of the Kerala high Court," said Ramkumar.

As cases rising in TN, public transport banned till July 31

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ CHENNAI

A total number of 4,328 fresh Covid-19 patients joined the list of persons afflicted with the pandemic in Tamil Nadu on Monday. The State also saw 66 persons succumbing to the disease in the last 24 hours according to the medical bulletin issued by the Tamil Nadu government.

By Monday evening, number of persons infected with the coronavirus across the State reached 48,196 while the total number of cases traced till date crossed 1.42 lakh.

As part of aggressive testing all over the State, 105 laboratories tested 43,548 persons on Monday while the number of persons tested till date crossed 1.58 million.

Taking a cue from the increase in the number of patients, Tamil Nadu

Government banned public transport across the State till July 31.

Monday also saw 3,035 persons getting discharged from hospitals across the State taking the number of recoveries till date to 92,567. Out of the 66 deaths reported on Monday, 59 died with comorbidities.

Chennai continued to show a fall in the number of persons afflicted with Covid-19. Out of the 4,328 tested positive on Monday, 1,140 were from Chennai.

Though the decrease in the number of patients in Chennai was not considerable, the capital city is showing trends that the pandemic has been contained. Experts attribute this to the fever clinics launched by the Greater Chennai Municipal Corporation, according to G

Prakash, Corporation Commissioner.

"High number of residents being screened in fever clinics has led to a declining trend for the last 12 days in Chennai that has a population of 87 lakh," said the corporation commissioner. But the same could not be said about the other districts. The three neighbouring districts of Chennai continued to show high number of cases on Monday too.

Chengalpet (219), Kancheepuram (352) and Thiruvallur (337) continued to show upward movement in the number of covid patients. Districts like Madurai (464), Thoothukudi (122), Ranipet (126) and many other southern districts continued to show increased numbers despite the efforts of the administration to bring the pandemic under control.

FROM PAGE 1

GEHLOT PASSES MUSTER, WINS ROUND 1

On Monday, the CLP passed a resolution supporting the Gehlot-led Government in the State after in a major show of strength of 102 MLAs.

Congress sources claimed that the group supporting Pilot wanted key portfolios like Home and Finance for its nominees and wanted the party to retain Pilot as Rajasthan Congress chief.

Sources also claimed that also on the table were demands to make four MLAs, supporting Pilot, Ministers in the Gehlot Cabinet as well as have a say in deciding 50 per cent of the candidates in the upcoming Panchayat polls in the State. Pilot, so far, has not issued any public statement in this political imbroglio.

Sources have said at least 12 MLAs loyal to Pilot are camping with him in Delhi, the Congress leader claims to have the support of 30 legislators while he was simultaneously in touch with BJP which Pilot himself has denied.

"The doors of the Congress were, are, and will be open for Pilot to come and hold discussions," Surjewala said same time cautioning that personal ambitions of leaders will not be allowed to destroy the party. A Pilot aide said the CM's back garden is not the place to prove majority and it is done in the Assembly. "If they have numbers as claimed, why not do a head count and take them to the Governor instead of moving them to hotel," he said on the claims of Gehlot and the Congress.

The resolution passed at the CLP meet said, "This ripping off of democracy by BJP is insult to eight crore people of Rajasthan, they'll not accept it. CLP meet expresses its confidence in Congress president Sonia and leader Rahul, and unanimously supports the Government led by Gehlot." Soon after the CLP the Gehlot camp legislators were put in a resort near Jaipur. Pilot has been upset since he was denied the Rajasthan Chief Minister's post after the December 2018 Assembly elections. Pilot has claimed that the Gehlot Government is in minority and that he has the support of over 30 MLAs in the 200-member Assembly.

According to sources, top Congress leaders who spoke to Pilot have asked him not to rebel against the Chief Minister and assured him that his grievances would be redressed at the party level.

Pilot has raised a banner of revolt against Gehlot, after the special operations group (SOG) of Rajasthan Police sent a notice to him for appearing before it in the case involving "horse-trading" of MLAs in the State. The SOG has registered an FIR in this regard and has also sent notices to the Chief Minister, chief whip of Congress and some Ministers and MLAs.

CONG HAS FAILED TO KEEP ITS HOUSE IN ORDER: BJP

He said blaming the BJP would not do any good as Gehlot has not been able to keep his Government intact as "MLAs are not happy with him".

"The Congress State Chief himself feels sidelined," Mathur said. BJP Rajasthan president Satish Punia

claimed that young leaders have always been "neglected and sidelined" in the Congress and asserted that it is time Congress government in Rajasthan should go "as it has lost the confidence of people."

I-T RAIDS ON GEHLOT'S 2 AIDES AMID TUSSELE

The sources said Sharma had received around Rs 9.7 crore from Mauritius and has stakes in the hotel. Sharma and Vaibhav are allegedly business partners. Sharma was summoned for questioning by the ED four days back and Vaibhav is also likely to be summoned by the ED, sources said. As many as 80 officers of IT Department were involved in the searches launched early this morning in Delhi, Jaipur, Mumbai and Kota and other places over alleged tax case against the Congress leaders in Rajasthan. Such moves in the midst of the political crises have led to allegations of arm twisting the Opposition by exploiting the investigative agencies under the Centre. Several Congress leaders have said that the BJP was using the probe agencies to destabilise a duly elected Government.

BENGAL BJP MLA FOUND HANGING WITH HANDS TIED, PARTY SEEKS CBI PROBE

He added, however that "all angles are being investigated ... things will be clearer after post mortem." Roy's death is yet another instance of mysterious hanging of BJP men after a couple of local saffron leaders were found hanging from trees in Purulia district in 2019.

Expressing shock at the "murder" of Roy, BJP president JP Nadda said, "The suspected heinous killing of Debendra Nath Ray, is extremely shocking and deplorable. This speaks of the Gunda Raj and failure of law and order in the Mamata Government."

Dismissing North Dinajpur TMC president KL Agarwal's statement rejecting any foul play in Roy's death, Bengal BJP president Dilip Ghosh said, "The cold-blooded murder of Hemtabad BJP MLA is shocking and unfortunate. We demand a CBI investigation as the State Government will not do fair enquiry. We will launch protest movements all across the State."

He wondered "how there was no mud or water on a person's clothing who committed suicide a mile away from his house in a rainy night," while Union Minister and local MP Debashree Chowdhury who rushed to the spot soon after smelt Trinamool Congress "politics of systematic elimination," behind Roy's death. "We want CBI investigation and not a thing less," she said. The State unit of the party has requested President Ramnath Kovind for an audience regarding the issue, Ghosh said.

The BJP which launched protest rallies throughout Bengal on Monday called a 12-hour bandh in North Bengal on Tuesday. From Wednesday onwards, they will hold dharna outside police stations across North Dinajpur District.

Refuting charges brought by the BJP senior Bengal

Minister, Firhad Hakim said, "It has been the tactic of the BJP to play narrow politics with corpses. But they will not succeed in this dirty game as truth will definitely come out." On demand of CBI probe he said, "The Bengal Police is more efficient than the CBI and has solved more cases than them. So the State police will handle the case and bring out the truth."

Meanwhile, the case was reportedly handed over to the Criminal Investigation Department (CID), sources said.

GOOGLE TO INVEST ₹75,000 CR TO BOOST INDIA'S ECONOMY

In another post, PM Modi tweeted "During our interaction, @sundarpichai and I spoke about the new work culture that is emerging in the times of COVID-19. We discussed the challenges the global pandemic has brought to areas such as sports. We also talked about the importance of data security and cyber safety." A statement from his office said that during the interaction, the Prime Minister "remarked that India is amongst the most open economies in the world". The Prime Minister "discussed the issue of data security and concerns around privacy," adding that "tech companies need to put in efforts to bridge the trust deficit".

ROYALS HOLD PADMANABHASWAMY TEMPLE'S SHEBAIT RIGHTS: SC

While making an interim arrangement to manage the affairs of the temple, the apex court said that it will remain in force till a fresh committee is set up and all the members of the committee must be Hindus.

The controversy over the administration and management of the historic temple was pending in the apex court for last nine years in the wake of charges of alleged financial irregularities.

Even after India's independence, the temple continued to be governed by a trust controlled by the erstwhile royal family for whom Lord Padmanabha (Vishnu) is their family deity.

The top court had on April 10 last year reserved its judgment on the appeals against the high court's verdict. The high court had directed the State Government to take steps to set up a body or a trust to take control of the temple, its assets and management and to run the temple in accordance with the traditions. It had on May 2, 2011 stayed the high court's direction regarding taking over of the assets and management of the temple. The top court had also directed that there shall be a detailed inventory of the articles, valuables, ornaments in Kallaras (vaults). On July 8, 2011, the apex court had said that "opening of kallara 'B' is to be kept in abeyance till further orders". In July 2017, the apex court had said it would examine the claims that one of the vaults the temple contained extraordinary treasure with "mystical" energy.

No further lockdown in Mumbai: BMC

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

With the doubling rate for Covid-19 cases in the country's commercial capital having increased to 50 days, Mumbai Municipal Commissioner IS Chahal on Monday made it clear that there is no plan to re-impose lockdown in the metropolis.

"The coronavirus situation in Mumbai is totally under control. There is no need for re-imposing lockdown in Mumbai," Chahal said, while talking to a regional television channel.

In what has come as a big relief to the Mumbaiikars is that the doubling rate for Covid-19 cases - which was three days on March 22, rose to 15 days on April 5 and increased further to 30 days on June 22 - has gone up 50 days on July 10.

In the case of suburbs like Bandra, Khar (east) and Santa Cruz - which fall under H-East ward - the doubling period has gone up to 154 days.

Chahal said that the testing done by the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) had gone up from 4,000 to 6,800 every day. "However, the total number of positive cases has come down from 1,400 to 1,200 now," the city chief said.

Of these 1,200 to 1,400 positive cases, the symptomatic cases are less than 200. "That being the case, the BMC needs only 200 beds daily," Chahal said.

"We have put in place Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) to streamline allocation of Covid-19 beds to the patients. Now it is essential for the private labs to submit reports of the patients within 24 hours of testing. Soon after that we will undertake contract tracing and isolate those who have come in contact with the positive patients," Chahal said.

6,497 positive cases in Maharashtra

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

With no major let up in the Covid-19 situation in Maharashtra, the total number of infections crossed 2.6 lakh mark on Monday, as 6,497 more people tested positive for the pandemic, while 193 fresh deaths were reported from various parts of the state.

With fresh infections and fatalities, the total number of infected cases mounted to 2,60,924, while the total deaths jumped to 10,482.

Of the total 193 deaths, Thane accounted for 59 deaths and for the fifth day this month, and the city surpassed Mumbai which today record-

ed 47 deaths

Apart from 59 deaths recorded in Thane and 47 deaths in Mumbai, there were 30 deaths in Pune, ten in Nashik, eight in Jalgaon, seven Solapur, six in Palghar, five in Raigad, three each in Aurangabad, Osmanabad and Sangli, two each in Ahmednagar, Dhule, Latur and Akola and one each in Amravati, Washim, Nagpur and Bhandara.

With 47 deaths, the total number of deaths in Mumbai went up from 5,288 to 5,335 now, while the number of infected cases in the metropolis rose by 1,158 cases to touch 94,146.

With 63,778 infected cases and 1705 deaths, Thane con-

tinued 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 40,180 infections and 11,27 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 1,44,507. The recovery rate in the state stood at 55.38 per cent. The mortality rate in the state is 4.02 per cent. The state health authorities pegged the number of "active cases" in the state at 1,05,637.

NIA arrests two, including journalism student, in ISKP case



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) has arrested two accused in an Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISKP) case, including a journalism student, a 22-year-old girl from Maharashtra.

On Sunday, NIA teams carried out searches in Pune and arrested the two accused persons—Nabeel S Khatri (27), a resident of Pune and Sadiya Anwar Sheikh (22) who hails from Phulenagar, Yerwada, Pune in connection with Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISKP) Case, NIA Spokesperson said

The couple was having affiliations with ISKP, which is a banned terrorist organisation and is a part of ISIS, and was found to be involved in subversive and anti-national activities. They were also found to be in touch with Abdullah Basith, who is already lodged in Tihar jail in another NIA case (ISIS Abu Dabhi module),” the spokesperson said.

The investigation has revealed that accused Sadiya Sheikh was continuously in touch with Jahanzaib Sami, Hina Bashir Beigh and Abdullah Basith on various secure messaging applications and deliberating on ways to propagate the ideology of ISIS and further its activities in India.

They were trying to build up a cadre of ISIS in India by recruiting gullible youth for terrorist activities, the agency further said.

It has also come to light that along with Jahanzaib Sami and Abdullah Basith, accused Nabeel Khatri was also actively involved in the planning to carry out violent terrorist attacks in India by arranging logistic support such as procurement of weapons, fake SIM cards and assembling of Improvised Explosive Devices

(IEDs) to further the activities of ISIS in India. He was continuously in contact with Jahanzeb on various secure messaging platforms, the official said.

Ram Mandir would meet 'Hagia Sophia' fate: Terrorist Azhar

RAKESH K SINGH ■ NEW DELHI



Banned Pakistani terror group Jaish-e-Mohammad's Chief Maulana Masood Azhar has in a statement welcomed conversion of Hagia Sophia museum into a mosque in Turkey and expressed hope that Ram Mandir in Ayodhya would also become a mosque at some point in time.

Ayodhya has been on the radar of the JeM for a long time and Azhar had issued a video in 2018 threatening to return the then defunct mosque to the Muslims. The issue has also been exploited by the terror outfits, including JeM, to recruit a section of the gullible youth from a particular community to join their ranks to further their

nefarious agenda in the country. This besides, such fault lines are also exploited by the Pakistan Army-ISI and their jihadi cohorts to get traction of the fringe elements of the minority community to disturb harmony by enlisting their support for logistics and supporting their sleeper cells to carry out terror attacks.

The JeM has been responsible for major terror attacks in India beginning from the hit on the Parliament House in 2001 to

Patankot Air Base and Army Base in Uri (2016) and Pulwama (2019) among others. Intelligence assessments here suggest the Jaish could target multiple controversial religious sites in the region, including in India, ahead of Muslim festival of Bakrid later this month. The Intelligence agencies are seized of the issue and counter-measures are being planned accordingly, sources said.

Interestingly, Azhar has also justified the hostage taking of people, including seven Chinese engineers, at Lal Masjid in 2007. China had defended Azhar against India's bid to ban him by the United Nations. Azhar is also believed to be harbouring some Uyghur groups that are waging

a struggle against Chinese oppression in the Xinjiang province. Meanwhile, the Tahreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) or the Pakistani Taliban has upped the ante against the Pakistani security forces and fatally hitting them almost on a daily basis. The outfit is also opposed against exploitation of the local resources by the Chinese through mining rights and other projects in the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). The Pakistan-Army and ISI have also formed fictitious Baloch groups to target Chinese interests and extract more funds from Beijing to provide security to their business interests, a counter-terrorism expert said. The TTP operates along

the Pak-Afghan border inhabited largely by the tribals and is opposed to the oppression of their lot by the Pakistani Army and other agencies.

The way Azhar has forcefully mentioned Hagia Sophia, Babri Masjid and Lal Masjid in his speeches and internal communication indicates the terror group, under the patronage of the ISI, has hatched a grand conspiracy to execute some major nefarious designs.

During the last six months, both Azhar and Lashkar-e-Tayyaba have praised the Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan about five to six times. This could be an indication that the terror masterminds see a godfather in Erdogan.

Special Court, New Delhi. Further investigation in the case is continuing, agency added.

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NHAI to tie up with IITs for improving road infra ecosystem

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) on Monday said it will partner with institutes like the Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) for improving the road infrastructure ecosystem. The objective is to leverage the intellectual prudence of students and faculty towards improvement of the road infrastructure ecosystem of the country.

"In its endeavour to provide world-class National Highways (NH) network, NHAI has approached all IITs, National Institutes of Technology (NITs) and reputed engineering colleges to collaborate and adopt nearby stretches of NH, on voluntary basis, as part of Institutional Social Responsibility (ISR)," the NHAI said in a statement.

The institutes along with its faculty and students have better appreciation of local requirement, topography, resource potential, among others, and these vital inputs can be utilised by NHAI during different stages of pre-construction, construction and operation of NH stretches, it said.

This decentralised approach, besides building a sense of participation in decision making, also provides an opportunity to the students for hands-on-learning, option for internship and future areas of research, it said.

Besides, the adoption of stretch by institutes opens avenue for access to important data, which can be used to improve the quality and safety



aspects of NH and enhance local capacity of institutes in terms of advanced lab and simulation systems. "Adoption of NH stretch by an institute would facilitate stakeholder engagement and help to mitigate the routine local problems such as traffic movement, congestion and immediate identification of accident prone sites," the statement said.

The highway users become more empowered in resolving local problems through the institute and the Authority, it said, adding that such instances would help NHAI in understanding the local needs both in present and future projects, improve maintenance and riding comfort, and develop wayside amenities for enhanced user experience. "The overall outcome shall be commuter friendly and enjoyable ride on the NH stretch," NHAI said.

