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RAIPUR, FRIDAY JULY 3, 2020; PAGES 12 ₹3

₹38,900 cr defence deal OK'd

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

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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



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

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

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

The 12 SU-30 MKIs are

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

The IAF has currently 30 fighter squadrons against a sanctioned strength of 42 squadrons. It will start adding the first batch of Rafale multi-role jets this month end. Another deal for 83 Light Combat Aircraft Mk-1A estimated to cost ₹38,000 crore is expected to be signed in the next two months.

Meanwhile, giving details

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

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

These include Pinaka Multi-barrel Rocket Launch System ammunition, BMP armament upgrades and SDRs, Long Range Land Attack Cruise Missile Systems and Astra Missiles.

The cost of these design and development proposals is in the range of ₹20,400 crore, it stated.

On the missile systems, officials said acquisition of

Pinaka missile systems will enable raising additional regiments over and above the ones already inducted by the Army.

Rajnath defers Leh visit, reviews LAC situation with Jaishankar

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

India fastest among top 15 nations in Covid rate

NAVIN UPADHYAY ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

While India took just 20 days to double — from 2,87,154 on June 10 to 5,85,792 on June 30, the USA needed 50 days to double from 12,71,640 on May 10 to 25,37,636 on June 30, according to the World Health Organization (WHO) data.

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

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

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



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

are next in order. Both took 22 days to double. Brazil went from 6,72,846 on June 8 to 13,44,143 on June 30, while Pakistan vaulted from 1,03,671 on June 8 to 2,09,337 on June 30.

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

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

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

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

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

Trump sees Chinese aggression in Ladakh as sign of its 'true nature'

New York: US President Donald Trump sees China's aggressive action along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in Ladakh confirming the Chinese Communist Party's "true nature", according to his

Spokesperson Kayleigh McEnany.

Asked at her briefing about China's attack on Indian troops, McEnany said, "Trump had said that China's aggressive stance along the India-China

border fits in with the larger pattern of Chinese aggression in other parts of the world. And these actions only confirm the true nature of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP)."

CM restores annual increment to Govt employees

STAFF REPORTER ■ RAIPUR

Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel on Thursday restored the annual wage increment given from July 1 every year to state government officers and employees. The Chief Minister made the announcement after interacting

with a delegation of the Chhattisgarh Employees-Officers Federation led by state Convenor Kamal Verma at his official residence.

Additional Chief Secretary Finance Amitabh Jain was present. The delegation urged Baghel to provide the annual increment as per the specified

date. The Chief Minister agreed but said the arrears will be cleared after six months. The delegation agreed to the suggestion.

Thus, the arrears from July to December will be paid in January 2021, in a single instalment. Similarly, officers and employees whose increment is

due in January 2021 will get the hike from the same month while their arrears of six months will be paid in July.

The Chhattisgarh government had earlier decided to keep the annual increment of officers and employees suspended in view of the crisis caused by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Covid-19 IN INDIA

TOTAL CASES: 6,26,538
 DEATHS: 18,226
 RECOVERED: 3,79,786
 ACTIVE: 2,28,460

STATES	TOTAL CASES	DEATHS	RECOVERED
Maharashtra	1,86,626	8,178	1,01,172
Tamil Nadu	98,392	1,321	56,021
Delhi	92,175	2,864	63,007
Gujarat	33,999	1,888	24,601
Uttar Pradesh	24,825	734	17,221
West Bengal	19,819	699	13,037
Rajasthan	18,662	430	14,948
Telangana	18,570	275	9,069
Karnataka	18,016	272	8,336
Andhra Pradesh	16,097	198	7,313
Haryana	15,509	251	11,019
Madhya Pradesh	14,106	589	10,815
Bihar	10,682	78	7,994
Assam	8,956	14	6,107
Jammu & Kashmir	7,849	115	4,974
Odisha	7,545	35	5,502

C'garh economy bounces back with growth in key sectors

STAFF REPORTER ■ RAIPUR

Chhattisgarh's economy has picked up pace following unlocking after the Covid-19 pandemic which played havoc across the entire country.

Consistent efforts put under the leadership of Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel have started to yield results with significant growth in GST, automobile, agriculture and other sectors.

GST collection in the state has increased by 22 percent as compared to last year while the number of vehicle registrations have gone up by 3.5 times as compared to May this year, said an official statement issued on Thursday.

Chhattisgarh has also secured the top position in providing employment to people under MNREGA and in bringing relief to forest dwellers engaged in collection of forest

produce, it said.

Giving details, the statement stated that in 2019 GST worth Rs 2,093 crore was collected. This rose to Rs 2,549 crore in the current year.

In June 2020, Jaipur (Rajasthan) recorded maximum sales of cars and bikes, followed by Raipur (Chhattisgarh). The sales in May were 7,603 bikes, which rose to 27,000 in June. Likewise, the sales of cars went up from 1,107 in May to 2,889 in June.

The Road Transport registration was 891 in April, 9,681 in May and 32,982 in June. Farmers purchased 3,000 tractors after the first instalment of Rajiv Gandhi Kisan Nyay Yojana was released.

Chhattisgarh ranks top in the country in terms of pro-

ducing 100-day employment to MNREGA job card holding families by creating 8.85 crore man days in the first trimester. It achieved 66% of the target of generating employment this year. In Naxalite-affected districts, 70 percent of works were completed.

The state is also in top rank nationally in terms of minor forest produce collection during the lockdown period. Till date, nearly 1.5 quintals of minor forest produce worth Rs 104 crore has been collected.

The statement quotes the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy as saying that the rate of unemployment in the state in April was 3.4 percent, which is the lowest in 12 months. It is significantly less than the national rate of unemployment i.e. 23.5 percent.

12 of Scindia men get ministerial berths in expanded Shivraj Govt

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

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

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

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

Shah calls for unified strategy in Delhi-NCR, telemedicine

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

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

Shah stressed on the need to have a unified strategy in Delhi-NCR to tackle the pandemic. Analysing the situation, Shah emphasised on the adoption of more testing using Rapid Antigen Test Kits to help reduce infection trans-



mission rate. It was decided in the meeting that these kits can be provided by the Government to UP and Haryana.

Other areas which were discussed - focus on early hospitalisation to reduce mortality rates and extensive use of

Aarogya Setu and Itihaas App to help mapping of Covid in NCR.

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

Soon after the meeting, Spokesperson, Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) tweeted, "A meeting was held today by HM Shri @AmitShah to review management of #COVID19 situation in NCR..."

India wins case against 2 Italian marines

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

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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



dent of February 15, 2012, involving Italian tanker 'Enrica Lexie' and Indian fishing vessel 'St. Antony'.

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

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

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

Pvt trains likely from April 2023

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

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

one failure per lakh kilometre of travel.

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

He also said there will be a power meter in every locomotive and private operators will pay for the actual amount of energy consumed.

The move will encourage them to keep their energy consumption low, he added.

China supplying weapons to Arakan Army to weaken India, Myanmar: Report

AGENCIES ■ NAYPYITAW/ MYANMAR

China is supplying funds and sophisticated weaponry to armed groups in Myanmar and the Naypyitaw-designated terrorist group, the Arakan Army, to have leverage over Myanmar and India, Licas News reported.

A military source with experience in South-East Asia confirmed that China is providing approximately 95 per cent of Arakan Army funding. He further revealed that the Arakan Army has approximately 50 of the MANPADS (Man-Portable Air Defense Systems) surface-to-air missiles.

"An object lesson in diplo-terrorism is the leverage over Myanmar and India that China gained by arming the Arakan Army, operating in the corridor from North-East India over Myanmar's Chin and Rakhine states to the Indian Ocean," according to Licas News reported.

According to a source, China's strategy as one to push its influence well south of its own border. "This strategy of supporting the

Arakan Army has enabled the Chinese to expand its area of influence towards western Myanmar that is, the India-Myanmar border," the source said.

"China is playing a multi-dimensional game in South Asia. China wants to weaken India. India is in a war with Pakistan and does not want to make a new enemy of Myanmar," said an Australian academic.

"China does not want Indian influence to increase in Myanmar," according to an Indian source. "They want a monopoly."

China's support of the Arakan Army against India's construction in Myanmar has been apparently quite effective.

The \$220 million road contract was awarded to the Delhi-based contractor, C&C Constructions, in June 2017.

The Myanmar government then delayed the requisite clearances until January 2018. Once construction was underway, the Arakan Army kidnapped crews including Indian citizens, firefighters, a Myanmar member of parliament and sabotaged a vehicle and building materials.

Covid-19: 1,500 teams for door-to-door screening in Noida

PTI ■ NOIDA (UP)

The Gautam Buddh Nagar administration on Thursday launched a 10-day surveillance campaign to strengthen coronavirus screening across Noida and Greater Noida with 1,500 health teams involved in it, officials said.

Another 40 teams comprising physicians, nurses and lab technicians have been formed to carry out 4,000 tests per day, the officials said.

Gautam Buddh Nagar's nodal officer for Covid-19 response Narendra Bhushan, Police Commissioner Alok Singh and District Magistrate Suhas L Y launched the campaign.

"The campaign will run from July 2 to 12 while 1,500 teams will conduct door-to-door screening of people and suggest tests for people with symptoms. To test 4,000 coronavirus samples every day, the administration has formed 40 teams comprising physicians, nurses and lab technicians," according to an official statement.

The teams will conduct

3,000 real-time PCR and 1,000 antigen-based tests, it said, adding that the teams have been trained for the campaign.

Chief Medical Officer Deepak Ohri said testing facilities have been created at primary and community health centres and district hospitals in Bisrakh, Dadri, Bhangal, Badlapur, Jewar and Dankaur.

"Besides, intensive screening and testing will be done in over 300 containment zones during the campaign," the statement said. According to official figures, 3,638 Covid-19 tests were carried out on Thursday in Gautam Buddh Nagar, which yielded 54 positive results.