The statement said large number of IITs, NITs and engineering colleges has opted to join the scheme and NHAI officers have started mutual consultation with directors of the interested Institutes. Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) are being signed between the individual institutes and NHAI for institutionalization of the scheme and bring reformative improvements in the road infrastructure of the country.

PTI slapped with ₹84 cr fine for 'lease violation', asked to pay within month

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA) has issued a notice to news agency Press Trust of India (PTI) for allegedly violating terms of the lease under which it was allotted land for its Sansad Marg office in Delhi and asked to pay a penalty of ₹84.48 crore within a month.

The notice dated July 7, issued by the ministry's Land and Development Office, warned that an additional 10 per cent interest may need to be coughed out by PTI if it fails to furnish the concerned amount within the stipulated time period.

This comes two weeks after the Prasar Bharati expressed displeasure over the news agency's recent interview with China's ambassador to India, who said India was the aggressor in the June 15 skirmish in Galwan Valley and said that it is reviewing its annual subscription with the news agency. Prasar Bharati is among PTI's biggest subscribers.

According to the ministry officials, the PTI office is built on land leased to the agency by the government. The officials said PTI had not paid ground rent since 1984. "Since 1984, PTI has not paid the ground rent. Besides, they have misused the land-allotment terms by converting the basement into an office and several unauthorised construction was undertaken. Under the lease term, the basement is to be used only for storage purposes," officials said.

The notice that sought Rs

84,48,23,281 argues that "the less will be pleased to regularise the breaches in the premises temporarily up to 14.07.2020 and withdraw the right of re-entry of the premises subject to the following conditions being fulfilled by you within 30 days from the date of issue of this letter."

The notice adds that the news agency must give an undertaking on non-judicial stamp paper stating that it will pay the difference of "misuse/damage charges" if the land rates are revised with retrospective effect from April 1, 2016, and will also remove the "breaches" by July 14, 2020, or get them regularised by paying charges. The Land and Development Office added that if the amount is not paid in the stipulated time period, an additional 10% interest may be levied.

"Further action to execute the lease deed shall be subject to complete payment and putting to use of the premises as per permissible under the master plan," the notice read. The notice added that if PTI did not comply with its terms, the "concession of limiting the penalty" will be withdrawn.

Officials said that an amount of ₹84 crore penalty includes all these violations, which the agency has failed to address despite several notices from us in the past. The notice also warns that further action to execute the deed has to be subject to complete payment and putting the premise to use according to the master plan.

SC asks Madras HC to decide TN's plea for OBC quota in medical admissions

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court Monday asked the Madras High Court to decide the pleas, including one filed by Tamil Nadu Government, against the Centre's decision not to grant 50 per cent quota to OBCs in medical seats surrendered by the state in all India quota for under graduate, post graduate and dental courses in 2020-21.

A bench of Justices L Nageswara Rao and Hemant Gupta said the high court should decide the plea of the state government and others irrespective of the pendency of another case here.

In a hearing conducted via video link, the top court said, "All the contention raised in petitions (before it) should be decided by the High Court" and requested the High Court to deal with the case.

Earlier, the State Government had moved the Supreme Court on July 2 seeking a direction to the High Court to expeditiously decide its plea challenging the Centre's decision not to grant 50 per cent quota to OBCs in medical seats surrendered by the state in all India quota for UG, PG and dental courses in 2020-21.

It had assailed the June 22 high court order which refused to grant any interim order on the OBC quota row saying that a similar petition was already scheduled to be heard by the Supreme Court.

The apex court, which was scheduled to hear the case titled as Saloni Kumar versus Union of India on July 8, has adjourned the hearing and had fixed the case for a later date.



The State Government and various political parties have challenged the Centre's decision not to grant 50 per cent reservation to OBCs as per Tamil Nadu law

The High Court had fixed the state's plea on quota on July 9.

The State Government and some political parties such as DMK, All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK), CPI (M), Tamil Nadu Congress Committee and CPI had moved the high court after the Supreme Court, on June 11, refused to entertain their petitions and asked them to approach the high court.

"Direct the High Court to expeditiously hear and dispose of the writ petitions..." the state government said in its plea before the top court.

The High Court has in effect declined to take up the writ petitions in spite of the fact that the Respondents (Centre, MCI and others) had virtually conceded to the prayer sought for in the writ petition.

"The High Court has failed to appreciate that the respondents are stalling adjudication of the issue. The

(High) Court has been misled by the Respondent's contentions and has unjustifiably kept the Petitioner's writ petition in abeyance till this court issues orders in an ostensibly identical matter..." it said.

The high court had refused to pass any interim order on the pleas after taking note of the Centre's submission that since 1986 no reservation has been provided in the AIQ (All-India quota) seats for medical admission as per the apex court directive.

"The same was modified after 10 years, providing reservation for SC/ST. In 2015, pleas were moved seeking OBC reservation, which is still pending before the apex court, which has to take a call and modify the order," the counsel for the Centre had told the High Court.

The State Government and various political parties have challenged the Centre's decision not to grant 50 per cent reservation to OBCs as per Tamil Nadu law.

SC to hear on July 24 pleas against blacklisting of foreigners for alleged Tablighi activities

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Monday said it would hear on July 24 the pleas filed by foreigners challenging the Centre's orders that blacklisted more than 2,700 citizens of 35 countries from travelling to India for 10 years for alleged involvement in Tablighi Jamaat activities.

The matter came up for hearing through video-conferencing before a bench headed by Justice A M Khanwilkar. Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, representing the Centre, requested the bench to adjourn the matter for two weeks.

The bench said the matter would be taken up for hearing on Friday next week.

The Centre had earlier sought dismissal of the pleas and informed the top court on July 2 that it has issued individual orders on a case-to-case basis for cancellation of visas and blacklisting of 2,765 foreign nationals.

As per the information available, 205 FIRs have been lodged against the foreign Tablighi Jamaat members by 11 states and 2,765 such foreigners have been blacklisted so far, the Centre had said in its affidavit.

Of these, visas of 2,679 foreigners (including 9 Overseas Citizen of India (OCI) card holders) have been cancelled, it had said, adding that remaining 86 include Nepal nationals who do not require visa.

The top court was also informed by the Centre that 1,906 Look Out Circulars (LOCs) were issued against foreign Tablighi Jamaat members and 227 left India before the issuance of LOCs/Black Listing.

Pvt hospitals empanelled under CGHS will charge fixed rates

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Centre on Monday said that private hospitals empanelled under the Central Government Health Scheme (CGHS) will charge from beneficiaries the rates prescribed by the Delhi Government for COVID-19 treatment till their States fix their own charges.

Last month, the Government had decided to reimburse the cost of pulse oximeter (per family) purchased by Central Government Health Scheme (CGHS) beneficiaries in case infected by the Covid-19.

An office memorandum issued by the CGHS director said the rates for treatment of COVID-19 in private-empanelled hospitals for CGHS beneficiaries shall be as per the package rate prescribed by the state government concerned.

"In case, no such rate has been prescribed by the state government in any CGHS city, the rates prescribed by the government of NCT Delhi, shall be applicable till rates are notified by the concerned state government," the memorandum dated July 10, 2020 read.

The Delhi Government last month issued an order fixing the cost of a Covid-19 isolation bed in any private hospital in the range of Rs 8,000-10,000 and an ICU bed with ventilator at ₹15,000-18,000 per day.

According to the memorandum, the Union Health Ministry had received representations regarding clarifications and guidelines on rates applicable for treatment at private healthcare organisations empanelled under the CGHS, following which the matter was reviewed.

For non-Covid-related treatment in private hospitals empanelled under the scheme, the normal CGHS package rate shall be admissible, the memorandum stated.

The Covid-19 test shall be permitted as per the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) guidelines and the CGHS rate shall be as per the rates fixed by state governments or actual, whichever may be less.

"If the State Government has not notified such rates, the rates prescribed by the ICMR are applicable till rates are notified by State Government," it said.

Services for mothers, newborns, young children and adolescents crumbling: IAP

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Mothers, newborns, young children and adolescents are losing 20 per cent of their health and social services due to the Covid-19 pandemic across the world, according to the UN Secretary-General's Independent Accountability Panel (IAP).

"Health systems in both rich and poor nations are massively struggling and the services for mothers, newborns, young children and adolescents are crumbling," said Elizabeth Mason, co-chair of the UN Secretary-General's Independent Accountability Panel (IAP).

The report said that 5.3 million deaths in children under 5 by pre-pandemic estimates, and over 400,000 additional deaths due to the infection-related disruptions in services.

Similarly, 2.5 million newborn deaths pre-pandemic, with a minimum of 168,000 additional deaths estimated while 295,000 maternal deaths were pre-pandemic, with an additional 24,400 additional deaths estimated. At least, 13.5 million children missed vaccinations against life-threatening diseases while more than 20 countries reported vaccine

campaigns are being halted and health workers are being diverted from maternity to COVID-19 units," Dr Mason added.

The Panel provided an overview of estimated impacts from COVID-19 pandemic on women, newborns, young children and adolescents since its start in January. The data was disturbing.

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shortages caused by the pandemic.

Also, said the panel around 42-66 million children risk falling into extreme poverty even as some 370 million children are missing school meals.

"These new findings show how weak our health systems are at protecting mothers, newborns, young children and adolescents," says Joy Phumaphi, co-chair of the Panel and former WHO Assistant Director-General. "We are at a point where decades of progress for this group could be easily reversed."

The COVID-19 pandemic has interrupted steady progress and has led to increased poverty and unemployment.

Early data finds women experience not only loss of various categories of support and social safety nets, but also an inability to access increased support, compared to men.

Covid brings lots of extra-pulmonary manifestations

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Becoming infected with SARS-CoV-2 or Covid-19 not only triggers substantial respiratory pathology, but also results into plethora of extra-pulmonary manifestations such as thrombotic complications, myocardial dysfunction, acute coronary syndromes, acute kidney injury, gastrointestinal symptoms, hyperglycemia and ketosis, neurologic illnesses, ocular symptoms, and dermatologic complications among others.

According to researchers, SARS-CoV-2 seems to employ mechanisms for receptor recognition similar to those used by prior virulent coronaviruses such as SARS-CoV, causing the SARS epidemic of 2003.

"The coronavirus spike protein facilitates entry of the virus into target cells. The spike subunit of SARS-CoV and that of SARS-CoV-2 engage ACE2 (angiotensin-converting enzyme 2) as an entry receptor. In addition, cell entry requires priming of the spike protein by the cellular serine protease TMPRSS2 or other proteases.

"In addition, the efficiency with which the virus binds to ACE2 is a key determinant of transmissibility, as shown in studies of SARS-CoV. Recent studies have demonstrated higher affinity of binding of SARS-CoV-2 to ACE2 than of SARS-CoV to ACE2, which may partially explain the increased transmissibility of SARS-CoV-2," explained the researchers.

Covid-19 seems to strike the elderly and immunocompromised the hardest, along with any of us with underlying health conditions such as diabetes, heart and lung disease. But the young shouldn't take anything for granted -- there have been deaths among people aged 20 to 50, as well.

Thrombocytopenia, although often mild (in 5-36% of admissions), is associated with worse patient outcomes while Acute kidney injury (AKI) is a frequent complication of the infection and is associated with mortality. In China, the reported incidence of AKI in hospitalized patients with Covid-19 ranged from 0.5 per cent to 29 per cent. Studies from the USA have reported much higher rates of AKI.

The incidence of gastrointestinal manifestations has ranged from 12% to 61% in patients with COVID-19. Gastrointestinal symptoms may be associated with a longer duration of illness but have not been associated with increased mortality, as per a review article published in the journal Nature (Medicine). The researchers reviewed a recent meta-analysis of 29 studies (of which the majority are from China), the pooled prevalence of individual symptoms was reported, including that of anorexia (21 per cent), nausea and/or vomiting (7 per cent), diarrhoea (9 per cent), and abdominal pain (3 per cent). In a study from the USA, a higher prevalence of these symptoms was reported (anorexia, 34.8 per cent; diarrhoea, 33.7 per cent; and nausea, 26.4 per cent).

SARS-CoV-2 may also directly damage the biliary ducts by binding to ACE2 on cholangiocytes. There is growing evidence of neurologic complications of COVID-19. Neurologic and ophthalmologic manifestations of Covid-19, said the researchers.

Piloting a revolt

Gehlot has numbers but Sachin Pilot has the perception and goodwill. Congress will suffer a body blow if he leaves



That ego wars have killed the Congress is old news. What's new is that it considers its factionalism as a championship round in an arena between suitable claimants to leadership and revels in the challengers it produces as an asset rather than a weakness. Challengers mean a second rung is ready and the top leadership can be held in check. And both can be used against each other. To the point that even when it is on the brink of disaster, now beginning to lose its State Governments despite a verdict in its favour, it refuses to acknowledge chal-

lengers who become the new winners and turns them into rebels. This is exactly what has happened in Madhya Pradesh and now in Rajasthan. This feudalistic pursuit, of course, flows from its dynastic leadership that wants to be feted as the only hope of a party of warring chieftains. The old warriors, who have unquestioningly accepted the primacy of Gandhis in deciding what's good for the party, humoured them even, have sought satrap status to rule over their home turfs on their terms in return for delivering election results. This mutual prosperity flourished till the political landscape itself changed to reward a more ground-up, fresh-faced and performance-driven parties and leaders. The Congress didn't even bother to broadbase its own structure by way of holding organisational polls, leave aside transforming itself. Even when Rahul Gandhi assumed leadership with his peers like Jyotiraditya Scindia and Sachin Pilot to usher in a new wave, it was merely cosmetic. Scindia and Pilot though chose to live down their dynastic entitlements and in their mid-40s, desperately wanted to create their own political legacy. To that extent, both gave up their comfort zones in Delhi and worked the ground in their States, resurrecting Congress fortunes in the process. But both were never given what they wanted, the chief ministership of their States despite delivering a winning verdict. The Gandhis were more scared of a senior revolt that would be difficult to quell than handling disappointed Young Turks, who being Rahul's friends and confidants, could, they thought, be won over. The Gandhi scion ultimately kowtowed to his mother Sonia Gandhi's propensity to go with old loyalists rather than risk them holding the party hostage by threatening breakaway units and worse, undercutting it. Rahul would never rebel because even the old hawks would endorse him so long as they continued their free run and left him to face the critique and responsibility of Congress fortunes. So there's no fight left for Rahul, who by the way has a soft corner for Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot, too. The likes of Pilot, Scindia and Milind Deora resented being castaways who would have to wait perennially for their time to come as the old guard maintained status quo. And invested in politics as a career, they are now leaving the grand old party, one that has left thinking seniors like Kapil Sibal and Shashi Tharoor wondering if the party stables would be empty after "the horses had bolted."

Sachin Pilot has been deeply invested in Rajasthan, getting the verdict for the Assembly polls in 2018, when even Gehlot wasn't good enough to manage the scoreline, and ensuring favourable returns in the panchayat polls that came soon after the mammoth May 2019 verdict for Modi. Yet Gehlot got the chief ministership, partly because of his history with Indira Gandhi who always trusted his organisational skills and partly because of his hold on a sizeable number of party cadres with whom he could break away. This ability to rustle numbers is also the reason why he was able to parade about 100-odd MLAs in a show of strength compared to Pilot's claim of having about 30 MLAs, enough to dislodge the Government. Pilot's strength, the high command thought, has been incremental and he was, therefore, convinced to be his deputy. But Gehlot has never been one to share power or yield some degree of autonomy, hemming in Pilot's administrative powers by appointing crony bureaucrats in his ministries. Still Pilot held on, while disenchanting his own supporters who had bargained for some stake in the new dispensation. Matters came to a head when despite the Congress win in the Rajya Sabha elections, Gehlot accused him of toppling the Government and sent police summons to him for conspiracy. Pilot is a reluctant leaver and the Congress cannot afford to lose him so soon after Scindia flocked to the BJP. In fact, given the testimonials, the public perception and emotion are with Pilot even though he may not parade numbers. What will Pilot do? Joining the BJP won't help much, considering he won't be made Chief Minister either with aspirant Vasundhara Raje not expected to lie low. He could float a regional outfit but would still have to make a hard choice of supporting the BJP, which is keeping a hawk's eye on proceedings. Negotiating within the Congress is unlikely to give him much of legroom. But yes, by quitting, he could give the Congress a body blow and become a trigger for younger leaders like him to make copycat moves. The Congress needs him more. Censuring him won't stop the drift in the party.

Book a cycle

Like cab aggregators, micro-mobility apps have mushroomed in a post-pandemic world



As the country limps back to normal from a post-COVID lockdown, there has been a major change in consumer behaviour with apps and e-commerce ruling the roost. Doorstep deliveries are the new normal, from essential items like food and groceries to electronics and lifestyle goods. But one could not have expected even the future of our mobility, namely bicycles, to land at out doorstep. Micro-mobility service providers like Yulu and Smart Bikes are shifting their existing battery-operated two-wheeler network from non-functional zones, such as metro stations, to residential complexes where people are using them to run errands or do the short commute rather than take the auto or cab. With public transport systems yet not fully functional and given the sense of insecurity among the people to use them in these testing times, e-vehicles have emerged as a reliable, safe, cheap and personal mode of travel, especially for those who feel vulnerable. Besides, there are health benefits; you can foster an active lifestyle. And you can ride towards a fossil fuel-free future, notching up green miles.

Cycling for everyday transport has not been a part of the Indian scheme of things unlike say, New York, which introduced 40 miles of new NMT lanes for cyclists in the wake of the pandemic or Italy, which got 22 new miles of cycling lanes. The transition towards a non-motorised form of transport has been long overdue in our country. A survey by the Institute for Transportation and Development Policy had estimated that the use of bicycles in major cities around the world would increase by 50-60 per cent. While the current plan is being run on a pilot basis in Delhi at a select few residential complexes, to achieve the long-term goal, we need to expand our infrastructure and develop more cycling tracks and sidewalks. To ensure that people, too, inculcate behavioural changes and make the shift to safer modes of transport, schemes such as car-free days and cycle-to-work programmes can be launched. What better time to start than now? The pandemic also has a big lesson for urban planning.

New normal with China

Now that India has sent a strong message to China and the rest of the world that it will not put up with any kind of bullying, we must Galwanise ourselves to deal with a hostile neighbour



A SURYA PRAKASH

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's strong message to Beijing from Ladakh some days ago and the global support he has garnered for calling out China's belligerence marks a much-awaited change in India's approach to the coercive tactics of this troublesome neighbour. China's attempt to redraw the boundaries in the Galwan Valley last month is only the latest in a long list of such incursions it has resorted to. While the brave soldiers of the Indian Army challenged the People's Liberation Army (PLA) men at the site, one has not seen similar assertiveness among Indian politicians, especially in the past.

This is something that is going on from the days of former Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, who seemed to have some totally impractical and unrealistic notions of friendship with China. Strangely, he believed that ties with our neighbour would improve with the passage of time and, therefore, he went out of the way to build bridges with that nation. This included his eagerness to see China as a member of the United Nations Security Council.

However, China has never really reciprocated. It has shown no inclination to resolve border-related issues so that there be any finality to the demarcation of territories. It has preferred a Line of Actual Control (LAC) to a regular border as the vagueness of the description of a line separating the two nations enables it to nibble away at land on our side. It has kept the pot boiling for over seven decades. Apart from this, China has, over the years, befriended Pakistan, supplied it with arms and aided its nuclear weapons programme. It has also turned a blind eye to the terror factories that are run by Pakistan to wage a proxy war against India.

What does all this amount to? The truth is that China is an enemy nation and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) is an enemy organisation, as noted lawyer Mahesh Jethmalani has opined recently.

Prime Minister Modi's ringing message from Ladakh, his Government's firm resolve to ban Chinese apps and scrap many big projects, which were being awarded to Chinese companies, must have come as a shocker for our eastern neighbour. Never before had an Indian leader spoken and acted with such sternness. Modi's declaration that "the era of expansionism is over" is a sharp message to China that it must change its ways. It is also a message to the rest of the world that India will not put up with this kind of bullying any more.

The Prime Minister reminded China and the world that expansionist policies tend to destroy humanity and pose a grave threat to world peace. History has also shown us that such powers, which believed in or attempted hegemonic policies, have been destroyed or forced to mend their ways. Modi's reference to "expansionism"



and its deleterious effects on world peace brought back the dreadful memories of World War II. Modi was telling the world, without naming China, that that country, too, was behaving in a crazy way, with confrontationalist policies towards many nations.

Hitler's expansionist policy made the Germans believe that they were invincible; that they could gobble up all the neighbouring nations; and destroy the UK, Russia and the allies led by America. Hitler began his hegemonic misadventure with the invasion of Austria, Poland and Czechoslovakia. Then came Norway, Denmark and Belgium, Yugoslavia and Greece followed by Luxembourg and the Netherlands. When he invaded France and later, Russia, he had bitten more than he could chew.

Looking back, one can say that was an act of extreme arrogance by a nation which was convinced about its invincibility. China's attempt to provoke India along the LAC comes alongside its attempts to challenge the maritime and sovereign rights of Japan, Australia, Vietnam, South Korea, Singapore and many other nations. The latest count says China has disputes with 23 nations, apart from going back on the promises made *vis-a-vis*



THE CHINESE ARMY GOT A SHOCK WHEN INDIAN SOLDIERS STOOD UP TO THEIR BULLYING TACTICS AT GALWAN AND GAVE THEM A BLOODY NOSE. TILL TODAY, CHINA HAS NOT HAD THE COURAGE TO TELL THE WORLD THE NUMBER OF CASUALTIES IT SUFFERED AT GALWAN. THIS SPEAKS A LOT ABOUT THE INNER STRENGTH OF THAT NATION



Hong Kong and Taiwan. This is a reminder to the world of the reckless and irresponsible behaviour of the Nazis 80 years ago. Many nations, including the US, Australia, Japan, France and several members of the ASEAN, have been highly critical of China after India blew the whistle.

The Prime Minister also sent across two other very important messages from Ladakh — that only strength begets peace and that India has stepped up and will continue to step up development of infrastructure along the LAC. These are very significant messages indeed and are meant for the domestic audience, which has been made to believe that neighbours will reciprocate decency and cordiality for decades. This myth needs to be busted once and for all.

China's response to the Prime Minister's speech is laughable. After having set itself on a confrontation course for many months, the Chinese Foreign Ministry issued a statement, saying this was not the time to ratchet up tensions along the border. It said India should avoid a "strategic miscalculation" with regard to China. This is strange because the way the dice has rolled out, it is China which has made "a strategic miscalculation" on India.

The Chinese Army got a shock when Indian soldiers stood up to their bullying tactics at Galwan and gave them a bloody nose. Till today, China has not had the courage to tell the world the number of casualties it suffered at Galwan. This speaks a lot about the inner strength of that nation.

There comes a time in the life of every nation when it must say "enough is enough." India must now get "Galwanised" to deal with a hostile China. It is going to be a long haul but what is a decade or two in the life of a nation? We are a nation of 1,350 million and in a couple of decades, we will be the most populous nation in the world. The time has come for the world at large and the Chinese in particular to absorb this fact. As the sociologists say "demography is destiny."

While the talks are on to disengage at the border and the Chinese Ambassador has issued a placatory statement appealing to Indians not to view China as a "war-like" country, we should not lower our guard. As the Prime Minister has said more than once, we need not put up with those who cast an evil eye on us. Also, pusillanimity does not bring peace. Strength does.

(The writer is an author specialising in democracy studies. Views expressed are personal.)

SOUNDBITE

The present pandemic demonstrates that the marginalised need to be assured of a minimum form of social security and effective disbursement of public entitlements.



Supreme Court judge —DY Chandrachud

Maybe break isn't a good word but you're allowed to bend instead of standing, trying so hard to brave everything you're feeling. Give yourself time.



Actor —Ileana D'Cruz

I believe that our country needs a genuinely liberal party headed by centrist professionals committed to inclusive politics and respect for India's pluralism.



Congress leader —Shashi Tharoor

Rahul Gandhi's jealousy is the reason behind decay in Congress. He doesn't allow young leaders to grow. He is not able to control his party and then he blames us.



Union Minister —Uma Bharti

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Worldwide impact

Sir — It is ironic that the US, the nation with the highest COVID-19 tally, has decided to withdraw from the WHO. US President Donald Trump has alleged that the world body has been functioning at the behest of China, the country which he believes is responsible for the spread of the virus. China promptly defended the WHO with vehement criticism of the US stand.

As it is, the US has a tradition of withdrawing from groups and contracts. Ever since Trump assumed office, this has become the new norm. There is no denying the fact that the WHO's association with China in the wake of the calamity has not been above suspicion. The WHO has avoided direct criticism of China. And the latter has only good words to describe the world health body and it has, thus, often reciprocated China's goodwill.

Nevertheless, the US' move to withdraw from the WHO is a perfect example of the country pursuing unilateralism. The move also illustrates the foreign policy followed by Trump. At a time when nations are fighting a health

Replicate the Dharavi model pan-India

This refers to the editorial, "The Dharavi project" (July 13). With a population density of 2.27 lakh people per square km against the national average of 382, Dharavi had the lethality to pose an existential threat to the rest of Mumbai. That public-private partnership, spruced up with community participation, chased away the COVID-19 in Dharavi is a classic example of team effort. People shutting down their small enterprises and daily wagers quitting their jobs helped the agencies achieve the impossible. That Dharavi constitutes just 2.6 per cent of Mumbai's cases with recovery at 83 per cent against Mumbai's 63 per cent is a glorious testimony of team spirit. An area where there is just one toilet per 500 people, maintaining hygiene and sanitation was a challenge. But the municipal corporation of Greater Mumbai did a fabulous job. Door-to-door screening, containment and mitigation strategies were rigorously implemented by the State Government and private health professionals. Private hospitals, fever centres, well-equipped quarantine centres, community kitchens together constituted Dharavi's best-in-class health infrastructure. There was no dearth of either critical medicines or medical gear like PPE kits, thermal scanners and pulse oximeters. Masks, gloves and sanitisers were



liberally donated by Bollywood. Private sponsorship of free food was also in abundance.

Since the World Health Organisation (WHO) has also complimented it, Dharavi may well emerge as the global benchmark on how to rein in the Coronavirus. Now when Dharavi has become a treasure-trove of knowledge, the Maharashtra Government must tap into it and replicate its best practices across the State to repeat the success. In fact, these practices should be replicated pan-India.

SK Prabhakar
Gurugram

crisis, its pullout will impact the way the world fights the pandemic. The worst-hit will be the developing countries and the ones having high infection cases.

Venu GS
Kollam

Change the system

Sir — This refers to the editorial, "Encounter the truth" (July 11). Without any doubt, gangster Vikas Dubey deserved severe

punishment — death penalty or life sentence — but this should have been done after all judicial processes were observed. Police brutality is unwarranted. That the police took the law into its own hands to deliver instant justice is

not only barbaric but also unconstitutional. It wouldn't be an exaggeration to say that the police-criminal-politician nexus works to settle personal scores. Such encounters are used routinely by the police to eliminate the criminals on the whims and fancies of those in power. This needs to change. The judiciary must intervene.

Rati Singh
Via email

Face the truth

Sir — This refers to the editorial, "Encounter the truth" (July 11). With the death of the dreaded gangster, Vikas Dubey, many questions will remain unanswered and unexplained. Nobody has any sympathy for the gangster but the incident gives a sad message where the police has acted as prosecutor, judge and executioner. No civil society can digest such a scenario. We need to focus on the politico-criminal nexus. Time for a change now.

AF Nadwi
Mumbai

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

FIRST COLUMN

Why let criminals rule the roost?

If no action is taken by the rulers of the country, this disease will grip the whole nation and India will lose its charm as the world's biggest democracy



VK **BAHUGUNA**

The recent events in Kanpur, Uttar Pradesh (UP), in which eight police personnel were ambushed by the notorious gangster Vikas Dubey, have exposed deep chinks in our democratic governance and rule of law. The brazen and inhuman manner in which the eight police personnel were killed by Dubey and his accomplices shows that hardened criminals have seeped deep into our administrative and law and order machinery. Circle Officer Mishra, who wrote about the nexus between the gangster and the in-charge of the Chaubepur Police Station to his superiors, was shot in the head and his legs were cut off. The criminals had also stored kerosene to burn the bodies of the cops and dispose the remains in a well in order to bury all evidence of the massacre. However, they were forced to flee before they could execute their sinister plan. It is another matter that the UP Police liquidated the don soon after he was handed over to them by the Madhya Pradesh Police. After Dubey's encounter, there was a hue and cry over the killing but no one is discussing the true nature of this disease engulfing the country.

The daring attack on policemen in Kanpur has clearly shown that the "don of Shivli" had deep links with the police and political parties of all hues. He was a land-grabber and a strongman who was instrumental in mustering votes for politicians. Despite numerous murder cases against him, he was roaming about like a respectable citizen, attending meetings with big politicians and was very cosy with police personnel. Even then, how did he think that he would get away with the murder of eight policemen? The answer is easy to find. He was a criminal against whom 60 cases were lodged with the police. He reportedly killed many people in cold blood.

In one daring attempt he killed a Minister-rank politician inside the police station in 2001 and 19 police personnel were witness to this killing. But none of the police personnel deposed before the court despite the fact that two cops, too, were killed in that incident. As people say, justice is blind and in the end Dubey was acquitted of the crime. After this he became the uncrowned ruler of his area of influence, subjugating all Government officials and controlling and bulldozing all who opposed him.

This incident raises many questions. First, why did the UP Government not take any action against those 19 police personnel whose deliberate action was responsible for Dubey's acquittal? Why did the police not appeal to higher courts and assess why the prosecution did not make a foolproof case as the murder was committed inside the police station? This is a big shame for the police, politicians and the Government. It also brings out the chinks in the judiciary which decided such cases in a clerical style. Why did the court not ask the prosecution about the attitude of the 19 police personnel? This reflects badly on the tottering criminal justice delivery system. The Indian judiciary needs to change its Victorian mindset in order to meet the challenges of modern society.

Though the general public has welcomed the elimination of this notorious criminal, it has been ruing the fact that the encounter ends all possibility of exposing the growing criminal-police-political nexus which is turning our country into a banana republic. This clearly shows that governance has been gradually slipping out of the hands of lawfully-empowered officials and into the hands of local mafia and politicians in the hinterland. This abdication has been accepted by the whole apparatus of legally-elected governments.

The second question is why this happens and allows small-time goons to become Frankenstein's monster? The answer lies in the fact that rural areas are still divided on caste or some other lines and most of the fights are related to land grabbing and developmental issues. Gram Pradhans control lot of funds and create their own groups. The local administration virtually becomes extinct and allows these gangsters to take over the reins and slowly a monopoly of criminals and their supporters comes into shape. All in the ugly chain become rich and powerful and rule the masses. Those who oppose are punished heavily or eliminated.

For instance, the principal of Dubey's school who taught him when he was a youngster, was killed for opposing the grabbing of his school land by the don, in a most inhuman way, while the village and revenue officials looked the other way. The culmination of such an environment is complete when politicians take the help of criminals during the elections. It is no wonder then that out of 403 MLAs in UP Assembly, 143 have a criminal background, says a report of the Association for Democratic Reforms. Dubey, too, was toying with the idea of joining the BJP. Democracy is thus gasping for air in the country.

The Dubey saga must prick the conscience of our politicians and also of the citizens who elect them and, of course, of the civil servants and police who are actually responsible for governing the nation. If no action is taken by the rulers of the country this disease will grip the whole nation soon and India will lose its charm and beauty as the biggest democracy of the world.

(The writer is a former civil servant)

POINTCOUNTERPOINT

IT WOULD BE BETTER IF THE PARTY CONVINCES SACHIN PILOT TO STOP. THOUGH THE PARTY DOES NOT END WITH THE DEPARTURE OF ANY ONE LEADER.

—CONGRESS LEADER
SANJAY NIRUPAM



I WILL MAKE MY INTENT CLEAR SOON. I HAVE THE SUPPORT. YOU CANNOT KEEP MLAs AGAINST THEIR WILL FOR A LONG TIME. IT'S A LONG HAUL.

—RAJASTHAN DEPUTY CM
SACHIN PILOT

Fix accountability

The only way to prevent and eliminate custodial deaths is to make the senior police officers directly accountable whenever such incidents occur in police stations under their jurisdiction



GOVIND **BHATTACHARJEE**

On June 26, three days after the father-son duo, P Jayaraj and Bennix, died after being brutally tortured in police custody in Sathankulam in Tamil Nadu (TN), a non-governmental organisation (NGO), the National Campaign Against Torture (NCAT), brought out its annual report for 2019. It revealed that a total of 1,731 people had died in custody in India during 2019, which is a whopping five deaths every day. A majority of these deaths, 1,606, happened in judicial custody and 125 in police custody, like the present ones.

The methods of torture used, like driving nails in the body or rods through the private parts, burning or other atrocious methods of torment would put even the medieval Inquisition to shame. It also highlighted that 75 per cent of the victims belonged to poor and marginalised communities or minorities, who have practically no access to legal remedies.

Investigations into these cases almost always lead to closure without any culpability being established and instances when someone is actually punished for the deaths are extremely rare. The deaths are attributed to either "natural causes" like prior illnesses and "injuries sustained prior to police custody" or "unnatural causes" like suicides. As per the statistics provided in the National Crime Records Bureau's (NCRB's) latest report on *Crimes in India, 2018*, in cases of 70 deaths in police custody, not even a single arrest was made, let alone conviction.

As per the Constitution of the country, policemen are public servants and a police station is considered a public property. Therefore, the duty and the behaviour of a policeman must conform to the country's law, respect basic human freedom and obey as well as maintain law and order. However, the ground reality is far from this and time and again, policemen are involved in custodial violence and deaths.

To prevent custodial violence, elaborate guidelines to be followed in all cases of arrest or detention were prescribed by the Supreme Court in its 1996 verdict in the DK Basu vs State of West Bengal case, and subsequent judgments made in 2001 and 2015. These guidelines are observed only in their breach. Any inquiry by a human rights group through the Right to Information (RTI) Act or otherwise almost always draws a blank, with the information sought being "unavailable."