Of the total tests, 10 were TrueNat, 1,591 RTPCR and 2,037 antigen-based, the data showed. Meanwhile, the district administration updated the list of containment zones in Gautam Buddh Nagar. There are now 246 category I (which have one Covid-19 case) containment zone and 57 category II (more than one case) across Noida and Greater Noida, according to an official document.

If elected, will revoke H1-B visa suspension: Joe Biden

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

Democratic presidential candidate and former US vice president Joe Biden has said that he will lift the temporary suspension on H-1B visas, the most sought-after by Indian IT professionals, if he wins the November presidential elections.

On June 23, in a huge blow to Indian IT professionals eyeing the US job market, the Trump administration suspended the H-1B visas along with other types of foreign work visas until the end of 2020 to protect American workers in a crucial election year.

Biden, in a digital town hall meeting on Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) issues organised by NBC News, praised the contribution of H-1B visa holders.

"He (US President Donald Trump) just ended H-1B visas the rest of this year. That will not be in my administration," Biden, 77, said responding to a question during the town hall. He was referring to the temporary suspension of the H-1B visas and other foreign work visas by Trump for the

rest of the year. "The people on the company visa have built this country," Biden said when asked what his administration will do in the first 100 days of his presidency.

If elected, bolstering ties with natural partner India will be high priority: Biden

Washington: Democratic presidential candidate and former US vice-president Joe Biden has said that if he wins the November elections, strengthening America's strategic relationship with its natural partner India will be a "high priority" for his administration. Biden is challenging incumbent President Donald Trump, a Republican, in the November 3 US presidential election.

"India needs to be a partner in the region for our safety's sake and quite frankly for theirs," Biden said in response to a question on the US-India relationship during a virtual fund raiser event on Wednesday. PT

Congress slams Centre over eviction notice to Priyanka Gandhi

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Congress on Thursday termed the Centre's order asking Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi to vacate her Lodhi Estate bungalow a 'frustrated attempt'.

Senior party leader and Punjab Chief Minister Aminder Singh demanded an immediate withdrawal of the cancellation order in the interest of Priyanka's security and safety.

Congress spokesperson Randeep Singh Surjewala said, "PM Narendra Modi and his Government are blinded by rage, hatred and revenge against the Congress leadership. Unnerved by the political activism of Priyanka in UP, Modi Govt has stopped even further by issuing house vacation notice. Such frustrated attempts will not deter us."

Surjewala said Priyanka has also been highlighting the failures of the UP government. "Priyanka is Indira Gandhi's grand-daughter and neither she nor the Congress leadership will be cowed down by such notices," Surjewala said.

Former union minister Jitin Prasada, also reacted on the move saying, "I fail to understand the timing of the government's actions. However, Priyanka is on a mission to fight and work for the people of UP and is unfazed and not bothered by these diversionary tactics." The government had in November last year replaced the Special Protection Group (SPG) cover of Congress president Sonia Gandhi and her children Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, with Z-plus security by the CRPF.

The party had then reacted sharply to the withdrawal of SPG cover to the Gandhi family and had even raised the issue in Parliament.

No Kanwar Yatra due to Covid, Ganga Water to be sent to States

PTI ■ DEHRADUN

The Uttarakhand Government will send the holy Ganga water in brass urns from Har ki Pauri in Haridwar to all states and Union territories for Shiva devotees as the annual Kanwar yatra is not being held this year in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Chief ministers of all states have expressed their inability to conduct Kanwar yatra in the traditional way owing to coronavirus.

So it has been decided to dispatch brass urns filled with the holy Ganga water from Haridwar to these states, Uttarakhand Cabinet Minister and state government's

spokesman Madan Kaushik told reporters.

Large brass urns filled with the holy Ganga water at Har ki Pauri will be loaded into trucks and sent to the chief ministers, Lt governors and ministers of the states and Union territories for distribution among Shiva devotees, he said.

"CMs of Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Rajasthan, Punjab, Delhi, Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand have agreed that traditional Kanwar yatra is not possible this year. So we have decided to send Ganga water from Haridwar in large brass urns to these states in trucks for distribution among people through their respective governments," he said.

PM Modi discusses bilateral ties in post-Covid world with Vladimir Putin

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

On a day Vladimir Putin was formally approved by his country's voters to run two six-year terms more till 2036, Prime Minister Narendra Modi telephoned the Russian President to discuss various bilateral issues and the post-Covid-19 world.

The leaders took note of the effective measures undertaken by the two countries to address the negative consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic and agreed on the importance of closer India-Russia ties for jointly addressing the challenges of the post-Covid world, an official statement said.

They agreed to maintain the momentum of bilateral contacts and consultations, leading to the annual bilateral summit to be held in India later this year.

Prime Minister Modi conveyed his keenness to welcome President Putin in India for the bilateral summit.

Putin thanked Modi for the phone call and reiterated his commitment to further strengthen the special and privileged strategic partnership between the two countries in all spheres.

During their conversation, Modi congratulated President Putin on the success of celebrations marking the 75th anniversary of the victory in the Second World War, and also for successful completion of the vote on constitutional amendments in Russia, the statement said. The Prime Minister noted the participation of an Indian contingent in the military parade held in Moscow on 24 June 2020, as a symbol of abiding friendship between the people of India and Russia.

6,330 afflicted in Maha

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

A record 6,330 people tested positive for Covid-19 and 125 more people succumbed to the pandemic in Maharashtra on Thursday, even as the state achieved two feats - of seeing the total number of Coronavirus patients being discharged from hospitals touching one lakh mark and the number of Covid-19 tests crossing 10 lakh mark.

With fresh fatalities and infections, the total number of deaths in the state mounted to 8,178 while the infected cases jumped from Monday's high of 5,537 to 6,330 on Thursday to touch a total tally of 1,86,626.

Of the total deaths reported on Thursday, 110 deaths occurred during the last 48 hours and rest 15 are from the previous period.

Of the total 125 deaths, Mumbai alone accounted for 58 deaths taking

the number of deaths in the metropolis to 4,689, while the total number of infected cases in the rose by 1,554 cases to touch 80,699.

Apart from 58 deaths that occurred in Mumbai, there were 24 deaths in Pune, 15 deaths in Aurangabad, 10 in Jalgaon, six in Thane, five in Satara, two each in Akola, Jalna and one each in Nandurbar, Buldhana and Kolhapur.

With 41,349 and 1025 deaths, Thane has emerged as the second worst-hit district after Mumbai in the state.

With 24,432 patients and 807 deaths till now, Pune district has come third among the affected districts.

On a day when the total number of patients discharged from various hospitals after full recovery since the second week of March this year touched 1,01,172, the recovery rate in the state stood at 54.21 per cent.

Jaishankar to headline India Global Week summit in UK

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

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

Organised by UK-based media house India Inc. Group, the webinar will include

sessions on Geopolitics, Business, Arts & Culture, Emerging Technologies, Banking and Finance, Pharma, Defence and Security, Social Impact and the impact of the Indian Diaspora. It will also feature country-specific sessions on Australia, Japan, Singapore, the US, and the UK.

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

Work to begin shortly on Zojila tunnel: Gadkari

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Union Minister Nitin Gadkari on Thursday said work will begin shortly on the strategic Zojila tunnel for all-year connectivity between Kashmir and Ladakh regions.

The tunnel project, stalled for about six years, holds strategic significance as Zojila Pass is situated at an altitude of 11,578 feet on the Srinagar-Kargil-Leh National highway and remains closed during winters due to heavy snowfall, cutting off Ladakh region from Kashmir.

"We are also starting work on the

around ₹ 7,500-₹ 8,000 crore Zojila tunnel to connect Ladakh," Minister for Road Transport and Highways and MSME Gadkari said.

Addressing a video interaction on 'Employment Opportunities by Ministry of MSME, Constraints and Problems faced by J&K Youth,' the minister also said a new express highway was being built to connect Delhi with Amritsar and Katra which will cut travel time between Delhi and Amritsar to four hours at an average speed of 110-120 km per hour.

Covid-19 tally in Andhra Pradesh crosses 16,000

IANAS ■ AMARAVATI

The number of Covid-19 cases in Andhra Pradesh crossed 16,000 on Thursday with 845 people testing positive during the last 24 hours, health officials said.

The state also reported five fatalities, pushing the death toll to 198. Srikakulam, Krishna, Guntur, Anantapur and Kurnool reported one death each.

According to the media bulletin by the State Command Control Room, 14,285 samples were tested during the last 24 hours.

Of them, 845 tested positive. It included four returnees from abroad and 29 from other states.

The health department said 281 people were discharged from hospitals, taking the number of recoveries to 7,313.

At present, 8,586 patients were undergoing treatment -- 6,673 in hospitals and 1,913 in COVID care centres.

Among districts, Kurnool remained the worst-affected with 2,120 cases, including 75 added during the last 24 hours. With 1,823 cases, Anantapur has the second highest number. The district reported 134 new cases, the highest daily jump among all districts. Krishna district has 1,594 cases, including 75 reported during the last 24 hours. PTI

'Is coronavirus weakening? When will vaccine for coronavirus come in India?', netizens ask Google

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Is corona virus weakening? When (will) vaccine for coronavirus (come) in India? and 'Will the coronavirus ever end?' were among the top Covid-19 related questions on Google in India in the month of June, even as the overall search volume for coronavirus declined as compared to May, according to Google search trends.

Netizens also sought answers to questions like 'Which mask is best for coronavirus?' 'How did New Zealand defeat coronavirus?' 'How many days symptoms of coronavirus?' and 'How many deaths from coronavirus in all world?', the data showed.

Coronavirus-centric searches in June dropped 66 per cent from May, but volumes remained more than double that of February, it added.

UNESCO Director-General condemns killing of journalist in Uttar Pradesh

PTI ■ UNITED NATIONS

The Director-General of UNESCO has condemned the killing of a young journalist in Uttar Pradesh last month and urged the authorities to bring the perpetrators of the crime to justice to deter other criminals from "practicing gunpoint censorship."