In 2015, Section 176 (1) of the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC) was amended by replacing the earlier provision of inquiry by an Executive Magistrate with that by a Judicial Magistrate. This also is rarely conducted or conducted mechanically, only to satisfy the formalities. Only after the nationwide outrage after the Sathankulam incident, the Madurai Bench of the Madras High Court ordered a Judicial Magistrate's inquiry into the incident and the five policemen were arrested in the case and transferred to the Madurai Central Jail from Tuticorin. Now, the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) is probing the case.

In 2006, the apex court also directed that every State should have a Police Complaints Authority where anyone can lodge a complaint against policemen. Only a few States such as Kerala, Jharkhand, Haryana, Punjab and Maharashtra have set up the authority. But that has not prevented custodial deaths — Punjab,

“ INVESTIGATIONS INTO THESE CASES ALMOST ALWAYS LEAD TO CLOSURE WITHOUT ANY CULPABILITY BEING ESTABLISHED AND INSTANCES WHEN SOMEONE IS ACTUALLY PUNISHED FOR THE DEATHS ARE EXTREMELY RARE. THE DEATHS ARE ATTRIBUTED TO EITHER 'NATURAL CAUSES' LIKE PRIOR ILLNESSES AND 'INJURIES SUSTAINED PRIOR TO POLICE CUSTODY' OR 'UNNATURAL CAUSES' LIKE SUICIDES. AS PER THE STATISTICS PROVIDED IN THE NATIONAL CRIME RECORDS BUREAU'S LATEST REPORT ON *CRIMES IN INDIA, 2018*, IN CASES OF 70 DEATHS IN POLICE CUSTODY, NOT EVEN A SINGLE ARREST WAS MADE, LET ALONE CONVICTION ”



along with Uttar Pradesh (UP) and TN, recorded the highest number of deaths in police custody in 2019.

In 1994, in its 152nd report, the Law Commission had remarked that despite all legal and constitutional safeguards, "The growing incidence of custodial torture and deaths has become a disturbing factor in society and the gory tales of dehumanising torture, assault and deaths in the custody of police are being reported almost in every morning newspaper." It observed that inquiries are conducted as a mere formality. Even more than 25 years later, things have not changed one bit on the ground. At best a monetary compensation is offered by the State. In the TN case, the State Government announced a compensation of ₹20 lakh and the DMK's Thoothukudi MP Kanimozhi declared a compensation of ₹25 lakh for the bereaved family. However, this is not enough to make up for the loss of the main bread-winners of the family, which is not backing off and is seeking justice for the two men.

But in other cases, money usually silences the victims' families, who mostly come from poor and marginalised backgrounds. In a rarest of the rare instances of its kind, for torturing a man to death in custody in 2006, a Delhi Sessions Court sentenced five UP policemen to 10 years of rigorous imprisonment in 2019. They had manipulated records to erase all evidence of custodial death before closing the case as a suicide.

The judge very aptly remarked on that occasion, "One of the reasons for custodial death is that the police feel that they have the power to manipulate evidence as the investigation is their prerogative. And with such manipulated evidence, they can bury the truth. They are confident that they will not be held accountable even if the victim dies in custody and even if the truth is

revealed." The fact remains that the inter-departmental solidarity will always tend to shield the perpetrators and give them protection in such cases. This gives them a sense of invincibility and gives them a licence to kill with impunity. The failure of the judicial system to bring the culprits to book follows as a natural corollary to the failure to fix accountability.

Indeed custodial torture should have no place in a civilised society but in our criminal justice system, it has been institutionalised. Torture and extra-judicial killings deem even to have acquired some legitimacy in the eyes of the public, as shown in the Hyderabad killing of four gang-rapists accused by the policemen last December.

Whitewashing and covering up are the norms. After the Sathankulam incident, the top police brass was busy trying to cover up the case, citing esoteric procedures. The Judicial Magistrate inquiring into the murders was intimidated by three police officers, the crucial CCTV footage in the police station was erased and the woman constable, who courageously deposed against her colleagues and whose testimony finally nailed the murderers, was under constant threats and intimidation.

It was only the widespread public anger that forced the TN Government to arrest the five culprits, transfer the probe to the CBI and take the extraordinary step of transferring the Sathankulam Superintendent of Police to keep him under "compulsory wait" at the DGP office, probably the first ever. This, however, is no punishment, and once the public anger subsides, it will be business as usual.

In the US, the 46-year-old George Floyd had struggled for nine minutes under the knee of the white Minneapolis police officer, Derek Chauvin, beseeching and begging for his life — "I can't breathe." Actually the chokehold has

been suffocating the US justice delivery system for the Blacks for a long time but the incident triggered the pent-up anger and resentment, leading to protests and violence that spread like wildfire across the globe.

The 'Black Lives Matter' movement upset many Indians, too, who voiced their anger on the social media. But no protests against police atrocities have erupted across our cities after the deaths of P Jayaraj and Bennix. Either we are too scared or we just don't care if cops go on a rampage. In the US, it has led to calls for police reforms and defunding the police. Use of chokeholds has been banned and it has also forced US President Donald Trump to issue an executive order for establishing a database to track police officers with a history of "excessive use-of-force complaints" in their records. Derek Chauvin had a history of using excessive force; such persons in future would carry it in their service records. This will likely serve as an effective deterrent.

The 18th Century French political philosopher Montesquieu wrote in his magnum opus, *The Spirit of Laws*, "There is no greater tyranny than that which is perpetrated under the shield of the law and in the name of justice."

If we aspire to have some semblance of a civilised society, we must eradicate such tyranny. The only way to prevent and eliminate custodial deaths is to make the senior police officers directly accountable whenever such incidents occur in police stations under their jurisdictions. A death should be reflected in their service records and should carry a negative weightage in their promotions and postings. Senior police officers alone can prevent this, and only when they are made directly accountable will this scourge stop.

(The writer is a former Director General at the Office of the CAG of India and an academic.)

China cannot be sued for Coronavirus

The Govt is protected by ambient sovereign immunity and misconduct, even if proved, will not be able to cater to sufficient grounds for its waiver



SONAM **CHANDWANI**

The wilful, negligent and unmindful attitude of the Chinese authorities has led to the catastrophe of COVID-19. While some consider the inaction and lackadaisical behaviour of China coupled with suppression of information as "treason against humanity", the possibility of maintaining a successful lawsuit against our neighbour has to be explored rigorously.

There have been a couple of instant suits filed against China, seeking compensation for the political opacity and lack of response by the Chinese authorities, which have caused humongous damage to human life and

economies across the globe. There have been charges alleging creation and release, accidental or otherwise, of the Novel Coronavirus and of unleashing biological warfare. In all probability, positive outcomes of such legal challenges are highly sceptical.

Undeniably, the Chinese authorities have deliberately chosen denial, have behaved irresponsibly throughout the saga and deserve the condemnation of the entire world. The regime of transferring patently false information all this while has made things unnecessarily worse as we stand today. Legal liability, however, is a disparate phenomenon. Here we need to realise, that the Government of China is protected by the ambient sovereign immunity, and misconduct, even if proved, will not be able to cater to sufficient grounds for a waiver of that indemnity.

Sovereign immunity is not just a judicial favour for foreign regimes. International treaties of shared under-

standing and reciprocity not allowing people to sue the country primarily guide it. The difficulty at this stage arises as the act of China, despite being in the nature of criminal negligence, fails to fall in the bracket of exception laid down by the international law to the immunity enjoyed by the States. Rather, there is a specific bar upon the exercise or performance or the failure to exercise discretionary powers regardless of whether the discretion is being abused. Possibly, the reckless behaviour of the Chinese Government is baked into the very idea of sovereign immunity.

The next leg of the argument revolves around the proposition that China did very little to stop the spread of the virus. Unfortunately, the thrust of the argument on legal principles is tremendously weak. Sovereign immunity does not work on benevolence but reciprocity. China has been rejecting all such allegations and is certain to junk every summons it receives, ulti-

mately making the entire exercise a futile thing. The World Health Organisation's (WHO's) International Health Regulations, 2005 is being referred to in order to assert that China violated its international obligations. Articles six and seven of the WHO regulations make timely notification and information-sharing obligatory on the country where an outbreak takes place. Consequently, China has been denying all such allegations, which in turn nullifies the violation as the legal liability could only be fixed if the country consents to it. There is a very minor and primarily a technical gateway to drag China to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) over the Coronavirus pandemic provided in the WHO's Constitution. This provision does not require the consent of the defendant country. A member country will have to establish or create a doubt that China deliberately withheld information from the WHO and the international community at large. Article 63

of the WHO's Constitution provides the legal basis for this route.

Tort law generally rests on the proposition that people will take reasonable care if they know there is an inherent danger that could cause harm to others. Under sovereign immunity, the costs of misbehaviour of the Government tend to lie where they fall. The concept of international terror and henceforth laws to tackle it were conceptualised a few years back. However, the absence of robust legislations possibly will not entail any punishment for another country's recklessness and the motive is opposite to be political.

Nevertheless, for the massive economic fallout, China cannot be allowed to go scot-free. Perhaps, world leaders have to work in mutiny to diplomatically pressurise China for causing the pandemic and the present situation. On the contrary, China has called the allegations xenophobic, which invalidates all possible actions undertaken

as of now. Further, the most difficult part of the regime is to prove the deliberate intention of China in causing all the trouble the world is in at present.

In a nutshell, China has a strong position to rescind all legal allegations brought against it by world players, including India. It is a very bleak proposition to contemplate that China will eventually compensate for the major fallout and global recession caused by its laxity and disregard for the state of affairs. However, the legal remedy of filing lawsuits seems to be futile and superfluous without much possibility of any fruitful upshot and conclusion. Nevertheless, how good the sequel stands will be eventually proven, as and when the lawsuits already instituted, are heard by the judiciary, while the wise option would be to avoid any bulging aspiration to be accrued from the judicial reaction to the legal battle.

(The writer is Managing Partner at KS Legal)



FOREIGN EYE



COVID-19 ON THE MARCH GLOBALLY

Poorer nations will need support to deal with both the pandemic and its broader impact. Hunger and poverty are surging and could kill more people than COVID-19. Leadership can't come from the US, as it withdraws from the WHO and finding agreement within the EU is proving hard. But for everyone's sake, we must recognise and honour our ties. (The Guardian editorial)

Retail inflation at 6.09 per cent in June

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Retail inflation rose by 6.09 per cent in June, mainly on account of higher prices of food items, the Government data showed on Monday.

Food inflation in June increased by 7.87 per cent, according to Consumer Price Index (CPI) data.

The inflation figures are based on data collected from limited markets in view of the restrictions imposed on account of coronavirus pandemic, the Ministry of Statistics & Programme Implementation said in a



release. The data collected, however, did not meet the adequacy criteria for generating robust estimates of CPIs at the state-level, it added.

The retail inflation based on Consumer Price Index was 3.18 per cent in June 2019.

The Government had released truncated CPI data for April and May in the backdrop of the lockdown to contain COVID-19 pandemic.

DPIIT to soon approach Cabinet for 74 pc FDI through auto route in Defence :Sources

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The DPIIT would soon approach the Union Cabinet to seek approval for relaxing norms to allow up to 74 per cent foreign direct investment (FDI) in defence manufacturing under the automatic route, with a view to attract overseas players in the sector, sources said.

As per the current FDI policy, 100 per cent overseas investments are permitted in the defence industry - 49 per cent under the automatic route, while beyond that the government approval is required.

In July 2018, the Government had relaxed foreign direct investment norms in the defence sector by allowing up to 49 per cent FDI under the automatic route.

CAIT aims to dent China's ₹4,000 cr biz during Rakhi

TO SEND 5,000 RAKHIS FOR SOLDIERS

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Traders' body CAIT, which has called for the boycott of Chinese products, on Monday said it has resolved for a "Hindustani rakhi" next month and dent China's estimated Rs 4,000 crore of trade during the festival. The Confederation of All India Traders (CAIT) would also hand over more

than 5,000 rakhis to Defence Minister Rajnath Singh to be further sent to soldiers guarding the country's borders.

The CAIT, which has 40,000 trade associations and seven crore members across India as its members, has resolved for a "purely Hindustani Rakhi festival" on August 3 and dent China's estimated Rs 4,000 crore trade during the festival, it said in a statement.

"This time any rakhi made by China or any rakhi-related product from China will not be used! In order to encourage the brave soldiers who are guarding the borders of the country, the women's

wing of the CAIT will give 5,000 rakhis to Defence Minister Rajnath Singh for the soldiers," the traders' body said.

The CAIT said that according to an estimate a trade of Rs 6,000 crore takes place every year in India on Raksha Bandhan in which China alone contributes about Rs 4,000 crore.

"Not only is finished rakhi imported from China but also rakhi-making products like foam, paper foil, rakhi thread, pearls, drops, decorative items for rakhi are also imported. Due to CAIT's campaign to boycott Chinese goods, no Chinese goods will be used in

rakhi this year and we are confident that China is set to lose about Rs 4,000 crores of business," Sushil Kumar Jain, the Delhi-NCR unit convener of the CAIT, said. He said the CAIT has sent a message to all its state chapters and other major associations working in all the states that Chinese rakhi or related products should not be sold.

"CAIT has also urged various state chapters to get people working in raw settlements in the cities, self-help groups of women, women working in anganwadis, small artisans and others to make rakhi and sell them in markets which will also be a great

help to people of all these classes," Jain said.

At the same time, CAIT has also urged small scale industries to make Rakhis using Indian goods, he added. The trade body said that its women wing would also give rakhis to soldiers posted at military hospitals in each city of the country.

The women wing of CAIT in every city of the country, will also tie rakhi to police personnel engaged in safety and security of citizens thereby giving a message that every person of the country stands firmly with the Army and the police force of the country, the statement said.

Gold rises ₹120, silver zooms ₹858

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Gold prices jumped ₹120 to ₹49,960 per 10 gram in the national capital on Monday following gains in global prices, according to HDFC Securities.

In the previous trade, the precious metal had closed at ₹49,840 per 10 gram. Silver also rose by ₹858 to ₹53,320 per kg from ₹52,462 per kg in the previous trade. In the international market, gold was trading with gains at USD 1,805 per ounce, while silver was quoting at USD 19.03 per ounce.

₹ settles flat at 75.19 against US \$

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The rupee settled on a flat note at 75.19 against the US dollar on Monday amid high volatility in the domestic equity market.

The ₹ traded in a narrow range as investors awaited retail inflation data for further cues, forex dealers said.

During the four-hour trading session, the domestic unit witnessed an intra-day high of 75.08 and a low of 75.21 against the US \$.

The rupee closed at 75.19 against the US dollar, up by just 1 paise over its previous close. It had settled at 75.20 against the greenback on Friday.



While weak US currency supported the local unit, foreign fund outflows and concerns over rising COVID-19 cases weighed on investor sentiment, traders said.

Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, fell 0.03 per cent to 96.62.

Nifty closed at 10,827.70, up 34.65 points, or 0.32 per cent, higher at 36,693.69 - giving up about gains of 330 points from its intra-day peak.

The NSE Nifty closed at 10,827.70, up 34.65 points, or 0.32 per cent, higher at 36,693.69.

Foreign institutional investors were net sellers in the capital market as they sold shares worth ₹1,031 crore on Friday, according to provisional exchange data. Brent crude futures, the global oil benchmark, fell 1.25 per cent to USD 42.70 per barrel. Meanwhile, the number of

cases around the world linked to the disease has crossed 1.29 crore and the death toll has topped 5.69 lakh.

In India, the death toll due to COVID-19 rose to 23,174 and the number of infections spiked to 8,78,254, according to the Health Ministry.

"Rupee consolidated in a narrow range ahead of the important inflation number that will be released today evening.

Expectation is that it could grow at 5.30 per cent in June compared to growth of 5.84 per cent in the previous month," said Gaurang Somaiya, Forex & Bullion Analyst, Motilal Oswal Financial Services.