UNESCO promotes the safety of journalists through global awareness-raising, capacity building and a range of actions, notably in the framework of the UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity, the organisation said in a statement. On Friday, the National Human Rights Commission issued notice to the Uttar Pradesh Government and the state's police chief in connection with the murder of Tripathy over his purported coverage of the sand mafia, a senior official said.

the authorities to bring the perpetrators of this crime to justice, which is essential to deter other criminals from practicing gunpoint censorship," she said.

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पावरग्रिड POWERGRID

NOTICE

1. Approval under regulation-86 of CERC (Conduct of Business) Regulations' 1999 and CERC (Terms and Conditions of Tariff) Regulations' 2019 for (i) Truing up of Transmission tariff for 2014-19 tariff block and (ii) Determination of Transmission tariff for 2019-24 tariff block for petition 1: Asset-1: 63 MVAR, 400 KV Switchable Line Reactor along with 500 Ohms NGR at Rajgarh (POWERGRID) end of Khargone TPS - Rajgarh (POWERGRID) 400 KV line under "POWERGRID works associated with Transmission system Strengthening in WR associated with Khargone TPS" in Western Region, Petition No 2: Raipur Pooling Station - Wardha 765 KV D/C second line with bay extension and equipment at 765KV Raipur Pooling station & Wardha substation under System Strengthening in Raipur - Wardha Corridor for IPP Projects in Chhattisgarh (IPP-F) in Western Region and petition No. 3: 400KV D/C Mundra UMPP - Bhuj (Triple Snowbird) Ckt-2 Transmission Line along with extension of 400KV Mundra UMPP Switchyard and 400KV Bhuj Pooling Station under Transmission System Strengthening Associated with Mundra UMPP (Part-B) in Western Region.

2. The beneficiaries of the above mentioned Transmission system are: (a) Madhya Pradesh Power Management Corporation Ltd, (b) Electricity Department, Administration of Daman & Diu, Daman, (c) Gujarat UrjaVikas Nigam Ltd., Vadodara, (d) Electricity Department, Government of Goa, Panaji, (e) DNH Power Distribution Corporation Ltd., Silvassa, (f) Maharashtra State Electricity Distribution Company Ltd., Mumbai, (g) Chhattisgarh Power Transmission Co. Ltd., Raipur, (h) Madhya Pradesh Audyogik KandraVikas Nigam (Indore) Ltd, Indore (i) Madhya Pradesh Power Transmission Company Ltd. (j) Maharashtra State Transmission Company Ltd. (k) Chhattisgarh State Power Distribution Ltd., Raipur (l) khargone transmission limited m) NTPCC LTD

3. Tariff details: (In lakhs)

Project	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19
Petition 1	-	-	-	14.96	221.02
Revised AFC based on truing up	-	-	-	15.13	214.64
Petition 2	-	-	84.95	31632.09	32067.5
Revised AFC based on truing up	-	-	85.14	31495.65	31781.95
Petition 3	-	-	-	-	140.74
Revised AFC based on truing up	-	-	-	-	143.33

2019-24 Block (In lakhs)

Petition No	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
Petition-1	193.93	197.28	196.63	193.48	190.36
Petition-2	30233.54	29510.29	28721.77	27920.91	27096.50
Petition-3	4295.56	4429.97	4381.95	4269.44	4156.13

4. A copy of the application made for determination of tariff is posted on the website of the applicant at www.powergridindia.com.

5. The suggestions and objections, if any, on the proposals for determination of tariff contained in the application to be filed by any person, including the beneficiary before the Secretary, Central Electricity Regulatory Commission, 3 & 4th floor, Chandralok Building, Janpath, New Delhi - 110 001 (or other address where the office of the Commission is situated), with a copy to the applicant at the address of its corporate office "Saudamini", Plot No. 2, Sector-29, Gurgaon, Haryana-122 001 within 30 days of publication of this notice.

Place: GURGAON Sd/-
Date: 01.07.2020 Dy. General Manager (Commercial)

POWER GRID CORPORATION OF INDIA LIMITED
(A Government of India Enterprise)
Corp. Office: "Saudamini", Plot No. 2, Sector-29, Gurgaon-122001, (Haryana) Tel.: 0124-2571700-719
Reg. Office: B-9, Qutub Institutional Area, Katwaria Sarai, New Delhi-110 016. Tel.: 011-26560112, 26560121
www.powergridindia.com, CIN: L40101DL1989G0038121

A MAHARATNA PSU

59 banned Chinese apps go off Google Play, Apple App Store

New Delhi: The 59 Chinese apps banned by the government have been taken down from Google Play Store and Apple App Store in India, blocking their access to mobile phone users in the country.

The government had on Monday banned 59 Chinese applications saying they were prejudicial to sovereignty, integrity, and security of the country.

A day later popular short video app TikTok was taken down from Google Play Store and Apple App Store. The other 58 Chinese apps have now been removed.

Google said that it has temporarily blocked access to the banned apps on its India Play Store. "While we continue to review the interim orders from the Government of India, we have notified the affected developers and have temporarily blocked access to the apps that remained available on the Play Store in India," a Google spokesperson said.

However, the spokesperson did not disclose details of the apps that Google had blocked. Similar action has been taken by the Apple App Store, sources said. Chinese apps removed from Play Store and App Store include UC Browser, SHAREit, WeChat, CamScanner, and Mi Community. TikTok app has gone offline and stopped working completely for users in India. According to sources, developers of many of the 59 banned apps had taken down their apps from Google Play Store voluntarily.

Meanwhile, in a statement, one of the banned apps Bigo Live said it has temporarily taken off the app from Google Play and App Store in India. "The Government of India issued an interim order on June 29, 2020, to block 59 mobile apps, including Bigo Live. We respect the Indian government's order and will temporarily take off Bigo Live from Google Play and App Store in India until there is further clarity provided on this matter," it said. PTI

around ₹ 7,500-₹ 8,000 crore Zojila tunnel to connect Ladakh," Minister for Road Transport and Highways and MSME Gadkari said.

Addressing a video interaction on 'Employment Opportunities by Ministry of MSME, Constraints and Problems faced by J&K Youth,' the minister also said a new express highway was being built to connect Delhi with Amritsar and Katra which will cut travel time between Delhi and Amritsar to four hours at an average speed of 110-120 km per hour.

The health department said 281 people were discharged from hospitals, taking the number of recoveries to 7,313. At present, 8,586 patients were undergoing treatment -- 6,673 in hospitals and 1,913 in COVID care centres.

Among districts, Kurnool remained the worst-affected with 2,120 cases, including 75 added during the last 24 hours. With 1,823 cases, Anantapur has the second highest number. The district reported 134 new cases, the highest daily jump among all districts. Krishna district has 1,594 cases, including 75 reported during the last 24 hours.

India's first plasma bank opens in Delhi

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Thursday launched India's first plasma bank set-up at the ILBS hospital in Delhi, and urged people to come forward to donate plasma. While citing the eligibility criteria over those who can donate plasma, Kejriwal said that those who fulfill the criteria and are willing to donate plasma can call on 1031 or WhatsApp on 88-0000-77-22 to register themselves. After the registration is complete, a Delhi government doctor will contact people who will approach via provided contact number and check their eligi-



bility. Urging people to come forward and donate plasma, Kejriwal said, "This is the first plasma bank in the country set-up for the treatment of Corona patients. People were finding it difficult to get plasma and the situation got quite chaotic in Delhi. We hope that the situation will improve after setting up of this plasma bank." Citing the eligibility criteria over who can donate plasma,

CM Arvind Kejriwal said, "There are strict eligibility guidelines and criteria over who can donate plasma. First, you must be tested positive for Corona. You must have fully recovered and must be free of Corona symptoms for 14 days. Your age must be between 18-60 years." "You cannot donate plasma if - your weight is less than 50 kg. Women who have ever been pregnant; you are diabetic on insulin; your blood pressure is more than 140 and diastolic less than 60 or more than 90. You cannot donate plasma if you have uncontrolled diabetes or hypertension with

change in medication in last 28 days, if you are a Cancer Survivor, or if you have chronic kidney/liver/lung or liver disease," he added. CM Arvind Kejriwal said, "Until now, 58000 people have recovered from Corona. The criteria is very stringent and will leave fewer recovered patients eligible. So I urge everyone who is eligible to come forward. You get very less chances of saving someone's life, if God has given you this chance, please do not hesitate to use it to save a life. You might experience weakness after donating blood, but you will never experience weakness after donating plasma."

CM dedicates Oxyzone to people of Raipur

STAFF REPORTER ■ RAIPUR

Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel on Thursday inaugurated Oxyzone, a green area developed over 19 acres of land in the heart of Raipur. He planted a sapling of sandalwood there.

After the inauguration, the Chief Minister said: "The government is making consistent efforts to enhance greenery in cities. Oxyzone of Raipur is an important step and initiative towards enhancing greenery. We will have to make collective efforts to maintain the greenery of this Oxyzone."

In the Oxyzone, saplings of various forest trees found across the state have been planted. Old trees



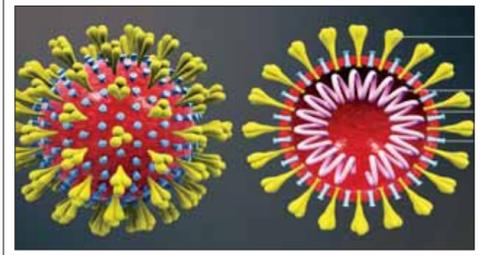
have been properly conserved.

An official statement said Oxyzone has been developed at a cost of nearly ₹11 crore. It covers over 12 acres of land near the Raipur Collectorate premises. More than 4,000 saplings of 75 species have been planted at a cost of ₹4 crore till date.

Oxyzone has rides for children, open air gym equipment and a hub for birds and butterflies. It has lawns and a small rose garden.

For walks, Oxyzone has 3km-long pathways. It has two water bodies: one natural, the other man-made. Rainwater gets collected for irrigating the plants. A waterfall has also been developed with lights for night viewing. There is a selfie zone for youngsters.

72 fresh Covid-19 positive cases found, 59 discharged



STAFF REPORTER ■ RAIPUR

Seventy-two fresh positive Covid-19 cases were detected in Chhattisgarh while 59 patients were discharged from hospitals upon their recovery on Thursday, officials said.

Among the 72 positives, 17 were from Raipur, 12 from Bemetara, 10 from Jagdalpur,

9 from Bilaspur, 7 from Balrampur, 5 from Janjgir-Champa, 4 from Dantewada, 3 from Surguja, and 1 each from Korba, Raigarh, Mungeli, Kanker and Balod districts.

Currently there are 637 active Covid patients in the state while 3,013 persons have been detected Covid positive so far. The virus has claimed 14 lives.

Chhattisgarh top state in procuring forest produces

STAFF REPORTER ■ RAIPUR

Chhattisgarh has emerged as the top state in India in collecting the largest amount of forest produce in the ongoing season.

"Considering the interests of tribal and rural people, the government is now procuring 31 types of forest produce at support price. From 2015 to 2018, only 7 kinds of forest produce were procured on support price," Forest Minister Mohammad Akbar said on Thursday.

Meanwhile, officials informed that last month about 1.50 lakh quintal forest produce worth ₹104 crore were collected, which is 73.71



percent of forest produce collected across India.

Crossing the ₹100 crore worth forest produce in the first half of the ongoing year is an important achievement, an

official press release said.

The Managing Director of the Chhattisgarh State Minor Forest Produce (Trading & Development) Co-operative Federation, Sanjay Shukla, said

arrangements have been made in 3,500 villages and 866 Haat Bazaars to procure forest produce at support price.

Women self-help groups are engaged in getting the forest produce.

"In Chhattisgarh, for primary processing of forest produces, 139 'Van Dhan Kendra' have been established.

"In the current season, 3.4 lakh quintal Saal seeds worth ₹61 crore, 63,000 quintal tamarind (with seeds) worth ₹20 crore, over 28,000 quintal mahua flower (dry) worth ₹8 crore, 5,107 quintal baheda worth ₹87 lakh and 5,000 quintal charota worth ₹70 lakh have been procured so far," Shukla said.

Coal miners strike to cost ₹66 cr loss to Chhattisgarh

STAFF REPORTER ■ RAIPUR

After a first day of strike by trade unions in Coal India, Union Minister of Coal and Mines Pralhad Joshi tweeted on Thursday that the planned three-day strike will cause a loss of ₹319 crores to the nation.

Chhattisgarh itself will suffer a loss of ₹66 crores, Joshi tweeted, and urged the trade unions to call off the strike in national interest.

But in Chhattisgarh, along with major trade unions Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh, Hind Mazdoor Sabha, INTUC, AITUC and CITU, 25 civil, tribal and farmer



rights organizations also extended their support to the strike.

V.M. Manohar, Secretary, Coal India Federation, said: "The strike will continue for next two days and if the government is not going to call off the tender of commercial mining there will be an indefinite strike in August."

He said the unions have no faith in the government when it comes to coal mining. "This government is intentionally moving to privatize South Eastern Coal Fields," he said.

Some mines are also to be auctioned in Chhattisgarh for commercial mining.

Tamradhwaj Sahu @tamradhwajsahu0 · 2h
छत्तीसगढ़ राज्य गठन के 19 साल 7 महीने बाद राज्य शासन द्वारा गठन संकेत (प्रतीक चिन्ह) @CG_Police को मिल गया है। अब पुलिस के आन, बान और शासन के इस प्रतीक चिन्ह को हर पुलिस अफसर व जवान अपनी बांह पर लगाएंगे।

Chhattisgarh Home Minister Tamradhwaj Sahu announced on Thursday that for first time after Chhattisgarh's formation 19 years and 7 months ago, all police officers and jawans will have the 'Formation Sign' (Insignia) on their shoulders. *Pioneer Photo*

C'garh keen to use excess rice to produce ethanol

STAFF REPORTER ■ RAIPUR

The Chhattisgarh government now wants the Central government to let it use excess rice the state holds to produce ethanol after an earlier request to utilize paddy for the same was rejected.

Chhattisgarh Food Secretary Dr Kamalpreet Singh has written to the Secretary, Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas, to grant permission to convert 4 lakh Metric Tonnes of rice to ethanol.

Dr Kamalpreet Singh said: "In a meeting of the National Biofuels Coordination Committee (NBCC) on April 20, approval was given to Food Corporation of India (FCI) to convert surplus rice to ethanol to make alcohol-based hand sanitizers and for the Ethanol Blended

As the paddy cannot be kept for a longer period, it is mainly being converted into rice. With approval to FCI by NBCC, we are also seeking approval for conservation of 4 lakh MT excess rice

Petrol (EBP) programme."

He said that Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel had in a letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi on February 10 and to NITI Aayog sought approval for using excess paddy available in the state for conversion into ethanol.

"The Central government denied permission for conversion of paddy. As the paddy cannot be kept for a longer period, it is mainly being converted into rice. With approval to FCI by NBCC, we are also seeking approval for conservation of 4 lakh MT excess rice," he said.

Naxalites kill policeman in front of his family

STAFF REPORTER ■ BIJAPUR

Naxalites armed with an axe and bows and arrows killed a policeman in front of his family and injured his parents after barging into their home in Chhattisgarh's Bijapur district, police said on Thursday.

The incident took place in Maatwada village in Jangla police station limits late Wednesday night when Assistant Constable Somaru Poyam was at home on medical leave, Superintendent of Police Kamlochan Kashyap said.

Poyam, who was posted at Farsegarh police station in the district, was on medical leave since June 10, he said.

According to preliminary

information, nearly 12 Naxalites stormed into the policeman's house and attacked him with an axe and bows and arrows, Kashyap said.

When his parents tried to save Poyam, they too were targeted, leaving the two injured, he said.

The Assistant Constable died on the spot, he said. The body was sent to a hospital in Bhairamgarh town for post-mortem, the official said.

Poyam's parents were admitted to a hospital, where doctors said they were out of danger.

A search operation has been launched in the area to trace the gang involved in the horrific attack, Kashyap added.

Vimal, Jay, Nisha get international Table Tennis umpire status

STAFF REPORTER ■ RAIPUR

Three senior table tennis players from Chhattisgarh -- Vimal Nair, Jay Baiswade and Nisha Jha -- have got the status of umpiring in international matches.

The three cleared the 'International Table Tennis Umpire' online examination organised by the International Table Tennis Federation, Switzerland.

Chhattisgarh Table Tennis Association Secretary Vinay Baiswade said the examination was held from June 28 to June 30.

Vimal Nair, a senior



Vimal Nair

player, is presently working as Senior Manager (Public Relations and Marketing), Central Bank of India, Zonal Office, Raipur. Jay Baiswade is a National Institute of Sports (NIS) certified and an

Jay Baiswade

International Table Tennis Federation Level-1 coach. National player Nisha Jha is presently working as Physical Training Instructor at the Government School Mana Camp, Raipur. Indian

Nisha Jha

Table Tennis Federation Vice President and Chhattisgarh Table Tennis President Sharad Shukla and other office bearers greeted the senior players on their achievement.

Man accused of assaulting, killing minor sent to jail

STAFF REPORTER ■ MUNGELI

A man accused of sexually assaulting a minor and murdering her in Chhattisgarh was on Thursday sent to jail for 14 days under judicial remand.

Additional District Judge P. Toppo passed the order in Mungeli, police said.

Bablu Bhaskar, who was a neighbour, allegedly set the minor on fire after she resisted his attempt to rape her. The girl, who was

admitted to a hospital on June 30, succumbed to her injuries on Wednesday, police said.

"The accused tried to sexually assault the victim while she was alone in her home but she resisted and raised an alarm. Getting provoked, Bablu committed the heinous act and escaped from the crime scene," said Sub-Divisional Police Officer Tejram.

The accused was caught on Wednesday night following a series of raids.

Transgenders' induction Home Ministry seeks CAPFs' views

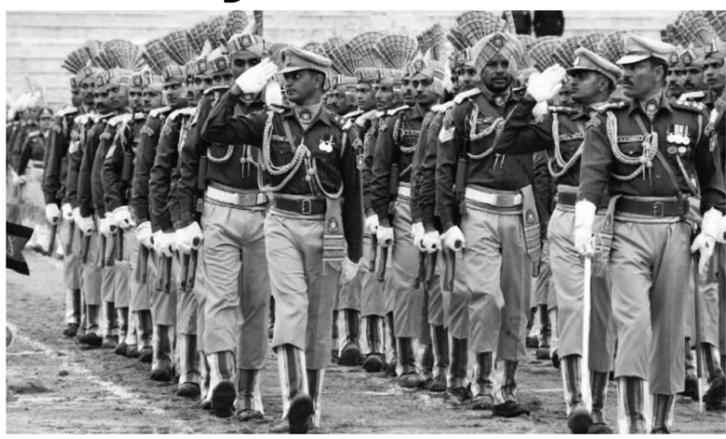
PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

Examination, 2020." All Inspectors General, Frontier and Directorate besides SSB, Academy are requested to offer their comments on the subject by Tuesday (June 23, 2020), the letter said, requesting perusal and comments from the Inspectors General. However, the SSB is yet to furnish the view on the issue to the Ministry. The DoPT further said, "All ministries/Departments of Government of India are requested to modify the relevant examination rules providing for inclusion of 'Transgender' as a separate category of gender, so as to make the said Rules in conformity with the provisions of The Transgender Persons (Protection) of Rights) Bill, 2019.

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

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

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

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

DEEPAK KUMAR JHA ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

Coordinated efforts showing good result in curbing virus

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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

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

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

based settings.

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

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

In India, a study by

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

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

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

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

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

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



NEW NORMS AT MONUMENTS FROM JULY 7, 2020

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

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

plete security from July 6.

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

The SoP mandates wearing

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

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

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

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Union Home Ministry on Thursday told the Supreme Court that 2,765 foreign Tablighis who violated the visa norms will be put on trial and not immediately deported. The Ministry also said that as many 1906 foreign nationals are still absconding and a Look Out Circular is issued against them.