NIFTY 50

SCRIP	OPEN	High	LOW	LTP	CHANGE
NIFTY50	10851.85	10894.05	10756.05	10815.20	47.15
TECH	571.95	601.80	570.50	600.50	31.50
HINDALCO	165.00	170.50	164.10	169.90	6.20
HCLTECH	585.00	605.00	583.35	604.00	21.75
JSWSTEEL	195.40	199.80	195.25	199.60	6.30
RELIANCE	1903.35	1947.70	1900.00	1938.70	60.65
WIPRO	223.95	229.00	222.55	227.80	5.70
BHARTIARTL	574.50	589.00	570.00	586.60	11.90
ZEE	172.80	174.90	170.60	173.60	3.50
BRIHANNIA	3760.00	3835.00	3750.25	3799.00	72.35
VEDL	111.20	114.20	111.10	114.20	2.05
INFY	788.00	805.35	786.05	796.10	14.25
HINDUNILVR	2239.00	2275.00	2235.00	2263.00	39.20
ITC	195.90	198.75	195.10	197.75	3.40
IOC	87.00	87.75	86.20	87.30	1.15
TATASTEEL	343.30	347.00	338.50	342.60	3.90
EICHERMOT	19610.00	19720.00	19450.00	19634.10	186.25
SUNPHARMA	450.00	501.70	492.30	498.35	4.45
BPL	378.00	384.20	375.45	379.60	3.25
MARUTI	6000.00	6092.25	5927.80	6006.20	50.55
INFRATEL	209.10	212.75	208.05	210.80	1.75
UPL	440.00	444.95	435.50	440.00	3.50
NESTLEIND	16885.00	17098.00	16875.05	16950.00	116.90
TATAMOTORS	108.85	112.10	106.85	108.30	0.70
DREDDY	3913.30	3928.95	3874.00	3904.00	23.55
ONGC	79.20	79.55	78.40	78.85	0.30
TITAN	973.95	973.95	999.00	965.05	3.20
AXISBANK	443.95	446.40	432.75	441.00	1.40
BAJAJ-AUTO	2898.90	2910.00	2876.80	2903.10	8.40
HEROMOTOCO	2701.95	2714.35	2670.35	2688.00	6.75
BAJAJFINSV	6574.00	6592.40	6400.00	6499.35	15.55
ASIANPAINT	1708.00	1732.90	1700.00	1705.50	15.50
GRASIM	614.00	617.95	607.55	618.85	0.40
SHREECEM	2246.00	2262.85	2225.00	2230.00	4.60
TCS	2220.00	2244.95	2210.00	2222.25	-0.10
CIPLA	641.00	666.00	636.60	638.85	-0.05
INDUSINDBK	547.90	555.00	534.50	539.10	-0.15
LU	940.00	944.80	925.00	931.00	-1.15
ULTRACEMCO	3820.00	3837.80	3778.00	3790.00	-8.50
M&M	560.00	560.50	549.20	553.50	-1.35
COALINDIA	131.80	132.45	131.30	130.65	-0.55
ADANIPOR	336.25	339.65	330.50	332.70	-2.25
NTPC	91.05	92.85	89.50	89.75	-0.65
KOTAKBANK	1360.00	1364.90	1324.10	1333.80	-15.55
GAIL	103.95	103.95	100.30	101.15	-1.25
SBIN	198.90	199.80	194.00	193.20	-2.60
ICICIBANK	364.10	367.00	352.50	354.15	-6.20
HDFC	1905.00	1907.20	1840.00	1853.65	-32.35
HDFCBANK	1109.90	1113.00	1071.30	1083.55	-21.55
BAJFINANCE	3360.00	3378.00	3216.20	3244.60	-49.55
POWERGRID	172.60	174.20	168.20	168.80	-3.80

BSE 500

Script	Open	High	Low	LTP
RELIANCE	1908.50	1947.00	1900.10	1938.70
IBULHSFIN	238.05	250.55	235.70	238.25
BAJFINANCE	3364.00	3380.00	3212.80	3233.25
SBIN	198.30	199.75	191.65	192.60
HDFCBANK	1109.00	1114.05	1071.20	1080.40
IDEA	9.99	10.09	9.50	9.76
LT	937.20	944.40	925.25	928.60
KOTAKBANK	1359.90	1364.20	1323.90	1335.20
TATAMOTORS	109.00	112.10	106.85	107.95
INDUSINDBK	548.80	554.55	534.50	539.60
BIOCEN	455.00	455.00	412.60	414.60
INDIAMART	2228.70	2228.70	2181.00	2205.00
RBLANK	185.00	185.95	177.10	177.90
ICICIBANK	364.60	367.00	352.50	353.55
HINDUNILVR	2241.00	2247.40	2236.75	2264.70
TATASTEEL	342.30	347.20	338.60	342.00
FONEX	10.90	11.95	10.85	11.80
AXISBANK	442.00	446.20	432.75	440.35
HDFC	1896.00	1907.75	1840.10	1846.50
BHARTIARTL	575.00	589.10	570.00	586.75
IOCL	86.70	87.80	86.25	87.45
HINDALCO	170.70	172.75	168.30	170.00
TECH	570.00	601.50	570.00	600.10
IRCTC	144.15	144.00	138.05	139.35
SAIL	38.90	38.90	35.55	35.75
BATAINDIA	1276.50	1280.00	1245.25	1252.25
MARUTI	6005.00	6057.00	5930.00	5965.05
INFY	791.00	804.90	787.55	796.70
DMART	2210.00	2302.00	2182.00	2327.00
AUROPHARMA	825.00	828.25	806.85	809.80
TCS	2225.00	2244.95	2210.75	2219.55
BLUORCHEM	345.00	349.05	335.60	344.65
FANUCINDIA	378.50	382.50	367.50	370.00
BHEL	42.30	43.00	41.80	42.55
BAJAJFINSV	6579.00	6588.00	6401.00	6460.50
M&M	207.00	208.70	203.15	203.95
LCHSFIN	277.00	281.50	273.05	275.05
GLS	428.00	431.65	415.55	415.45
ESMARTS	1140.00	1206.90	1124.40	1128.60
ITC	196.00	198.75	195.35	197.45
HCLTECH	584.90	604.75	583.60	602.60
HINDPETRO	210.00	214.90	209.40	210.75
COLPAL	1400.00	1436.05	1395.75	1431.85
NRTRANFIN	704.10	713.00	682.05	688.95
NESTLEIND	16830.00	17090.00	16830.00	16965.00
SHREECEM	532.90	554.55	525.05	517.75
BHARTIARTL	361.75	377.50	359.70	369.10
JSWSTEEL	196.00	199.85	195.50	198.35
PJEL	1451.20	1480.75	1420.30	1432.20
DLF	149.00	149.00	141.75	142.90
SUNPHARMA*	493.50	501.45	492.65	499.65
VEDL	111.00	114.25	111.00	112.45
HINDALCO	165.00	174.05	164.15	169.15
CEATLTD	899.40	907.05	882.35	894.00
ACC	1310.00	1353.80	1310.00	1345.65
GRANULOS	235.25	244.85	235.05	244.00
FRETAL	103.50	111.00	103.50	111.00
TITAN	975.75	975.75	959.20	966.00
TATACONSUM	430.25	433.40	422.05	424.40
ZEE	173.00	174.80	170.80	173.65
BRIHANNIA	3760.00	3834.70	3752.65	3798.70
POWERGRID	172.60	174.20	168.25	169.20
WIPRO	224.00	229.00	222.75	227.55
ONGC	1409.10	1442.00	1407.95	1431.95
APOLLOHOSP	78.65	79.55	78.45	78.90
DREDDY	3920.00	3925.00	3875.00	3898.60
STAR	423.40	424.00	412.45	418.00
ADANIPOR	380.00	382.35	361.60	364.40
PIDILITIND	1391.00	1404.80	1383.00	1395.50
JUBLFOOD	1628.10	1648.05	1596.25	1630.15
DIVISLAB	2230.00			

IN RESPONSE TO XINJIANG BAN

China sanctions top US officials, politicians

Beijing: China on Monday imposed visa restrictions on some top US officials and politicians in the latest tit-for-tat response to America's move to sanction several Chinese officials for alleged human rights abuses targeting ethnic minority groups in the Muslim-majority Xinjiang province.

Foreign Ministry spokesperson Hua Chunying told the media here that the behaviour of the US officials and politicians, and visa ban on some Chinese officials from Uygur Muslim dominated Xinjiang province "severely damaged China-US relations, and should be condemned."

Hua made the comments in response to US sanctions and visa restrictions on three senior officials of the ruling Chinese Communist Party from Xinjiang for alleged human rights abuses targeting Muslim Uygurs.

China has decided to impose sanctions starting from Monday against US Congressional-Executive Commission on China (CECC),

US Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom Samuel Brownback, Congressman Chris Smoot and US Senators Marco Rubio and Ted Cruz.

The CECC is headed by Rubio, a vocal critic of China. Announcing the ban on US officials, Hua reiterated "Xinjiang is entirely the internal affair of China, and the US has no right to interfere. The Chinese government's determination to protect its sovereignty, and crackdown against terrorism, separatism and extreme religious forces is unshakable."

Hua said China would take further measures based on the situation. This is the first-time China has banned top US politicians in its retaliation to US sanctions and visa bans on Chinese officials from Xinjiang, Tibet and over the new national security law in Hong Kong.

Beijing's move comes days after the US on Thursday slapped sanctions on some Chinese officials in-charge of Xinjiang Uygur autonomous

region who were "believed to be responsible for, or complicit in, the unjust detention or abuse of Uygurs, ethnic -Kazakhs and members of other minority groups in Xinjiang."

The three officials banned by the US are Chen Quanguo, CCP Party Secretary of the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region; Zhu Hailun, Party Secretary of the Xinjiang Political and Legal Committee; and Wang Mingshan, the current Party Secretary of the Xinjiang Public Security Bureau.

China has been saying it would retaliate with similar bans on US officials with "egregious behaviours".

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo while announcing sanctions on Chinese officials in Xinjiang on Thursday said "the United States is taking action against the horrific and systematic abuses in Xinjiang and calls on all nations who share our concerns about the CCP's attacks on human rights and fundamental freedoms to join us in condemning this behaviour".

Russian University claims successful trials of 1st Covid vaccine

Moscow: The clinical trials of the world's first coronavirus vaccine on volunteers has been successfully completed at Sechenov First Moscow State Medical University, Sputnik news agency reported quoting an official.

The Sechenov First Moscow State Medical University began clinical trials of the vaccine produced by Russia's Gamalei Institute of Epidemiology and Microbiology on June 18.

"Sechenov University has successfully completed tests on volunteers of the world's first vaccine against coronavirus," Vadim Tarasov, the director of the Institute for Translational Medicine and Biotechnology, said. The first group of volunteers would be discharged on Wednesday and the second on July 20, he added.

According to Alexander Lukashkev, the director of the Institute of Medical Parasitology, Tropical and Vector-Borne Diseases at Sechenov University, the objective of this stage of the study was to show the vaccine's safety for human health, which was



successfully done.

"The safety of the vaccine is confirmed. It corresponds to the safety of those vaccines that are currently on the market," Lukashkev told Sputnik.

The further vaccine development plan is already being determined by the developer's strategy, including the complexity of the epidemiological situation with the virus and the possibility of scaling up production, Lukashkev added.

"Sechenov University in a pandemic situation acted not only as an educational institution but also as a scientific and technological research center that is able to participate in the creation of such important and complex products as drugs ... We worked with this vaccine, starting with preclinical studies and protocol development, and clinical trials are currently underway," Tarasov noted. ANI

EU, Turkey clash over Hagia Sophia, Mediterranean drilling

AP ■ BRUSSELS

Turkey and the European Union clashed on Monday over Ankara's decision to change the status of Hagia Sophia from a museum to a mosque and its continued energy exploration in disputed Mediterranean waters.

After their first face-to-face meeting in months, the 27 EU foreign ministers said that they "condemned the Turkish decision to convert such an emblematic monument as the Hagia Sophia," EU foreign affairs chief Josep

Borrell said.

"This decision will inevitably fuel the mistrust, promote renewed division between religious communities and undermine our efforts at dialog and cooperation," he said after the meeting of EU foreign ministers.

He said there was "broad support to call on the Turkish authorities to urgently consider and reverse this decision."

Hagia Sophia was originally built in Istanbul as a Christian cathedral, and the pope and others have expressed their sadness and criticism of the

move by President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

Greek Government spokesman Stelios Petsas said Monday that the EU was "faced with a challenge and insult" meted out by Erdogan.

Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu hit back and rejected international intervention concerning its decision to convert Hagia Sophia back into a mosque.

"Hagia Sophia was left as a legacy as a mosque and must be used as a mosque," Cavusoglu told state broadcaster TRT.

141 dead or missing in floods in China

Beijing: Over 140 people have died or are missing in the catastrophic floods that have been wreaking havoc in China since last month, affecting more than 37 million and damaging 28,000 houses, media reports said on Monday.

China's State Flood Control and Drought Relief Headquarters upgraded the emergency response for flood control from level III to level II on Sunday, as incessant downpours continued across vast stretches of the country.

Over 2.24 lakh people have been relocated as China faces "flood catastrophe" with 433 rivers in spate, testing the strength of some of the water barrages including the world's largest Three Gorges Dam.

The floods have affected 37.89 million people in 27 provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities. Since June, 141 people are dead or missing, and 28,000 houses have collapsed, state-run CGTN quoted the Ministry of Water Resources as saying. PTI

Taliban kill 11 in assault on Afghan intel compound

Kabul: Taliban insurgents launched a complex attack on an intelligence compound in northern Afghanistan on Monday that began with a suicide bombing and killed at least 11 intelligence agency personnel, officials said.

The attack took place in Aybak, the capital of the Samangan province. Sediq Azizi, a spokesman for the provincial governor, said another 63 people were wounded in the attack and the ensuing clashes.

A suicide bomber struck the compound, followed by two insurgents who opened fire. Both were killed in the gunbattle, Azizi said. The blast from the initial bombing could be heard miles (kilometers) away and damaged several nearby buildings. Abdul Khalil Musadiq, a provincial hospital chief, said many of those wounded were civilians, including children.

The Taliban claimed the attack. The insurgents have

continued to regularly target Afghan security forces despite signing a peace agreement with the US in February that was intended to pave the way for an end to decades of war.

On Sunday, the Taliban attacked checkpoints in the northern Kunduz province, killing at least 14 Afghan security forces, according to Esmatullah Muradi, a spokesman for the provincial governor.

The Taliban said they were behind the attacks but claimed government forces fired mortar shells in response, hitting civilian homes — a claim dismissed by the Defence Ministry.

The Taliban and government forces have been trading blame over a recent surge in violence across Afghanistan — even as efforts continue to try and bring about the start of direct peace talks between the government and the insurgents. AP

Former Mueller prosecutor writing book on investigation

New York: A top prosecutor for special counsel Robert Mueller has a book coming out this fall about the two-year investigation into the alleged ties between Russia and the 2016 campaign of President Donald Trump.

Random House announced Monday that Andrew Weissmann's "Where Law Ends: Inside the Mueller Investigation" will be published Sept. 29.

Weissmann, often the target of criticism from Trump supporters, is calling the book a meticulous account of the Mueller team's probe and its ongoing battles with the Trump

administration.

"I felt it was necessary to record this episode in our history, as seen and experienced by an insider," he said in a statement. "This is the story of our investigation into how our democracy was attacked by Russia and how those who condoned and ignored that assault undermined our ability to uncover the truth. My obligation as a prosecutor was to follow the facts where they led, using all available tools and undeterred by the onslaught of the president's unique powers to undermine our work."

"I am deeply proud of the work we did and of the unprecedented number of people we indicted and convicted — and in record speed. But the hard truth is that we made mistakes. We could have done more. 'Where Law Ends' documents the choices we made, good and bad, for all to see and judge and learn from." Weissmann, who worked as an FBI general counsel under Mueller, gained prominence as a prosecutor investigating organised crime in New York City and for his leadership of a task force looking into the Enron scandal. AP

Maryland Governor says GOP needs 'bigger tent' after Trump

Washington: A Republican governor rumoured to be eyeing a run for the White House in 2024 said Sunday that the GOP needs to be a "bigger tent party" after President Donald Trump leaves office.

Maryland's Larry Hogan, who has been known to break with Trump, told NBC's "Meet the Press" that he doesn't "know what the future holds in November."

"But I know that the Republican Party is going to be looking at what happens after President Trump and whether that's in four months or four years," Hogan said.

"And I think they're going to be looking to, 'How do we go about becoming a bigger tent party?'" The rebuke was a rarity from Republicans, who have largely been afraid to criticize a president still popular with the GOP rank-and-file despite questions about how he has handled the COVID-19 pandemic.

Hogan did not rule out voting for Joe Biden, the Democrat challenging Trump in the November election. In 2016, Hogan wrote in the name of his father, a former Republican congressman from Maryland.

"It's a difficult choice," he

said. "I think most people would like to see something different, and maybe we'll figure that out in 2024."

The governor pointed to his 2018 reelection as a model, when he won in deep-blue Maryland by almost 12 percentage points "by reaching out, by trying to find that middle ground where people can stand together" and by eschewing "divisive rhetoric." He also noted that he did well with suburban women, a group that polls suggest has largely abandoned Trump. AP

TRUMP'S REELECTION OPERATION HIRES 1,500 FIELD STAFFERS

Washington: The Republican National Committee and President Donald Trump's campaign say they have now hired 1,500 field staffers, aiming to convert their financial advantage over Democrats into votes in November.

Trump Victory, the joint field effort of the two organisations, announced Monday the hiring of an additional 300 staffers set to hit 20 target states by Wednesday in the largest field operation over mounted by a Republican. AP

Postal voting for over 700,00 Sri Lankan officials begins amid new Covid-19 threat

PTI ■ COLOMBO

The postal voting for over 700,000 Sri Lankan officers, who will be on duty on August 5 for the parliamentary polls, began on Monday amidst special security measures, following a sudden spike in COVID-19 cases in the country.

The voting will go on for 5 days with two days reserved next week for those who fail to cast their vote this week. Over 700,000 officers who will be on election duty on August 5 are eligible to cast their vote. The election authorities

said the voting in the north central town of Rajanganaya was indefinitely postponed due to a COVID-19 threat. According to the health officials, a cluster has been forming in the area since last week with the infections from a drug rehabilitation center at Kandakadu in Polonnaruwa district.