In an affidavit filed before the Apex Court, the Home Ministry said visas of 2,679 have been cancelled, 2,765 blacklisted, 205 FIRs lodged and 1905 lookout notices issued against those absconding. The MHA said the Tablighis from more than 35 countries will be put on

trial for serious violation of Foreigners Act, NDMA Act and Epidemic Diseases Act, apart from the charges of visa violation norms.

"It was decided not to deport them after the quarantine ended as appropriate punitive action is required to be taken," the MHA's affidavit filed through Solicitor General Tushar Mehta said before the Bench of Justice AM Khanwilkar.

The court is hearing petitions filed by a large number of foreign Tablighi members challenging government orders blacklisting around 2,500 of them from 35 countries and not allowing them to go back to their respective countries.

Telangana to name a few.

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

CBI carries out searches at GVK group premises in Mumbai, Hyd

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The CBI has carried out searches at the offices of the GVK group in Mumbai and Hyderabad after registering a case against its chairman, Venkata Krishna Reddy Gunupati, in connection with alleged irregularities to the tune of ₹ 705 crore in the running of the Mumbai airport, officials said.

The agency operation was conducted on Wednesday and continued till late in the evening, they added.

The case pertains to the alleged siphoning off ₹ 705 crore from the funds of the Mumbai International Airport Limited (MIAL), a joint venture under public-

private partnership (PPP) between the GVK Airport Holdings Limited and the Airports Authority of India (AAI) besides other investors, by showing inflated expenditure, under-reporting of revenues, fudging of records among others, the officials said.

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has booked Gunupati, a director in MIAL, his son GV Sanjay Reddy, managing director in MIAL, the companies MIAL, GVK Airport Holdings Limited (a GVK group company) and nine other private companies allegedly used to camouflage the inflated figures through sham deals and unidentified AAI officials, they added.

हरीयाणा सरकार					
CORRIGENDUM NOTICE					
Sr. No.	NAME OF BOARD CORP./AUTH	OLD REFERENCE/NIT NO.	NATURE OF CORRIGENDUM	WEBSITE OF THE BOARD CORP./AUTH	NODAL OFFICER/CONTACT DETAILS/EMAIL
1	UHBVN	NIT NO GHN-3/2020-21	To extend the date of acceptance of Bids is 15.07.2020 - 1:00 PM & opening of Bids at 3:00 PM on the same day.	www.uhbvn.org.in	9354726389 xenopuhbvngghana@gmail.com
2	UHBVN	NIT-1/2020-21	Hiring of 2 nos. of Vehicles for SDO OPS/DIVN UHBVN Bahu & Matan Hai. Tender opening date 07.07.2020 at 3 pm.	www.uhbvn.org.in	xenoberi@uhbvn.org.in
3	UHBVN	NIT II /2020-21	1.lump sump contract for sweeping and cleaning of 11 Nos Sub Stations/Offices. Tender opening date 07.07.2020 at 3 pm.	www.uhbvn.org.in	xenoberi@uhbvn.org.in
4	DHBVN	NIT NO. 33/EOH-720/VOL-1/2020-21 (TENDER ID NO. 2020_HBC_127589_1)	Date extended up to 20.07.2020	www.dhbvn.org.in	70273-48444 estateofficerhisar@dhbvn.org.in
5	DHBVN	NIT NO. 34/EOH-624/VOL-1/2020-21 (TENDER ID NO. 2020_HBC_127619_1)	Date extended up to 20.07.2020	www.dhbvn.org.in	70273-48444 estateofficerhisar@dhbvn.org.in
6	DHBVN	NIT NO. 35/EOH-609/VOL-1/2020-21 (TENDER ID NO. 2020_HBC_127645_1)	Date extended up to 20.07.2020	www.dhbvn.org.in	70273-48444 estateofficerhisar@dhbvn.org.in
7	DHBVN	NIT NO. 1/XEN/CIVIL/GGN/2020-21 DATED 11.06.2020	Date Extended upto 10.07.2020 (13:00 Hrs)	www.dhbvn.org.in	8059922323 xencivilggn@dhbvn.org.in
8	UHBVN	1/UH/GA-953 DATED 19.03.2020. REG - VARIOUS FIRMS FOR PROVIDING LEGAL SERVICES TO UHBVN	Regarding extending NIT-1 (previous closing date 25.06.2020 at 1:00 pm) now extended closing date 20.07.2020 (1:00 pm)	www.uhbvn.org.in	0172-3019132 usga@uhbvn.org.in

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION KINDLY VISIT : www.haryanaeaprocmnt.gov.in or www.etenders.hry.nic.in RO NO. 81566

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

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

5 cops held in TN custodial death

CB-CID files fresh FIR against Inspector, 4 others

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ CHENNAI
The CB-CID wing of Tamil Nadu Police probing the custodial death of the father-son duo of P Jeyaraaj and J Fenix arrested five police officials of Sattankulam Police Station in Thoothukudi on Thursday. The arrested include an Inspector of Police, two sub-inspectors and two constables

who had picked up Jeyaraaj from his mobile phone shop on June 19 allegedly for violating lockdown rules that mandated shopkeepers to down the shutters by 9 pm. Jeyaraaj and Fenix, who was arrested the same night, succumbed allegedly due to police torture on June 21 in the Government General Hospital at Sattankulam. The Tamil Nadu

Government had transferred the case to CBI but the Madras High Court which had taken suo motu petition on the custodial deaths asked the CB-CID to take over the probe till the CBI takes charge of the investigation. The High Court was upset that the cops of Sattankulam Police Station had threatened the Judicial Magistrate who went to the station as part of the judicial enquiry and ordered the district collector to entrust the police station to revenue officials pending enquiry. Interestingly, the CB-CID officials who took over the probe prepared and registered

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

BABRIDEMOLITIONCASE

Uma Bharti appears before CBI court

Lucknow: Former Union Minister and senior BJP leader, Uma Bharti, on Thursday, appeared before a special CBI court here to record her statement in Babri mosque demolition case. The special CBI court is currently recording the statements of 32 accused under CrPC section 313 (court's power to examine the accused), a stage in the trial that follows the examination of prosecution witnesses. Uma Bharti, 61, is the 19th accused to depose before the



court in over 27-year-old case. Thirteen other accused, including former deputy prime minister L.K. Advani and senior BJP leaders, Dr M.M. Joshi and Kalyan Singh are yet to be examined by the court. Their lawyers have informed the CBI court that they would prefer to appear

through video conferencing, in view of the Corona pandemic. The court has already directed the government to ensure facility for video conferencing. The CBI court is conducting day-to-day hearings to complete the trial by August 31, as directed by the Supreme Court. Babri mosque in Ayodhya was demolished on December 6, 1992 by 'kar sevaks' who claimed that an ancient Ram temple had stood on the same site. IANS

4,343 test +ve on single day in TN

State inches towards 1 lakh cases

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ CHENNAI
Tamil Nadu is inching towards the 1,00,000 mark in the number of persons diagnosed with coronavirus and it could happen in two days, if one goes by the numbers released by the State Government's Department of Health on Thursday. For the first time since the covid-19 hit the State as a pandemic in late January, a record number of 4,343 persons were diagnosed with the pandemic on a single day. Out of the 4,343 tested positive on Thursday, Chennai accounted for 2,027 patients. The day also saw the death of 57 persons afflicted with coronavirus and this took the number of fatalities in the



State till date on account of the pandemic to 1,321. While Tamil Nadu has diagnosed 98,392 persons with Covid-29 till date, there are 41,047 active cases in the State on Thursday. The change in the total number of persons tested till date is because of the number of persons who were

cured as well as those who succumbed to coronavirus. Out of the 57 who breathed their last on Thursday, 45 had chronic ailments or pre-existing morbidity, according to the medical bulletin. Tamil Nadu Government has not reduced the rate of test-

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

Though the Tamil Nadu Government is yet to accept the possibility of community transmission, Dr Kulanda Swamy, former director of public health and preventive medicine said the best alternative to counter the virus is to tighten up the social distancing and hand washing rules. "I feel it is better for the aged and inform to be taken to villages from big metropolitan cities like Chennai. The districts with rural ambience has succeeded in preventing the coronavirus from trespassing their borders," Dr Kolanda Swamy told The Pioneer. Since schools and other educational institutions will take time to re-open, it would not be a problem for those with their own houses in rural areas to shift, he said. "My apprehension is about those who are in the 60+ age group. They and the children are the most vulnerable groups," said the doctor, a specialist in public health whose counsel is sought by the Tamil Nadu Government despite his remitting office in May 2020.

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

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI
An incident that came to light as a one-off crime report last week in Kochi has snowballed into a major criminal case with international ramifications. Some of the prominent Malayalam film stars are being used as couriers to smuggle in gold from West Asian countries to various groups including terrorist gangs, if the reports coming out of Ernakulam Police Station are any indication. It all started with Shamna Kasim, an upcoming film artist complaining to the Police that a group of people who had approached her parents with marriage proposal were hatching a plan to kidnap her with the intention to ask for ransom money. Shamna's mother filed a police case against five persons who had approached the family with a marriage proposal. The group had furnished fake identities about the youth and his family. This was followed by

the group calling on Shamna's parents at her Kochi home. Their dubious behaviour aroused suspicion in the minds of her parents who filed a complaint. The police arrested all the five youth mentioned in the complaint and took into custody five more persons who are said to be their associates. It turned out that they were members of a major racket specialising in gold smuggling, blackmailing and flesh trade. On interrogation, the youth disclosed that they were in contact with many more film personalities. Ernakulam City Police Commissioner Vijay Sakhare who is personally monitoring the case told mediapersons on Thursday that the arrested persons have wider contacts in film circles and they were associated with many popular artists. "We have understood that they were in touch with many stars in Malayalam films. Shamna Kasim is just one of the artists. They were being

exploited for all kind of illegal activities," said Sakhare. The incident took a curious turn when police grilled Dharmajan, a small time actor and comedy artist. Though the actor denied any kind of association with the gang, police are yet to be convinced of his claims. The covid-19 shut down of the film industry has put hundreds of artists and technicians out of work since February 2020. The police suspect that it is likely that some artists might have fallen prey to the gang members and might have worked as gold couriers. The Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) too has pitched in Ernakulam tracking the flourishing gold smuggling industry in the State. It was reported that Customs officials had seized gold worth millions of rupees from Kozhikode Airport smuggled into the country by chartered aircraft which were evacuating expatriates from West Asia.

Maha seeks ₹10K cr from Centre to revive power undertaking

PNS ■ MUMBAI:
Maintaining the "financial health" of "Mahavitaran" had deteriorated, Maharashtra Energy Minister Nitin Raut on Thursday urged the Centre for an immediate assistance of Rs 10000 crore to prevent the Maharashtra State Electricity Distribution Limited (MSEDCL as Mahavitaran is known) "from slipping into coma". In a letter shot off to Union Energy Minister, R K Singh, Dr Raut said that Maharashtra State Electricity Distribution Limited (MSEDCL or Mahavitaran) had incurred huge financial losses due to Covid pandemic and was facing precarious financial situation and demanded immediate assistance of Rs 10000 crore to help the state electricity overcome the liquidity crunch. He has said due to Covid-19, Mahavitaran which was the largest distribution company of India, was grappling with acute fund shortage. The lockdown period continued for almost 3 months and it still continued in major parts of Maharashtra. Dr Raut said out that during the lockdown period industrial and commercial consumption reached to the bottom. The industrial and commercial consumption which amounted 60 percent of the revenue could not get realised during the period which put Mahavitaran in a precarious financial condition. He said the industrial and commercial consumption was the main source of providing subsidized rates to residential and agriculture consumers, drop in its sale added to the financial woes of the Mahavitaran as the residential and agriculture consumption continued unabated. Rather domestic consumption showed rising trend during the summer due to heat and work from home, he averred. "Almost all of the industrial and commercial consumption stopped during lockdown period. All the consumers were given time extension to pay their electricity bills. Thus, the realization of revenue almost halted in April and May; whereas, the power purchase costs (mainly Fixed), staff salaries, tax liability were not reduced," the state minister said.

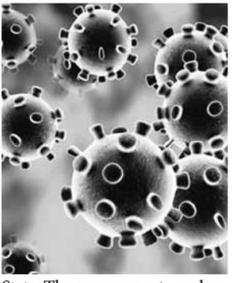
10 more deaths due to Covid in J&K

PNS ■ JAMMU
The Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir on Thursday recorded 10 more deaths due to Covid-19 while 154 new cases of coronavirus tested positive taking the total tally to 7,849 cases. The death toll rose to 115 while 118 more patients were discharged from different hospitals after they recovered and tested negative for Coronavirus. According to the media bulletin, "nine deaths were reported from Kashmir while one patient died due to Covid-19 in Jammu, taking the total tally to 115". According to the media bulletin, "154 new patients of coronavirus were detected in Jammu and Kashmir and on the recovery front, a total number of 118 patients were discharged from different hospitals after they tested negative. Out of 154 new positive cases, 20 were reported from Jammu and 134 from Kashmir division. The highest number of 51

154 fresh cases take total tally to 7,849
patients tested positive in Srinagar. Situation remained grim in two districts of Srinagar and Baramulla as a maximum number of 1021 and 928 positive cases have been detected there. Shopian, Kulgam and Anantnag have reported 801, 846 and 692 cases respectively. Jammu district reported a maximum number of 363 cases with 71 active positive undergoing treatment followed by Udhampur with 284 cases (102 active), Ramban 223 cases (36 active) and Kathua with 232 cases (66 active). According to the media bulletin, out of 7849 total cases, 2760 are active positive in Jammu and Kashmir. 432 are active in Jammu division and 2328 in Kashmir. More than 4900 patients have recovered, 1204 in Jammu and 3770 in Kashmir division.

Brigadier dies of corona, IAS officer down with disease

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA
A senior Army officer attached to the Eastern Command headquarters at Fort William has died of corona, Army sources said. The Brigadier rank officer was suffering from the disease for the past few days when he was admitted to the Barrackpore Army Hospital. Later he was shifted to the Command Hospital at Alipore even as his condition deteriorated. The officer died on Thursday, sources said adding however that his wife and son had recovered from the disease. In a second case a senior IAS officer of the Joint Secretary rank have been diagnosed with the dreaded disease. The senior officer working with the Land and Land Revenue Department has been home quarantined and her office on the sixth floor of the State secretariat at Nabanna has been sanitized, sources said. She is the first IAS rank officer to contact the disease in the



State. The government employees who had come in contact with the officer too have been sent for home quarantine. Meanwhile, amid rising pandemic cases in Bengal there was some respite for Capital Kolkata where the number of containment zones came down from around 1,800 to 1496 on Thursday, sources said adding however that the total number of containment zones in the State was about 3,500 on the second day of Unlock - II period. Apart from this, two districts including Alipurduar in

North Bengal have once again entered the "green zone" back from "red zone" while the remaining 21 districts were still in the red zone category. Elsewhere, senior Trinamool Congress leader and MP Sougato Roy on Thursday welcomed the proposed Central amendment in the electoral laws enabling the people above 65 years of age and those suffering from corona to vote from home. The new regulations were likely to be implemented in the coming Assembly elections in Bihar which goes to polls later this year. "It is good that the corona afflicted people will get a chance to vote along with those in the high risk group but for that the entire electronic voting system including the mobile telephony will have to be adjusted accordingly," he said adding the same rules may not be required during Bengal polls next year by when the corona crisis will in all probability blow over.

NIA likely to probe Malda e-rickshaw blast

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KOLKATA
The National Investigation Agency will investigate into the Malda e-rickshaw blast that killed its driver and damaged several nearby houses late on Wednesday noon, sources said. The reason behind the NIA's intervention is the intensity of the blast, officials said adding the "explosion was so massive that it ripped off the roof of a nearby structure and shattered the window panes of nearby houses besides its sound being heard from a great distance." A hand and the head of the driver were torn and tossed several feet away due to the impact of the blast suggesting "there was something more than met the naked eye." The police in its preliminary findings however suggested a short circuit in the battery box that might have caused

the blast while locals said they had noticed a shattered white box at the blast site. The State Crime Investigation Department (CID) was presently conducting the investigations alongside the forensic experts, sources said. The identity of the Toto (e-rickshaw) driver was yet to be established, the police said adding he might have been an outsider working to earn his living in Malda, a town which borders Bangladesh on one hand and Bihar's Katihar district on the other. On the third side lie Pakur and Shibganj districts of Jharkhand. A similar blast in October 2014 killing two persons was initially passed off as a result of a cylinder explosion until the NIA unearthed an elaborate network of Bangladesh terror group Jamatul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) which was training its moles in this side of the border.

PRIYANKA'S GOVT ACCOMMODATION

Modi Govt's order smacks of cheap politics: Maha Cong

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI:
Castigating the Modi Government for its decision to revoke Priyanka Gandhi's security and take away her official residence, the Maharashtra Congress on Thursday charged that the ruling BJP dispensation "feels threatened" by the increasing popularity of Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka and it had no answers to questions being raised by the two leaders. In a statement issued here, Maharashtra Congress president and senior Minister in the "Maha Vikas Aghadi" Government Balasaheb Thorat alleged that the Modi government was trying to stifle Priyanka's voice, "but Priyankaji and the Congress party don't give importance to such actions." Dubbing the ruling BJP's decision to strip Priyanka of her security and take away her residence was "unfortunate" and it smacked of "cheap politics", Thorat said: "Priyanka has witnessed horrific deaths of her grandmother and Prime

Minister of India, Indira Gandhi and father Rajiv Gandhi. Even today, when the threat to the Gandhi family has not subsided completely, the BJP government's decision to do away with her security and residence is a symbol of their cheap politics." "... the BJP Government is trying to stifle her voice, but Priyankaji and the Congress party don't give importance to such actions. We will continue to raise their voice on the issues concerning the common man and also against the anti-democratic actions of the central government," Thorat said. "The BJP Government feels threatened by the increasing popularity of Rahul and Priyanka Gandhi. The questions raised by Rahul and Priyanka Gandhi on the wrong decisions taken by the BJP government leave them with no answers and so this is an attempt by the BJP Government to put pressure on them," the State Congress chief said. Accusing the BJP Government of trying to put

pressure on the two Congress leaders against targeting the Modi Government, Thorat said: "No matter how much pressure the BJP government tries to exert on them, Priyanka and Rahul Gandhi will continue to raise their voices on issues that are in the interest of the people and will continue to fight on the issues of the common man".

pressure on the two Congress leaders against targeting the Modi Government, Thorat said: "No matter how much pressure the BJP government tries to exert on them, Priyanka and Rahul Gandhi will continue to raise their voices on issues that are in the interest of the people and will continue to fight on the issues of the common man".

NORTHERN RAILWAY TENDER NOTICE
The Dy. Chief Electrical Engineer/Const./Northern Railway, 4th Floor, DRM Office, New Delhi-110001 invites e-tender under Single Packet System for the under noted work:-

1. Name of work and location	Hiring of one no. Non AC vehicles for 3 years- Jagg/Cyops/Fats Sumo or similar on monthly basis under Dy. Chief Elect. Engineer / Const./ 4th Floor, DRM Office, New Delhi
2. Completion period of the work	36 Months
3. Approx. Cost of work	Rs. 16,99,668/-
4. Earnest Money amount (to be deposited Online)	Rs. 34,000/-
5. Date & Time for submission of E-tender and opening of tender	Tenders may be uploaded upto 11.30 hrs. on date 29.07.2020 on IREPS web site i.e. www.ireps.gov.in and tender document is available on www.ireps.gov.in. The bidders can participate in the e-tender, the tender will be opened at 11.30 hrs on 29.07.2020.
6. Detailed Tender Notice & Tender Document	The detailed e-tender notice is available on Northern Railway web site i.e. www.nr.indianrailways.gov.in and tender document is available on www.ireps.gov.in. Above tender document will be available for submission of offer on IREPS web site i.e. www.ireps.gov.in from 15.07.2020 to 29.07.2020. All other terms and conditions in respect of above tender are given in tender document. The detailed tender notice also can be seen on the Notice Board of the above office.