Nearly 500 new infection, including 70 students, were detected from Kandakadu cluster. Around 600 close contacts of those who tested positive have been sent for quarantine.

US: Judge blocks federal executions; admin appeals

Terre Haute (US): A US district judge on Monday ordered a new delay in federal executions, hours before the first lethal injection was scheduled to be carried out at a federal prison in Indiana.

The administration immediately appealed to a higher court, asking that the executions move forward.

US District Judge Tanya Chutkan said there are still legal issues to resolve and that "the public is not served by short-circuiting legitimate judicial process." The executions, pushed by the Trump administration, would be the first carried out at the federal level since 2003. The new hold on executions came a day after a federal appeals court lifted a hold on the execution of Daniel Lewis Lee, which is scheduled for 4 pm EDT on Monday. AP

Time to make masks mandatory? Not just a US debate

AP ■ PARIS

Amid pervasive backsliding on social distancing, Britain and France are weighing whether to require people to wear masks in public places.

Scientists say the two countries' governments should have done so ever since they started easing lockdowns — like many other European nations did — instead of exposing their populations to the risk of infections from mass dance parties and summer vacationers who think there's no longer anything to worry about.

Whether to make masks mandatory isn't just a matter of debate in the United States, where infection rates are still climbing fast.

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson urged U.K. residents Monday to wear face coverings in shops and other tight indoor spaces — but stopped short of making it compulsory. Critics have accused Johnson's government of failing to provide clarity on mask-wearing in the days since he began backtracking on its previous advice that suggested face covers were not necessary. After the prime minister then was pho-

tographed wearing one in a shop, government ministers appeared on TV urging personal choice in the mask issue.

Meanwhile, France's government said Monday it's considering requiring masks in all indoor public places amid signs of a small rise in confirmed virus cases — and a big drop in public vigilance.

French scientists have pushed for such a requirement in recent days as families crisscross the country for summer vacations, but the government has remained cautious. Local mayors have already started requiring masks, notably in the Mediterranean city of Nice, where images of thousands of people dancing at an outdoor DJ performance this weekend provoked nationwide concern. Elsewhere in Europe, where the virus curve largely flattened out months ago, most governments made masks mandatory as soon as they started reopening their economies, requiring their use in shops and other indoor public spaces and on public transportation.

Some nations have imposed mask requirements as new outbreaks emerged in recent days or weeks.

Britain and France, which have reported some of the world's highest numbers of coronavirus cases and deaths, took a more relaxed attitude, recommending masks but not requiring them.

At least until now. "As the virus comes down in incidence and we have more and more success, I think face coverings are a kind of extra insurance we can all use to stop it coming back and stop it getting out of control again," Johnson said.

"To be absolutely clear, I do think that face coverings do have a real value in confined spaces and I do think the public understands that." Mask requirements could help the government get the country back on track from the severe downturn — in March and April alone, the U.K. economy shrank 25%.

Many economists think unemployment could more than double to over 3 million this year, levels last seen in the 1980s. Speaking with reporters during a visit to the London Ambulance Service, Johnson said people "should start to think about getting back to work" if their employers have made their workplaces safe against the coronavirus.

Germany aims to make EU presidency 'climate neutral'

BERLIN (AP): German is aiming to make its six-month presidency of the European Union "climate neutral," by organising events in such a way as to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and offsetting any that can't be avoided, officials said Monday.

The Environment Ministry said the voluntary move builds on earlier efforts by Austria and Finland to reduce the carbon footprints of their presidency. Countries that hold the rotating position usually engage in a flurry of diplomacy, hosting hundreds of events with participants from across the 27-nation bloc.

Germany said the practice of emission offsetting — paying for projects such as reforestation that capture or prevent the same amount of carbon dioxide released into the atmosphere — will be extended to include catering for events, not just travel.

The Environment Ministry said it plans to offer only vegetarian meals at its events, though other ministries may choose to serve meat and fish, which have a bigger carbon footprint.

Germany, Europe's biggest economy, accounts for about 2% of global greenhouse gas emissions. The government wants to cut the country's emissions by at least 55% in 10 years compared to 1990 levels, and ensure that the entire federal administration is "climate neutral."

Scientists identify two antibodies from llamas that can neutralise coronavirus

London: Scientists have demonstrated that two small, stable antibody variants derived from the South American mammals llamas can neutralise the novel coronavirus in laboratory cells, an advance which may lead to the development of new therapeutics against COVID-19.

The study, published in the journal Nature Structural & Molecular Biology, noted that the 'nanobodies' can prevent infection with the novel coronavirus SARS-CoV-2 by blocking its interaction with the protein ACE2, which it uses as

a gateway to enter and infect cells.

According to the scientists, including those from The Rosalind Franklin Institute in the UK, passive immunisation, which involves giving a patient virus-neutralising agent — either from people previously infected with SARS-CoV-2 or purified antibodies — can be a useful therapy for COVID-19.

They said antibodies against the 2002-03 SARS pandemic virus could prevent infection of cells by blocking the binding of the virus' spike protein to ACE2. PTI

PM Oli says 'real' Ayodhya is in Nepal; BJP rejects claim

PTI ■ KATHMANDU

Stoking a potential controversy, embattled Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli on Monday claimed that the "real" Ayodhya lies in Nepal, not in India and that Lord Ram was born in Thori in southern Nepal.

Condemning Oli for his remarks, BJP national spokesperson Bizay Sonkar Shastri said that the Left parties even in India played with people's faith, and the Communists in Nepal will be rejected by the masses in the same way they have been here.

"Lord Ram is a matter of faith for us, and people will not

allow anybody, be it prime minister of Nepal or anyone, to play with this," he said in New Delhi.

Speaking at an event on the birth anniversary of Nepalese poet Bhanubhakta at the Prime Minister's residence in Kathmandu, Oli said that Nepal "has become a victim of cultural encroachment and its history has been manipulated." Bhanubhakta was born in 1814 in Tanhu of western Nepal and is credited for translating Valmiki's Ramayan into Nepali language. He died in 1868.

"Although the real Ayodhya lies at Thori in the west of Birgunj, India has

claimed the Indian site as the birthplace of Lord Ram," Oli said.

"We also believe that deity Sita got married to Prince Ram of India. Actually, Ayodhya is a village lying west of Birgunj," he said, adding that the marriage between bride and bridegroom at such a distance was not possible at the time when there was no communication and transportation system.

"The place called Thori, near Birgunj is the real Ayodhya, where Lord Ram was born. In India there is great dispute on Ayodhya. But, there is no dispute in our Ayodhya," Prime Minister Oli was quoted as saying by his press advi-

"The place called Thori, near Birgunj is the real Ayodhya, where Lord Ram was born. In India there is great dispute on Ayodhya. But, there is no dispute in our Ayodhya," Prime Minister Oli was quoted as saying

sor Surya Thapa. "Valmiki Ashram is also in Nepal and the holy place where King Dasharath had executed

the rites to get the son is in Ridi, which is in Nepal," he said.

As Dasharath was the ruler of Nepal, it is natural that his son Ram was also born in Nepal, Oli argued. Therefore, real Ayodhya lies in Nepal, he claimed.

Many scientific inventions and knowledge originated in Nepal, but unfortunately such a rich tradition could not continue later, Oli said.

Prime Minister Oli, under growing pressure to resign amidst a rift in the ruling Nepal Communist Party over his style of functioning, has alleged that some of the ruling party leaders are aligning with the southern neighbour to

remove him from power after his government issued a new political map incorporating three Indian territories of Lipulekh, Kalapani and Limpiyadhura.

His allegations have been criticised by senior NCP leaders, including former prime minister Prachanda, who demanded Prime Minister Oli's resignation, saying his recent anti-India remarks were "neither politically correct nor diplomatically appropriate."

The India-Nepal bilateral ties came under strain after Defence Minister Rajnath Singh inaugurated a 80-km-long strategically crucial road connecting the Lipulekh pass

with Dharchula in Uttarakhand on May 8.

Nepal reacted sharply to the inauguration of the road claiming that it passed through Nepalese territory. India rejected the claim asserting that the road lies completely within its territory.

Later, Nepal updated the country's political map through a Constitutional amendment, incorporating three strategically important Indian areas.

India termed as "untenable" the "artificial enlargement" of the territorial claims by Nepal. India has handed over a diplomatic note to Nepal over the map issue, Nepalese media reports said.

Pak to restore Afghanistan's exports through Wagah border

AVEEK SEN ■ NEW DELHI

Afghanistan's exports to India will restart from July 15 through Wagah border as part of Covid-19 management mechanism with Pakistan, Afghan Ambassador to Pakistan Atif Mashal has tweeted. Pakistan had closed down the Wagah border with India in mid-March in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic.

"At the special request of the Government of Afghanistan and with a view to facilitating Afghanistan's transit trade, Pakistan has decided to resume Afghan exports through Wagah border crossing from July 15, 2020, after implementing Covid related protocols," the Foreign Office (FO) of Pakistan said in a statement. Pakistan's Foreign Office stated that with this step, Pakistan has fulfilled its commitments under the Pakistan-Afghanistan Transit Trade Agreement (APTITA). Last month, Pakistan had reopened the Torkham crossing in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, Chaman point in Balochistan and Ghulam Khan in North Waziristan to Afghan traders.

LoseCarbs

Carbohydrates are often blamed for weight gain, but a right proportion and a good choice can help to lose and maintain a healthy weight. Good carbohydrates consist of fiber which gives a longer satiety value and are often low in calories. Low carbohydrate diets as a way to rapid weight loss, are however gaining more of attention today



DOCYARD DR INDU BANSAL

Director, Radiation Oncology

NARAYANA SUPERSPECIALITY HOSPITAL, GURUGRAM



Keep count of your drinks

Different types of beer, wine, or malt liquor can have very different amounts of alcohol content. It's important to know how much alcohol your drink contains. In the US, one standard drink (or one alcoholic drink equivalent) contains roughly 14 grams of pure alcohol, which is found in: 4.2% alcohol content: some light beers, 12 ounces of regular beer, which is usually about 5% alcohol, 5 ounces of wine, which is typically about 12% alcohol, 1.5 ounces of distilled spirits, which is about 40% alcohol.

The National Institute on Alcohol Abuse & Alcoholism (NIAAA) defines moderate drinking as up to four alcoholic drinks for men and three for women in any single day and a maximum of 14 drinks for men and seven drinks for women per week.

There are various health problems associated with alcohol intake as depression, dementia, mental health problems, alcoholic hepatitis, anemia, arrhythmias, cirrhosis, fatty liver, gout, high blood pressure, nerve damage, seizures, stroke, chronic disease of the heart muscle, known as cardiomyopathy, some types of cancer. All types of alcoholic drinks, including red and white wine, beer, cocktails, and liquor, are linked with cancer. The more you drink, the higher your cancer risk.

There is consistent evidence that alcohol is a carcinogen. 3.5% of all cancer-related deaths were because of alcohol consumption. 5.5% of all new cancer occurrences and 5.8% of all cancer deaths worldwide were attributable to drinking alcohol.

Alcohol consumption increases the risk of seven different types of cancers — that of the mouth, throat, voice box, esophagus, bowel, liver and breast. Whereas smoking is linked to at least 15 types of cancers

In spite of this only 13% of people understand that cancer is one of the health risks associated with alcohol consumption. Ignorance is a lot like alcohol. The more you have of it, the less you can see its effect on you.

There is evidence that alcohol consumption increases the risk of seven different types of cancers — that of the mouth, throat, voice box, esophagus, bowel, liver and breast. Whereas smoking is linked to at least 15 types of cancer, the most common being lung cancer. It may also increase the risk of cancers of the skin, pancreas and prostate. Even low levels of drinking (up to two drinks a day) were associated with an 8 to 23% higher risk of prostate cancer when compared to no drinking. Alcohol is thought to be the cause of between 5% to 11% of all breast cancer cases.

A recent BMC Public Health study suggest that the cigarette equivalent of a bottle of wine is five cigarettes for men and ten for women. The authors estimate that in non-smoking men, the absolute lifetime risk of cancer—that is, the risk of developing cancer during one's lifetime—associated with drinking one bottle of wine per week is 1.0%. For women, it is 1.4%. Thus, if 1,000 men and 1,000 women each drank one bottle of wine per week, around 10 extra men and 14 extra women may develop cancer at some point in their life. In men, this risk appears to be associated primarily with cancers of the gastrointestinal tract, whereas in women, 55% of cases appear to be associated with breast cancer. The authors also found that drinking three bottles of wine per week — a level known to increase the risks of a wide range of different health problems — was associated with an increase of absolute lifetime cancer risk to 1.9% in men and 3.6% in women. This is equivalent to smoking roughly eight cigarettes per week for men and 23 cigarettes per week for women.

We all know drunkenness is nothing but voluntary madness. Drunk never looks good. So, please take a pause and think. Less drinking more thinking. Try a big cup of sobriety — now that's a good stuff. Wake up with no hangover.

SUMMERCoolERS

CHERRY: A cherry is a stone fruit. These tiny fruits are loaded with Vitamins and antioxidants that help in reducing skin's signs of aging and making it look fresh and glowing. It also helps in regulating blood pressure because of the high potassium content. The phytochemicals in cherries help reduce bad cholesterol levels.

They work wonders as sleep stimulators. If you want to have a good night's sleep then grab a cup of cherry juice before going to bed and after

waking up in the morning. Cherries are a good source of melatonin, which helps us regulate our sleep cycles. Cherries have also been found to help with jet lag.

Sweet cherries have a low glycemic index of 22 — lower than apricots, grapes and peaches. This makes them a better snack than many other fruits, especially for diabetics.

Furthermore, these small berries are good enough to keep you hydrated and energetic throughout the day.



COVID-19 is not only a respiratory illness, but it can trigger several neurological disorders as well, says DR RAJNISH KUMAR

If you feel COVID-19 is a respiratory disease then you need to think again. As a day passes, it has been emerging as the biggest threat to trigger a huge range of neurological disorders. Stroke, anxiety, confusion and fatigue are the few names from the long list. There are many instances when people have complaint of challenges in staying focused, problems with the memory and extreme tiredness after the mild illness.

Neurological experts suggest that earlier nobody realised that the virus does cause problem in the brain and after much analysis they realised that there could be many factors including lack of oxygen flow to the brain, blood-clotting and a hyper-inflammatory response of the immune system that a patient might be going through. However, it is still not clear whether the novel virus itself is affecting the brain too. Though the recovery rate from the coronavirus infection has gone up, many believe that getting back home from the ICU is the beginning of much neurological disorder that a patient never had before.

There have been evidences from the past that how a massive lockdown had affected the brains of the people. During the end of World War I, a mysterious neurological syndrome known as encephalitis lethargica appeared and went on to affect more than a million people worldwide. There is limited evidence of its causes, and whether the trigger was influenza or a post-infectious autoimmune disorder is still unknown. Some patients had movement disorders that looked like Parkinson's disease,

which affected them for the rest of their lives.

What researchers say?

Neurologists are working hard to have a better understanding of how coronavirus infection is affecting their patients when various researches have estimated that the deadly virus is causing neurological impact. A recent researchers at the University College London (UCL) have studied the brain of 43 patients with confirmed or suspected COVID-19 infections who developed neurological symptoms, like inflammation, psychosis and delirium. The scientists identified 10 cases of temporary brain dysfunction with delirium, 12 cases of brain inflammation, eight cases of strokes and eight patients with nerve damage. Most of those with inflammation were diagnosed with acute disseminated encephalomyelitis (ADEM), a rare disease that the researchers said has increased in prevalence during the pandemic.

Whereas, when the research was conducted in aged patients, with an age group of 60 and above, it has been seen that they didn't develop any respiratory problem but with the neurological disorder instead becoming "the first and main" symptom of COVID-19.

Even a study in China, has found out finds that the strokes, altered consciousness and other neurological issues are relatively common in more serious cases of COVID-19. They studied the 214 cases of severe coronavirus illness treated in Wuhan city during the early phase of the global pandemic, doctors reported that 36.4 per cent of patients displayed neuro-

COVID-19 can evoke an extremely strong immune response, which is called a cytokine storm. During a cytokine storm, the body overproduces immune cells and proteins to the point where they can attack tissues, leading to blood clots and organ failure in some cases

logical symptoms including disorientation or confusion, headaches or even seizure. Some even had impairments in taste or smell.

As the disease has been around for a matter of months, we might not yet know what long-term damage COVID-19 can cause. Doctors need to be aware of possible neurological effects, as early diagnosis can improve patient outcome. We've already seen evidence that COVID-19 can evoke an extremely strong immune response, which is called a cytokine storm. During a cytokine storm, the body overproduces immune cells and proteins to the point where they can attack tissues, leading to blood clots and organ failure in some cases. At this point, there's so little data on these patients that these explanations are only ideas.

We now need detailed studies to understand the possible biological mechanisms ... so we can explore potential treatments. A prospective, observational study with a larger number of patients that includes more specific neuroimaging and other diagnostic tests is warranted for more conclusive evidence. Research should focus on if responses like the cytokine storm can actually explain these neurological symptoms.

Similar to the UK, which has a surveillance programme called CoronaNerve, India should also have such program on an urgent basis so that the physicians can report neurological symptoms of COVID-19 with the hope of better understanding the effect of the coronavirus on the brain.

The writer is Head of Department Neurology, Paras Hospitals, Gurugram

UNMASK YOUR SKIN PROBLEMS



Wearing face masks for long durations can cause flare-up of acne problems. DR AJAY RANA shares simple tips that can help

At this time, the world is facing the COVID-19 pandemic, a crisis that has never been seen before. Today, wearing a mask is one of the most effective ways to combat the spread of the virus. No matter wherever you go, the Government has now mandated customers and visitors to cover their mouth and nose with a mask or any piece of clothing. Masks keep us off from touching our face constantly. Which is the most common habit to spread this deadly virus. Also, if someone is coughing or sneezing, it provides a guard against spreading droplets to get contact with other individuals. But wearing the mask for prolonged periods can cause a lot of skin problems for many people.

Wearing face masks for a long duration can cause flare up of acne problems. Sweat, oil and makeup are present on the skin and when we cover them with a mask, it becomes occluded. And when we breathe into the mask, the humidity develops in the mask, increasing the chances of acne.

There has been an increase in cases of perioral dermatitis. Moisture and vapour, as well as any secretions such as saliva or mucus, are trapped inside the mask. It acts as an irritant dermatitis to the skin and upset the natural balance of the skin layer around the mouth. This results in rashes, redness, irritation and scaling around the nose and mouth. Sometimes tiny pimples or pustules appear in clusters around the skin of the lips.

Humidity due to wearing masks for longer duration makes the skin layer too moist, trapping all this moisture inside the mask. It is almost like diaper dermatitis. But when the skin is in that moist environment and then we take the mask off and let the air out, then sometimes it can become too dry also and cause dryness of the skin with itching and redness.

There are many simple things we can do to protect our face from the side effects of wearing masks. Sometimes, it also depends on the type of mask we are wearing. If it's a cloth mask, you need to wash it on a regular interval.

■ If you are at home, where no many people are present, then avoid wearing masks for extended periods of time.

■ If your skin seems too much on the dry side, use a gentle, hypoallergenic moisturiser. Don't use something such as witch hazel or rubbing alcohol that will be even more irritating to the skin layer.

■ Use a neutral cleanser, a mild soap or good face wash to clean your skin.

■ If you're using disposable masks then after using it, hang it up in a sunny place to dry for a day or two before using it again.

■ Consult a dermatologist if you do not know how to manage your condition, without waiting for it to aggravate.

The writer is Dermatologist, Aesthetic Physician and Founder-Director of ILAMED

DadiKaKehna

Rains bring along a plethora of diseases like dengue and malaria.

The adage 'prevention is better than cure' can't be truer when it comes to these two illnesses.

ROSHAN DEVI shares tips that can help keep the pesky pest away



Monsoon is a welcome change after the scorching hot summer days. Unfortunately, it brings with it a woe of problems not to mention diseases like Dengue and Malaria. Prevention is better than cure. Here is what people need to do to ensure that their surrounding and homes are free from mosquitoes.

The most important thing to keep in mind is to get rid of all the water that has been standing in tubs and planters. Fill in fresh water. If you use a cooler, drain out all the water. Let it dry before you fill fresh water.

Did you know that *Tulsi*

keeps the mosquitoes away? Just keep shrubs of the plant at the entrance door and windows to keep the mosquitoes at bay.

Camphor is another home remedy that will help in getting rid of mosquitoes. Close all of the doors and then light camphor.

After about 30 minutes, there won't be any mosquitoes. Believe it or not garlic is a great way to get rid of the peskies. Crush a few cloves and boil them in water. Pour the solution in a spray bottle and spray it around. The solution kills mosquitoes instantly. Don't worry, the house will not reek of garlic.



Planting health

Plant-based diets offer all the essential protein, carbohydrates, fats, vitamins, and minerals for optimal health, says ROHIT SHAH

There are many arguments regarding the best diet. Nevertheless, health and wellness communities admit that diets highlighting fresh, whole ingredients and minimising processed foods are excellent for overall wellness of the body. The whole-foods, plant-based diet does just that. Dropping the phrase "plant-based diet" is in a buzz these days. But why is it so hot right now? Because it focuses on minimally processed foods, specifically plants, and can improve your health, boost energy levels, and prevent chronic diseases. Plant-based diets also offer all the essential



protein, carbohydrates, fats, vitamins, and minerals for optimal health, and are also higher in fiber and phytonutrients.

Plant-based VS vegan: The vegan doesn't consume any animal products, including meat, eggs, milk, dairy, and honey. Yet, a vegan diet is not always as nutritionally virtuous as a plant-based lifestyle. The focus of vegan is usually set to avoid animal products, but the priority is not set on unprocessed whole

foods based on plants. On the contrary, fully avoiding animal products doesn't mean following a plant-based lifestyle (like a vegetarian or vegan). In fact for plant-based eaters, animal proteins can happily fit into the lifestyle, yet they typically serve as more of a supporting role to your veggies and whole grains. Therefore, a plant-based diet includes not only fruits and vegetables, but also nuts, seeds, oils, whole grains, legumes, and beans. Overall, plant-based

lifestyle is more of a flexible and broad way of thinking about nutrition and ingredient quality. Moreover, with a plant-based diet, the focus is on simple, nutritious and whole foods.

So if you're probably thinking that moving to a plant-based diet sounds like a great idea, but you don't know where to start. Don't worry, we've got you covered.

Eat ample vegetables. At lunch or dinner, fill half your plate with vegetables at lunch and dinner. Try to include plenty of colours when picking your vegetables. Enjoy vegetables as a snack with salsa, hummus or guacamole.

Include whole grains for breakfast: Start with quinoa, oatmeal, buckwheat, or barley. You can also add some nuts or seeds along with fresh fruit.

Go for greens: Try a variety of green leafy vegetables such as kale, collards, spinach, and other greens every day. Steam, grill, braise, or stir-fry to preserve their nutrients and flavour.

Besides all these, the most effective and nutritious plant based food is Hemp and hemp seeds. It is because, they are one of those few superfoods which are incredibly healthy.

The writer is Co-founder & CEO, Hemp Horizons Pvt Ltd

Trend Slazer

Shilpa gives yoga tips

Months of being confined at home and the inability to go for a walk or hit the gym has led to stiffening of muscles and back-ache among many. Actor and fitness enthusiast SHILPA SHETTY has a few simple yoga tips.

Recently, Shilpa shared a video on her Instagram where she can be seen performing *Vyaghrasana*, *Marjariasana*, and *Utthana Vyaghrasana* among other asanas that help enhance flexibility of the body.

"Our bodies are getting rusty without the same movement, agility, and exercise we were accustomed to; before this pandemic hit us. Daily travels have drastically reduced for a majority of us, leaving us with very little physical activity," says she.



'The main reason I've joined YouTube is to broaden my horizons. My aim for this channel is to introduce everyone to the real Daisy, to show who I am. This is basically my way of connecting with my fans on very real terms. I'm super excited to start my journey. I know I'll get as much love as I do on my other platforms.'

—Daisy Shah

It is flashback day for actor KAJOL as she went down memory lane to recall the time when she sported wavy and voluminous hair.



Taking to her Instagram account, Kajol posted a picture in which she is seen flaunting wavy and curly locks.

"What... I swear this hairstyle was in trend... once upon a time," she captioned the image, which seems to be from the 1990s. She added, "#InStyle #UnnaturalPerm #MeWhen."

Reacting to the throwback image, fans showered her with a lot of funny comments.

'Honoured to work for a cause'

Oscar-winning actor REGINA KING says it is always an honour to be part of a piece of work that is entertaining and socially relevant.

She cites that as the reason for being part of the television series *Watchmen*.

"It's definitely an honour to be able to have been a part of a piece of work that was entertaining but also socially relevant," Regina said.

"Prior to *Watchmen* I had done *Seven Seconds* and *American Crime*, and both of those shows had commentary rooted in them, around the things that are going on in our country right now," she added.

NEW GOLDEN RULES

Here are a few habits that you need to teach your child in a COVID-19 world



Consultant Pediatrician, Fortis Hospital Kalyan and Dr Jesal Sheth, Sr. Consultant, Pediatrician and Neonatal Intensivist, Fortis Hospital Mulund, suggest some habits that you could gradually inculcate in your child:

- ♦ Hand-washing properly with soap and water for at least 20 seconds is the cornerstone of our efforts to avoid all illnesses not just COVID-19.
- ♦ Follow this with sanitisation of hands multiple times a day.
- ♦ Follow social distancing while visiting public places. This habit will have to be practiced for a long time to come.

- ♦ Always maintain a distance of two metres or six feet between yourself and the other individual when you go out or even see your friends.
- ♦ Always follow cough etiquettes, which means that you cough or sneeze in your elbow sleeves.
- ♦ The virus enters the body if we touch our nose, mouth and eyes. So always wear a face mask that covers the nose and mouth while outdoors and do not touch your face. Do not remove your mask or touch it till you reach home.
- ♦ Take bath if possible when you come home, if not, wash your hands thoroughly.
- ♦ Eat healthy, home cooked immunity boosting food, including vegetables, fruits and legumes.
- ♦ Continue to be in touch with their peers and family members, not physically but by digital means.
- ♦ Inculcate a habit of physical activity comprising fun indoor

- exercises.
- ♦ Proper use of the internet and online tools with appropriate use of child-safe tools must be taught.
- ♦ Instill in them the habit of reading, writing or following a hobby of their choice
- ♦ This is the best time to get to know your kids. Understand the challenges that they might be facing. It is recommended to talk about the importance of mental health, especially during these challenging times
- ♦ Pray and respect for all service workers that are helping COVID-19 patients.

While you are at home, make the most of your time and teach your children life lessons by setting an example by things you regularly do. It could be spiritual, reading to them or even as basic as dinner table discussions.

—IANS

Thank you, next

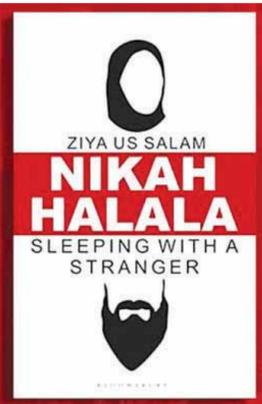
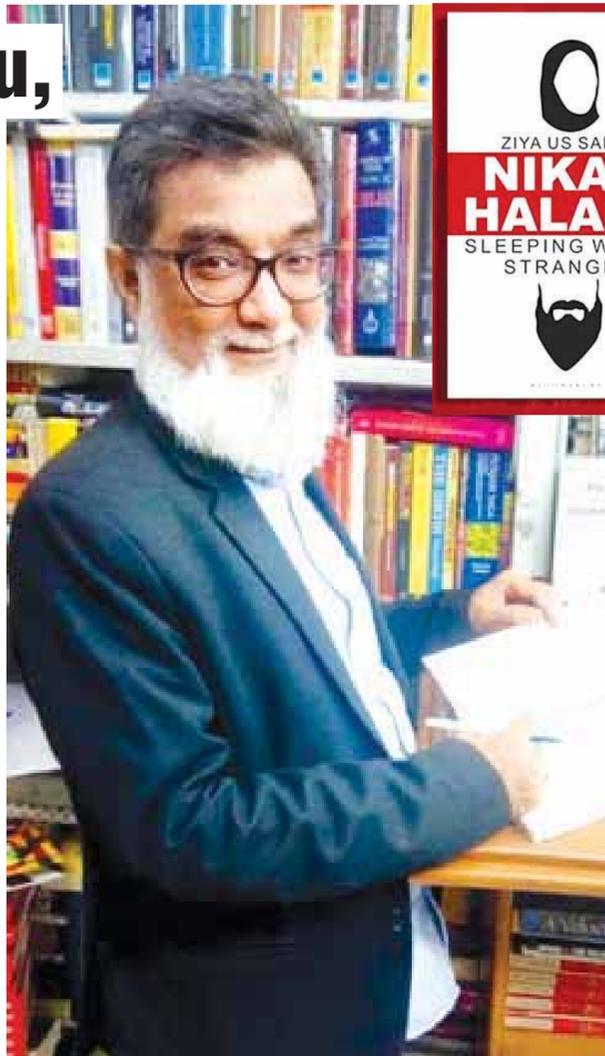
Author ZIYA US SALAM's new release, *Nikah Halala: Sleeping With a Stranger*, exposes the sordid reality of instant triple *talaq* and fake marriages in Islam, a tradition unique to the Indian subcontinent that ends up mocking faith and punishing women for the crimes of men.

An extract:

Muslim society in India remains in a state of denial when it comes to *nikah halala*. The Quran allows divorce twice. After that the spouses either live together happily or divorce gracefully. Nowhere does it allow marriage with a pre-arranged date of divorce to a new man only to go back to the former husband.

Nikah Halala: Sleeping with a Stranger by Ziya Us Salam is a probing exercise that exposes the cycle of instant triple *talaq* followed by a fake marriage, which too ends with another instant triple *talaq* that allows the woman to marry the former husband. While the holy book does not mention instant triple *talaq*, this tradition is unique to the Indian subcontinent that claims to bring squabbling couples together but ends up making a mockery of the faith and punishes women for the crimes of men.

The first-ever book to talk of the subject, *Nikah Halala* presents the sordid reality of mock marriages against the background of Quranic injunction on the sub-



ject and exposes the departure in practice from the teachings of the holy book that gives divorced women complete freedom to follow their path.

An extract:

Islamuddin was not one to rest on his laurels. Through one member of his grow-

ing circle of friends, he heard of a possible vacancy at a mosque in Bombay. It was at Dharavi. The friend put in a good word and Islamuddin started for Bombay. But before that, he packed off his wife and children to Sasaram. He was now single in the big, bad city. He got the job all right but found himself lost and overawed by the

pace of life. It was then that an uncle of his friend, through whom he got the job, put his hand over his head. He told him about what to expect from worshippers, how people often moved out at the end of the prayer without waiting for a collective *dua* to begin. One day, he came up with a proposal that was to change how Islamuddin looked at his wife, his children and, indeed, Islam itself. The uncle, clearly in the late 50s, and manifestly prosperous, suggested he marry a girl. Startled, Islamuddin reminded him, 'Aapko toh pata hai hum biwi-bachche wale hain.' (You know, I am married with a wife and kids.)

'I know. I am only suggesting a one-day *nikah*.'

That is all, the uncle cleared the picture.

'Is it not *haram*?'

'You are like a son to me. Will I ask my son to do anything *haram*? This is only to help a fellow Muslim brother to save his family. You will be helping a fellow Muslim in distress,' the uncle insisted, adding, 'Her husband might give you some *nazrana*.' (Gift.)

'Let me speak to my wife,' Islamuddin said.

'What for? How will she know? If a man wants, he can keep four wives. And it is just for a day. You are a young man. Your hair has not gone grey. Your wife is sitting a thousand kilometres away...' Uncle was not about to give up.

'But I have no place to bring a wife here, you know that.'

'Yes, I know. I will ask her former husband to arrange a room in the vicinity of a hotel.' Uncle solved another problem.

Two days later, Islamuddin got married. Again. Without his wife's knowledge or permission.

To whom?

'I do not remember her name. She was from Vapi, I think. It was in 1991 or early 1992.' That is all he can recall in 2019.

A day later, he divorced her. The marriage was consummated. Divorce effected faithfully.

It was to be the first *nikah halala* of his life. Neither before nor afterwards was he sure of the religious validity of the act.

A couple of years later, in 1994, he married another woman. 'She was from Surat. Her husband was well-educated. He used to teach in a college in Jaipur, I remember. He came with the proposal,' Islamuddin

reveals. 'To you directly?' 'No, to the uncle. Nobody ever came to me directly. It was always through that uncle.'

Did uncle solemnise the *nikah halala* himself? 'Who else would do it? Something like this is like charity. One hand should not know what the other has given.'

Sometime in mid-1998, Islamuddin was joined by his wife and children, effectively putting an end or at least a comma to his career as a *halala* husband.

'Do not say that. It was always to help out, to protect families. Otherwise, is there a dearth of women for sex in a place like Mumbai? I left my family more than 40 years ago but never touched a girl out of wedlock.' Fake wedlock, he might clarify, Islamuddin, as we said, always looked for avenues for growth. He learnt from another friend in Mumbai that Dubai offers much more money for the same job.

'But for better chances to find an opening, you will have to shift to Delhi. The agents first come to Delhi. It is only if they do not get qualified people there that they go elsewhere,' he was told.

Once again, Islamuddin packed off his wife to Sasaram; his daughter and elder son were anyway married and settled in Sasaram and Patna respectively.

Once in Delhi, he found a job first in Nizamuddin, then a little later at a small mosque in central Delhi. He was paid better, given accommodation too. Even as he waited for a Dubai opening, a *halala* opportunity arose.

In July 2019, a man working in the fashion industry had divorced his wife through instant triple *talaq*. Some three months later, he wanted her back. Once again, through word of mouth, Islamuddin was approached. This time he readily agreed.

Will you not ask your wife?

'No, no, it is not needed.'

'Will you charge anything for it? How much will be the *mehr*?'

'Jo unke husband ki marzi ho, de dijiyega.' (Give whatever her husband wishes.)