No. 307- Dy.CEE/C/NDLS/2019-20 Dated: 02.07.2020 1474/20
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Noida New Okhla Industrial Development Authority
Administrative Building, Sector-6, Noida 201301 (U.P.)
Website: www.noidaauthorityonline.com

E-TENDER NOTICE
E-Tenders are invited from eligible contractors/firm for the following jobs against which bids can be uploaded and same shall be opened/downloaded as per schedule mentioned. The details and conditions of all tenders are available on Noida Authority's official Website: www.noidaauthorityonline.com and <https://etender.up.nic.in>. Please ensure to see these websites for any changes/amendments & corrigendum etc.

Fresh - Tender work
(A) The above tenders can be uploaded by dated 16.07.2020 upto 5.00 pm. shall be opened/downloaded on dated 17.07.2020 at 11.00 am.

Sr. No.	Job No.	Name of Work	Tender Amount (Rs. Lacs)
1.	38/GM(R)/SM(WC-5)/2020-21	M/o Road (Construction/Repair of road and drain in front of Plot No. B-45 to B-42, B-42 to B-44 and B-44 to B-43 in Sector-58), Noida	66.42

Re - Tender work
(B) The above tenders can be uploaded by dated 09.07.2020 upto 5.00 pm. shall be opened/downloaded on dated 10.07.2020 at 11.00 am.

Sr. No.	Job No.	Name of Work	Tender Amount (Rs. Lacs)
3.	14/GM(R)/SM(WC-2)/2020-21	M/o Drain (Repair of B/W, Plaster & P/F Precast slab over drain from Botanical Garden Bus Station Sector 38A to Electric Sub-Station on DSC road), Noida	33.07
4.	03/GM(R)/SM(WC-2)/2020-21	M/o Road (Repair of RCC Central Verge at different location on DSC road from Sector-18, underpass to Sector-15 Metro Station), Noida.	34.02

General Manager (R), Noida
CLEAN, GREEN, SAFE & SECURE NOIDA

Now, a telecom war

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



Yes, the economic realities of China dominating much of our product supply chains, from electronics to drugs, weigh heavy on us. Yes, we are deeply aware of sudden disruptions, litigation and fair trade violations if we take a dramatic step of boycotting China overnight. And while building self-sufficiencies is a long-term and sustained effort, there is no reason why we cannot begin taking *atma nirbharata* seriously while we can. For the latest Chinese ambush at Ladakh has cost us 20 soldiers and over-tested our patience and strategic responsibility in the region. China continues to eat into our territory as it always has. It won't settle as long as it doesn't get what it wants and this presumed supremacy has finally got the Government thinking about reducing our dependencies on it. For the summit diplomacy, which has yielded nothing on the ground except encouraging more hostilities, has been a colossal waste of time that smartly sidestepped contentious border issues and helped China deepen its market access as part of trade deals. So Union Minister for Road Transport and MSMEs Nitin Gadkari has said that no Chinese company will be allowed to participate in any highway or MSME project either directly or indirectly, the latter implying outsourcing consultancies by the bidder company. He even suggested alternative technologies that would help us compete on cost effectiveness and gave the example of PPEs, something which we thought would have to come in bulk from Chinese factories and something which we are exporting now. The shrinkage of trade volume to India won't impact China much, which can only be upset about being denied entry to a future vibrant market, and it is not that current commitments are not being honoured. It is just that manufacturing our own is a sovereign decision and COVID-19 and the Galwan attack have just been accelerators. Similarly, the Department of Telecommunications cancelled the much anticipated 4G upgradation tender of Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL) to avoid participation by Chinese companies like Huawei and ZTE. Local operators such as Airtel, Vodafone and Jio have been asked to reduce dependence on Chinese companies. Meanwhile, the Indian Railways has already cancelled a ₹471 crore contract with the Beijing National Railway for a project on the Eastern Dedicated Freight Corridor. Of course, the US, too, has been red flagging concerns about Huawei and ZTE being a "national security risk" because of their data mining and surveillance operations while working their telecom grids. It is even exerting pressure on its allies, India now getting top billing, to comply by banning them.

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

Size does matter

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



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

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

N Nagarajan
Secunderabad

The enemies within

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



AJOY KUMAR

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

There is a certain segment

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

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

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

SOUNDBITE

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

Former BCCI secretary —Niranjan Shah

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

Actor — Saif Ali Khan

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

Democratic presidential candidate —Joe Biden

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

Union Minister —Nitin Gadkari

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Damp squib

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

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

Changing the rules of engagement

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

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



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

SK Prabhakar
Gurugram

Further action needed

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

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

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

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

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

M Pradyu
Kannur

Mumbai sets example

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

Bhagwan Thadani
Mumbai

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

FIRST COLUMN

An eco-friendly innovation

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



KOTA SRIRAJ

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

(The writer is an environmental journalist)

POINT COUNTERPOINT

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

—NEPALESE PRIME MINISTER
KP SHARMA OLI



NOT INDIA, IT IS ME WHO IS DEMANDING YOUR RESIGNATION. YOU MUST FURNISH PROOF OF SUCH IRRESPONSIBLE REMARKS.

—CHAIRMAN OF THE NEPAL COMMUNIST PARTY
PUSHPA KAMAL DAHAL 'PRACHANDA'

It's not that elementary

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



INDRANIL DE

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Put the migrant workers front and centre

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



ONKAR NATH

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Centre's decision to impose a

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

(The writer is a former Additional Deputy CAG)

HONG KONG CITIZENSHIP PLAN

China threatens retaliation against UK

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

Hong Kong protester arrested on suspicion of stabbing police

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

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

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

China, pro-Beijing activists condemn 'foreign meddling' in Hong Kong

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

Daniel Pearl's killers custody extended for 3 more months

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

Landslide at Myanmar jade mine kills at least 162

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



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

Those taking part in the recovery operations, which were suspended after dark, included the army and other government units and local volunteers.

The London-based environmental watchdog Global Witness said the accident "is a damning indictment of the government's failure to curb reckless and irresponsible mining practices in Kachin state's jade mines."

OFFICE THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER PWD (R&B) ELECTRIC DIVISION JAMMU. NOTICE INVITING TENDER e-NITNo.EDJ/29of 2020-21 Dated 30-06-2020

78% of voters back extending Putin's rule

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

Russia denies supplying weapons to Taliban

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

Washington: US officials will provide a classified briefing for congressional leaders Thursday about intelligence assessment that Russia offered bounties for killing US troops in Afghanistan.

Appeal for Identification

General public is hereby informed that one person Name: Unknown, S/o: Unknown, R/o: Unknown, Age: About 45 Years, Height: 5'6", Sex: Male, Complexion: Shallow, Built: Medium, Face: Round, Wearing: Yellow Black Linedar T-Shirt, Black Payjama, Blue shoes in feet, Place of Recovery: Found dead on 19.06.2020 at Patel Park, Patel Nagar, Delhi

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

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

Johnson's father flies to Greece despite ban

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

The elder Johnson, 79, has a villa in Greece. Greece has banned flights from the UK until at least July 15. The Daily Mail reported that Stanley Johnson flew to Athens via Bulgaria.

UJVNL LTD. H.O.: "UJWAL", Maharani Bagh, GMS Road, Dehradun-248006. "e-Tender Date Extension Notice-6" Date: 01-07-2020

New Zealand's Health Minister resigns after virus blunders

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

Ban gives tobacco illegal drug status in South Africa

Cape Town: The message was dropped into a WhatsApp group used by suburban moms in South Africa. Amid the grumbings over homeschooling during lockdown, one mom went off topic: "Does anyone know where to get illegal cigarettes? I just need a few. I'm desperate."

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

CENTRAL RAILWAY APP BASED ELECTRIC THREE WHEELER SERVICES. No. BB/C/289/P&P/TDR/06 sites/2020. Date: 30.06.2020. Senior Divisional Commercial Manager, Mumbai Division, CSMT Mumbai.

PUBLIC NOTICE. This is to bring to the notice of the general public notice that two ID card Mr. Denesh Kumar and Mr. Vaswanand issue by ICICI Bank Ltd. having ID card no. 20751 and 16282 has been found missing and/or lost on 12th Jan 2020 and 6th Jan 2020

WESTERN RAILWAY CORRIGENDUM. Tender No.: 29204990D, Dated: 02.06.2020. Description: PPE-Innerwear. Qty: 30,000. Revised Due date: 10.07.2020. EMD: ₹ 8,06,400/-

EASTERN RAILWAY Bidding Tender Notice No.: 01HWHCONIL of 2020-21 for e-tendering; Date : 29.06.2020. Open Tender Notice for e-tendering is invited by Dy. Chief Engineer / Con/II/Eastern Railway, Howrah, 371 No. New Railway Office, Telkolghat, Howrah-711101 from reputed contractors with sufficient experience, financial capability and having proper and requisite resources and experience for the following work

World Bank grants \$750 mn support to small biz

Lauds Govt's MSME package

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

deserve support," Ahmad said.

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

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

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

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

The Government had in May announced a support

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

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

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

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

not fall victim to the downturn," he said.

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

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

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

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

PTI ■ MUMBAI

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

A sharp recovery in the rupee added to the momentum, traders said.

After soaring 600 points during the session, the 30-share BSE Sensex settled 429.25 points, or 1.21 per cent, higher at 35,843.70.

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

M&M was the top gainer in the Sensex pack, jumping 6.05 per cent, followed by Titan, Tata Steel, HCL Tech, Infosys and TCS.

On the other hand, Axis Bank, HUL, Kotak Bank, ICICI Bank and Bharti Airtel tumbled up to 2.24 per cent.

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

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

Global indices were positive following news of encour-



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

International oil benchmark Brent crude futures rose 0.86 per cent to USD 42.39 per barrel.