'We cannot stay here, I am old now. So the *nikah* will have to be solemnised some distance away. And they will have to book a room in a hotel and bear the expenses. But what about the *mehr*?'

'Woh bhi humein hi dena hoga?' (I will have to give that too?)

'Yes, Sir. In Islam, marriage cannot be solemnised without *mehr*.'

'Yes, I know. Make it ₹500. But make it fast. I might have to go to Dubai any day. I want to finish your job before going.'

Islamuddin was a seasoned *halala* husband.

NOW A HOME AFFAIR

In keeping with ITC Hotels' commitment towards enhancing gourmet experiences, the chain has announced its partnership with a food delivery platform to offer customers responsible dining in the comfort of their homes



hygiene and safety protocol for pan-India home delivery of food to their valued guests. The collaboration with Zomato will further assist us in responsibly delivering our unique culinary experiences using their advanced distribution network across the country.

'ITC Hotels are known not just for their luxurious hospitality but also for their culinary delights. We are glad to partner with them. With the growing trend of celebrations at home, we believe that ITC's exclusive gourmet and indigenous food offerings powered by our wide on-ground delivery network will offer great food delivery options for consumers celebrating small or large occasions. Zomato will ensure that its safety measures are well implemented in every delivery,' added Mohit Sardana, COO, Food Delivery, Zomato.

Zomato has implemented eight Max Safety measures to ensure utmost safety of food. These measures include — restaurants follow WHO practices; contactless delivery; both restaurant staff and delivery partners wear masks; temperature checks and sanitisation stations for both kitchen staff and delivery partners and mandatory use of Aarogya Setu app.

traditions through our globally acclaimed signature brands. However, in a world where change is the order of the day, it has been our endeavour to ensure our patrons continue to enjoy their favourite cuisines through an outreach dining experience in the comfort and safety of their homes. As part of ITC Hotels, Responsible Luxury initiative, the 'WeAssure' programme follows a stringent

protocol. The latter showcases an array of authentic global culinary delights and also celebrates indigenous flavours of the region

with the chain's culinary initiative — 'Local Love'. Thus, diners can enjoy the subtle flavours of different cuisines, authentic to a

region and culinary style. Anil Chadha, COO of ITC Hotels, said, "We have always showcased the finest culinary

Man City free to play Champions League

CAS lifts club's two-year ban from European competition, cuts fine to \$16m

AFF ■ LONDON

Manchester City's two-year UEFA ban from European football has been overturned by the Court of Arbitration of Sport (CAS), the Lausanne-based court said on Monday.

The CAS ruled that the English Premier League runners-up did not breach financial fair play (FFP) rules by disguising equity funding as sponsorship, and also imposed a lower €10 million (\$15.7 million) fine for failing to co-operate with the continental football governing body.

"The club welcomes the implications of today's ruling as a validation of the club's position and the body of evidence that it was able to present," City said in a statement.

The decision means Pep Guardiola's team will compete in next season's Champions League, for which they have qualified by finishing second to Liverpool in the Premier League. They also lead Real Madrid 2-1 in this season's round of 16 after the away leg.

City were accused of deliberately inflating the value of income from sponsors with links to the Abu Dhabi United Group, also owned by City owner Sheikh Mansour, to avoid falling foul of FFP regulations between 2012 and 2016.

The case against City was reopened when German magazine *Der Spiegel* published a series of leaked e-mails in 2018.

"Most of the alleged breaches reported by the (UEFA) adjudicatory chamber of the club financial control body were either not established or time-barred," CAS said in a statement.

UEFA had ruled in February that



TOP-4 RACE INTENSIFIES

LONDON: Manchester City's success in overturning its Champions League ban on Monday has huge ramifications on the Premier League and the remaining two teams that will qualify for Europe's top club competition.

Chelsea, Manchester United and Leicester — and maybe Wolverhampton Wanderers and Sheffield United, too — are now fighting for two qualifying spots instead of three with two weeks of the season remaining.

The fight for a top-five finish has reverted back to needing to be in the top four to join champion Liverpool and City, already secured in second place, in earning tens of millions of

dollars in UEFA prize money next season.

The most concerned team is likely to be Leicester.

In the top four since September — and, in December, even looking like the most realistic title challenger to Liverpool — Leicester has imploded, collecting only two wins from its last 11 league games stretching back to the end of January.

After losing to relegation-threatened Bournemouth 4-1 on Sunday, Leicester will find itself in fifth place if Man United beats Southampton on Monday.

United appears much more likely to secure a top-four finish and

return to the Champions League after a season's absence.

With four straight wins ahead of the Southampton game, United is the form team in the league and also has the most benign remaining schedule with upcoming matches against Crystal Palace and West Ham before what could be a winner-takes-all game game at Leicester on the final weekend of the season.

Making it all the more intriguing is the fact that another final-day match is between Chelsea and Wolves.

Chelsea is currently in third place, one point ahead of Leicester, but will drop into fourth if United beats Southampton. AP

City had committed serious breaches of FFP regulations and failed to cooperate with its investigation, handing them a ban and a €30 million fine.

City denied any wrongdoing and their appeal was heard over three days by the CAS last month.

Without Champions League football, the side could miss out on at least £100 million (\$175.3 million) in prize money and broadcast revenue, as well as match day and other income.

The FFP regulations are designed to stop clubs running up big losses through spending on players. They also ensure sponsorship deals are based on their real market value and are genuine commercial agreements — and not ways for owners to pump cash into a club to get around the rules.

City cheered the decision that will have huge ramifications on the club's finances and potentially the future of Spanish manager Pep Guardiola and star players such as Kevin de Bruyne and Raheem Sterling.

"While Manchester City and its legal advisers are yet to review the full ruling by the Court of Arbitration for Sport, the club welcomes the implications of today's ruling as a validation of the club's position and the body of evidence that it was able to present," City said in a statement.

Since Sheikh Mansour's takeover 12 years ago, City's fortunes have been transformed from perennially living in the shadow of local rivals Manchester United to winning four Premier League titles in the past eight years among 11 major trophies.

Last Saturday, they secured qualification for the Champions League for a 10th consecutive season with a 5-0 win at Brighton.



Foxes collapse at Vitality

AP ■ BOURNEMOUTH

Dominic Solanke scored twice as Bournemouth's bid for Premier League survival was boosted by a 4-1 victory over Champions League-chasing Leicester, which was reduced to 10 men.

They were the striker's first goals since joining from Liverpool in January 2019 after failing to score in his 38 previous league appearances.

At Dean Court, Leicester scored after 23 minutes as Jamie Vardy bagged his 23rd league goal of the season to extend his lead in the Golden Boot race.

But Bournemouth turned the game on Sunday in its favor during a two-minute spell which saw Leicester lose a player.

In the 66th minute, Leicester keeper Kasper Schmeichel booted a goal-kick into Wilfred Ndidi's back, forcing his teammate to trip Callum Wilson.

Junior Stanislas stepped up to score the resulting penalty and 101 seconds later Dominic

Solanke's weak shot trickled under Schmeichel's woeful attempt to save.

Leicester defender Caglar Soyuncu sent off for kicking Wilson as he attempted to retrieve the ball from the net after Solanke's goal.

Bournemouth's luck was in and Stanislas's strike went in off Leicester's Jonny Evans for an 83rd-minute own goal before Solanke's composed finish made it four in the 87th minute.

Bournemouth's first win in 10 games, a drought stretching back to February 1, moved them to within three points of 17th placed Watford, with three games left for all the teams in the relegation fight.

Fourth-placed Leicester will drop to fifth if Manchester United beat Southampton on Monday, leaving their hopes of Champions League qualification in danger.

"I didn't see that coming but we are not good enough to get too comfortable. We will finish where we deserve to," Leicester manager Brendan Rodgers said.



PSG welcome fans with 9-0 win

AFF ■ PARIS

Paris Saint-Germain routed second division Le Havre in a friendly on Sunday remarkable not for the 9-0 score, but because it drew the biggest crowd for a match in one of Europe's Big Five football nations since early March.

The French Government relaxed the health protocols before the weekend to allow for a total attendance of 5,000, including players, journalists and staff, at games and while the match at Le Havre was not the first to be played, the others involved only lower-division clubs.

For the game at Le Havre, the tickets, priced between 30 euros (\$34) and 60 euros, sold out in six minutes.

"It is a victory for French football, sport in general," said outgoing Sports Minister Roxana Maracineanu who was at the match.

"I am delighted that football in France can resume in a popular way, with more people in the stadiums. It is the only country in western Europe to be able to do this."

Unlike Germany, England,

Italy and Spain, France abandoned its league season in the face of the coronavirus pandemic, but when the other four countries resumed their leagues, they did so behind closed doors.

Although social distancing rules were in place, fans took a few liberties once they were in the 25,000-capacity Stade Ocean on Sunday.

On the field, Neymar and Mauro Icardi each scored twice and Kylian Mbappe once before PSG made 10 changes leading 5-0 at half time.

Pablo Sarabia, with two, Idrissa Gueye and Arnaud Kalimuendo scored in the first 15 minutes of the second half to complete the rout as PSG started to warm up for a busy few weeks in late July and early August.

PSG are due to play Saint-Etienne in the French Cup final on July 24 and Lyon in the French League Cup Final on July 31 before resuming their Champions League campaign away to Atalanta on August 12.

Both French finals will be at the 80,000-seat Stade de France in Paris.

Sevilla almost book top 4 spot

AFF ■ SEVILLE

Sevilla all-but secured Champions League qualification by beating relegation battlers Real Mallorca 2-0 on Sunday in La Liga.

Lucas Ocampos scored a first-half penalty before Youssef En-Nesyri added a second late on to move Sevilla nine points clear of fifth-placed Villarreal.

With three games left and the superior head-to-head, Villarreal are not mathematically out of contention but they would have to take maximum points and see Sevilla lose both of their remaining matches.

"Champions League qualification was our objective," said Sevilla's Fernando Reges. "We are very close and now we just have some small steps left to make it."

Finishing in the top four would be an impressive achievement for Sevilla and their coach Julen Lopetegui, who took over last year following his nightmares in charge of Spain and Real Madrid.

They could even yet finish third, given they sit level on points with Atletico Madrid.

Defeat damages Real Mallorca's fading hopes of avoiding relegation.

They remain three points behind Alaves, who have a superior record head-to-head and a game in hand against Getafe on Monday.



Milan keep European hopes alive

NAPLES: AC Milan kept their hopes of European football alive on Sunday with a 2-2 draw at Napoli that leaves them with a strong chance of reaching the Europa League.

Franck Kessie's penalty 17 minutes from time gave Milan a battling point in Naples after Giovanni Di Lorenzo and Dries Mertens had put the hosts deservedly ahead with an hour gone.

The draw leaves Napoli in sixth place and the final Europa League spot, but as Gennaro Gattuso's side have already qualified for the competition's group stage by



winning the Italian Cup, seventh place currently offers a place into the qualifying rounds.

Milan, who are two points and one place behind Napoli, are favourites to take the third spot in the Europa.

"When you get results and put in strong performances against this kind of opponent, it really boosts your confidence," said Milan coach Stefano Pioli.

Theo Hernandez gave the away side the lead against the run of play with 19 minutes gone when he met Ante Rebic's brilliant cross with a thumping volley, but Napoli responded brilliantly to going behind.

They were deservedly level 14 minutes later thanks to a fizzing free-kick delivery from Lorenzo Insigne which Gianluigi Donnarumma pat-

ted out to Di Lorenzo, who tapped home.

Mertens put the hosts ahead on the hour mark when he met Jose Callejon's low cross with a shot that was deflected past Donnarumma by Alessio Romagnoli.

From there it looked like there would only be one winner but they were given the perfect chance to equalise when Nikola Maksimovic brought down Giacomo Bonaventura in the area. Kessie made no mistake from the spot, rifling his finish past David Ospina.

Pellegrini wants Betis fighting in Europe

MADRID: Manuel Pellegrini's main goal in his new coaching job with Real Betis is to make the Spanish club a regular in European competitions.

Pellegrini was officially introduced as Betis' new coach on Monday after signing a three-year deal that will begin next season.

"This is a team that has to be fighting for European competitions," the Chilean coach said. "It needs it as an institution and it will be my main objective to help the club take that leap and achieve better results on the field."

Pellegrini helped Villarreal thrive in Europe more than a decade ago, making it to the Champions League semifinals in 2006 and quarterfinals in 2009. He also led the club to a runner-up finish in the Spanish league in 2008.

"If they told me before arriving at Villarreal that we would play in the semifinals and quarterfinals of the Champions League, or that we would finish second in La Liga,



people would have said that that was crazy," the 66-year-old Pellegrini said.

Betis last played in the Champions League in 2005-06. It made it to the Europa League in 2013-14 and 2018-19.

Pellegrini said he hoped to achieve with Betis the same success he had with his previous clubs in Spain.

"I'm convinced that Betis has a squad with a lot of quality and that can achieve great things," Pellegrini said. "I will try to help with my experience to try to get the most out of the team." AP

U-17 WWC will be held behind closed doors in worst-case scenario: AIFF

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The FIFA U-17 Women's World Cup will be held behind closed doors only in the worst-case scenario, All India Football Federation general secretary Kunal Das said on Monday amid a continued rise in the country's Covid-19 case count.

Already postponed once, the tourney is to be held from February 17 to March 7 next year as per the revised schedule.

"In the worst case scenario, we will have to do it behind closed doors and that will be a pity (especially after the grand success of the

I-LEAGUE MUST GO ON

NEW DELHI: The All India Football Federation plans to go ahead with the 2020-21 I-League season even if the clubs' star foreign recruits are unable to make it due to the coronavirus-forced travel restrictions.

International flights remain suspended since March

men's U-17 World Cup in 2017), but human lives are of course most important," Das said.

The pandemic has so far claimed more than 22K lives with the number of positive cases crossing 8.5 lakh.

owing to the Covid-19 pandemic.

"The league must go on even if without foreigners. But there are other people including the league committee chairman, Mr Subrata Dutta (who will also be need to be on same page)," AIFF general secretary Kunal Das said on Monday. PTI

The camp for the tournament is likely to begin in August with Jharkhand emerging as the frontrunner to be the host. The state's chief minister Hemant Soren has taken it upon himself to play host.



England's batting still their nemesis: Hussain

PTI ■ SOUTHAMPTON

England's batting continues to remain their "nemesis" despite the focus being on stand-in captain Ben Stokes' questionable decisions in the opening Test against the West Indies, feels former skipper Nasser Hussain.

Questions were raised even before the match began as senior pacer Stuart Broad was dropped from the crucial encounter. Stokes then handed the visitors the ball after winning the toss under grey skies, resulting in England being bowled out from 204 in the first innings.

"Let's not get lost with the Broad issue or the toss issue. England having batted first were bowled out for 204 — that is still their nemesis," Hussain was quoted as saying by Sky Sports.

"They did well in South Africa, but in England, against the Dukes ball, they often find themselves 20-3, 30-3, and without

Root in the side this week that was a nightmare. That is still the issue for England," he added.

The two teams head to Manchester to play the second Test of the three-match series, starting on Thursday, and Hussain feels England need to replicate the series-winning batting performance they put up earlier this year against South Africa.

"They are going to a good surface at Old Trafford. Root is back and they have to bat like they did in South Africa this winter and at points in New Zealand. Not being 204 all out."

Hussain said maybe England underestimated West Indies, citing that had it been the Ashes, Broad would have been a definite starter.

"All I would say about Broad is that if this had been the first Test of an Ashes series, would he have been playing. I would say, yes, 100 per cent? So why wasn't he playing against the West Indies?"

"Was it because we underestimated West Indies and took them lightly? They hold the Wisden Trophy — we have underestimated them in the past and they have beaten us, so why do it here?"

Hussain said the West Indies played "exceptional cricket" and the win will boost their confidence heading to Manchester.

"It's great for West Indies on so many different levels. They deserve it for coming over to England (amid the coronavirus pandemic) and doing what they have had to (quarantine and be in a bubble)."

"Winning like that was absolutely phenomenal — and that's why it was an important win. Imagine doing all that and then losing after bossing this game. They would then have driven up to Manchester thinking 'we have done all the right things and we are 1-0 down,' Hussain added.

NZ cricketers start squad training

WELLINGTON: New Zealand's top cricketers returned to squad training on Monday at the country's High Performance Centre in Lincoln after a prolonged break caused by the Covid-19 pandemic.

In a statement issued on Monday, New Zealand Cricket (NZC) announced that six national camps will be conducted till September.

"New Zealand's top male and female cricketers will return to squad training at the NZC High Performance centre in Lincoln this week, while a larger second camp for players further North will commence at Bay Oval in Mount Maunganui from July 19," it added.

The male players who trained on Monday were Tom Latham, Henry



FERNs will train at the Canterbury hub this week, while a larger second camp for players further North will commence at Bay Oval in Mount Maunganui from July 19," it added.

The male players who trained on Monday were Tom Latham, Henry

Nicholls, Matt Henry and Daryl Mitchell. Skipper Kane Williamson will be part of the batch that will start training next week in Mount Maunganui.

New Zealand's first camp in Lincoln will get over on July 16. It will be followed by training camps in August (10 to 13) and September (dates not yet decided). PTI