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

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

Emphasising that at this juncture Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) is the need of the hour, the senior minister said such funds would benefit the country as there is a need for pumping in liquidity into the market. Economic activities have been significantly disrupted in the wake of the pandemic and subsequent lockdowns that were in place to curb spreading of infections.

"Country at this juncture needs liquidity. Without liquidity our economy's wheel will not accelerate... ₹50-60 lakh crore foreign investment is needed in the country under present circumstances to boost the economy," the Road Transport, Highways and MSME Minister told PTI in an interview.

Infrastructure sector including highways, airports, inland waterways, railways, logistic parks, broad gauge and metro, apart from Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises

(MSMEs) can attract large scale foreign investment, he noted.

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

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

"Some MSMEs are already listed on the BSE. I have talked to investors in Dubai and the US to come and invest in such MSMEs based on their three-year turnover, GST track record, IT record and good rating.

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

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

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

Further, the minister noted that public private partnerships can help harness huge

funds and would have a cascading impact by generating more employment and boosting the economy.

Besides, the minister said that 22 green highways were being build, including the Rs 1 lakh crore Delhi-Mumbai Expressway on a new alignment. Citing the example of Delhi-Mumbai Expressway, he said talks were on with the Maharashtra government to shift about 1.5 lakh leather workers to Thane in a proposed leather cluster along the highway which will have the most modern facilities including schools and hospitals besides affordable housing under Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana.

"The development of backward area will alleviate poverty and accelerate development. Socio-economic thought is behind this," he said.

The Centre has announced Rs 20 lakh crore economic stimulus package, including Rs 8.01 lakh crore of liquidity measures announced by the Reserve Bank since March.

On Tuesday, Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced that the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Ann Yojana (PMGKAY), a free ration scheme, would be extended for 80 crore people till the November end. PTI

RBI asks banks to reclassify MSMEs as per revised criteria

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The RBI has asked banks, financial institutions and NBFCs to reclassify micro, small and medium enterprises on the basis of the new criteria.

Last month, the government notified new criteria for classification of micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) on the basis of turnover and investment in plant and machinery.

"We advise you to initiate necessary action for reclassification of enterprises as per the new definition w.e.f July 1, 2020 and issue necessary instructions to your branches/controlling offices in this regard, at the earliest," RBI said in a communication to banks, financial institutions and non banking financial companies (NBFCs).

After 14 years since the MSME Development Act came into existence in 2006, a revision in MSME definition was announced in the Atmanirbhar Bharat package on May 13.

The Reserve Bank further said in case of an upward change in terms of investment

in plant and machinery or equipment or turnover or both, and consequent re-classification, an enterprise will maintain its prevailing status till expiry of one year from the close of the year of registration.

As per the revised definition, an enterprise is micro where the investment in plant and machinery or equipment does not exceed ₹1 crore and turnover does not cross ₹5 crore.

An enterprise is now classified as small enterprise, where the investment in plant and machinery or equipment does not exceed ₹10 crore and turnover is not over ₹50 crore.

For medium enterprise, as per the new classification, the investment in plant and machinery or equipment should not exceed ₹50 crore and turnover should be below ₹250 crore.

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

Mumbai: The rupee surged by 56 paise to close at more than three-month high of 75.04 against the US dollar on Thursday tracking weakness in the greenback and gains in domestic equities amid optimism over potential Covid-19 vaccine.

Fresh traders said investors turned to riskier currencies and assets after Pfizer reported encouraging vaccine test results.

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

It had settled at 75.60 against the greenback on Wednesday. The rupee logged its "biggest single-day gain since April 23, boosted by gains in the domestic equity market amid weakness in the greenback," Devarsh Vakil, Deputy Head of Retail Research, HDFC Securities said.

"Market participants also expected dollar inflows while state-run banks remained on the sideline. Moreover, investor sentiment strengthened further after Pfizer reported encouraging vaccine test results," he said.

The first of four experimental Covid-19 vaccines being tested by Pfizer and its German partner BioNTech showed encouraging results in very early testing of 45 people, the companies said on Wednesday. PTI

Coal India arm BCCL says no impact of strike; union leaders claim otherwise

D h a n b a d / R a m g a r h (Jharkhand): Bharat Coking Coal Ltd (BCCL), a subsidiary of Coal India, on Thursday said there was no impact of the three-day strike called by different trade unions to protest against the Government's decision to allow commercial mining of coal.

Another Coal India arm, Central Coalfields Limited (CCL) said mining through outsourcing companies remained unaffected.

However, the striking trade union leaders claimed that the strike impacted coal mining in the two subsidiaries of Coal India Ltd. Trade unions went ahead with their three-day strike against commercial mining in the coal sector after talks with Coal and Mining Minister Pralhad Joshi had failed on Wednesday.

A notice issued by the public relations department of BCCL said there was no impact of the strike in the first shift as all miners marked their attendance and resumed work as scheduled.

For the protection of miners, the colliery management has deployed CISF personnel in large numbers and intensified patrolling in the area to foil any attempt of trade union leaders to stop miners from joining duty, sources in the BCCL said.

The General Manager of CCL's Barka-Sayal and officiating GM of Argada command area, Amresh Singh, said "disruption of coal has been affected due to the strike, but coal mining via outsourcing private companies remained unaffected."

Rashtriya Colliery Mazdoor Sangh (RCMS) General Secretary AK Jha said that in the first shift, which began at 6 am, the miners reached the colliery but did not join the work.

"Production has been hampered in all the collieries of the BCCL and the Eastern Coalfields Limited," he claimed.

Rajendra Singh Chandel, the Rashtriya Pragatishil Workers Union (RPWU), affiliated to CITU, which is leading the strike in Ramgarh district, claimed that coal production and dispatch have been affected as the coal workers extended support to the strike. PTI

US adds 4.8 million jobs as unemployment falls to 11.1%

AP ■ WASHINGTON

U.S. employers added a substantial 4.8 million jobs in June, and the unemployment rate fell to 11.1%, as the job market improved for a second straight month yet still remained far short of regaining the colossal losses it suffered this spring.

The nation has now recovered roughly one-third of the 22 million jobs it lost to the pandemic recession. And with confirmed coronavirus cases spiking across the Sun Belt states, a range of evidence suggests that a job market recovery may be stalling. In those states and elsewhere, some restaurants, bars and other retailers that had re-opened are being forced to close again.

The re-closings are keeping layoffs elevated: The number of Americans who sought unemployment benefits barely fell last week to 1.47 million. Though that weekly figure has declined steadily since peaking in late March, it's still more than double the pre-pandemic peak set in 1982. And the total number of people receiving jobless aid remains at a sizeable 19 million.

California has re-closed bars, theaters and indoor restaurant dining across most of the state. Florida has also re-closed bars and beaches. Texas has reversed some of its efforts to reopen its economy. New York has paused its plans to allow indoor dining.

Credit and debit card data tracked by JPMorgan Chase show that consumers reduced their spending last week after having increased it steadily in late April and May. The reversal has occurred both in states that have reported surges in Covid-19 and in less affected states, said Jesse Edgerton, an economist at J.P. Morgan.

Global stocks rise on vaccine hopes, ahead of US jobs data

Beijing: Global stock markets and Wall Street futures rose Thursday on hopes for the development of a coronavirus vaccine and ahead of the release of monthly US jobs data. Investors were encouraged after Pfizer and BioNtech announced preliminary data from a vaccine test, one of a series being carried out by global developers.

At the same time, the populous American states of California and Texas reported daily record highs in new cases.

"Vaccine hopes, while welcome, fall short of guaranteeing a V-shaped recovery," Mizuho Bank said in a report. In Europe, the FTSE 100 in London rose 1% to 6,219 and Frankfurt's DAX gained 2% to 12,504. The CAC 40 in Paris advanced 1.7% to 5,011.

On Wall Street, the future for the benchmark Standard &

Poor's 500 index was up 0.8% and that for the Dow Jones Industrial Average was up 1%.

The US labour market report is expected to show a gain of about 3 million jobs in June — a record high — and a drop in the unemployment rate of a full percentage point to 12.3%. Even so, the combined job growth for May and June would recover only a fraction of the 22 million jobs that were lost in March and April, when the virus forced business shutdowns and layoffs across the country.

Thursday's figure will likely set the tone in financial markets ahead of a long holiday weekend in the United States. In Asia, the Shanghai Composite Index rose 2.1% to 3,090.57 and the Nikkei 225 in Tokyo added 0.1% to 22,145.96. The Hang Seng in Hong Kong gained 2.8% to 25,124.19. AP

UPI hits all-time high with 1.34 bn transactions in June

New Delhi: Payments on Unified Payments Interface (UPI) in June hit an all-time high of 1.34 billion in terms of volume with transactions worth nearly ₹ 2.62 lakh crore, as per National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) data.

On a month-on-month basis it registered a 8.94 per cent growth from 1.23 billion in May.

UPI payments had fell to 999.57 million in terms of volume with transactions worth ₹ 1.51 lakh crore in April, following the coronavirus-induced lockdown that halted almost all services, except essentials.

Online payments slowly gathered pace from May, with staggered opening of the economy. In May, the number of UPI transactions stood at 1.23 billion valued at ₹ 2.18 lakh crore, showed the NPCI data. PTI

Bank credit grows 6.18 %, deposits 11 %: RBI data

Mumbai: Bank credit and deposits grew 6.18 per cent and 11 per cent to ₹102.45 lakh crore and ₹138.67 lakh crore, respectively, in the fortnight ended June 19, according to the RBI.

In the fortnight ended June 21, 2019, bank credit had stood at ₹96.48 lakh crore and deposits at ₹124.92 lakh crore. In the previous fortnight that ended on June 5 this year, advances had grown 6.24 per cent and deposits by 11.28 per cent. Rating agency Crisil in a recent report said bank credit growth is likely to nosedive to a multi-decadal low of 0-1 per cent in 2020-21 as economic activity is sharply impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic. PTI

ES Ranganathan takes charge as GAIL Director (Marketing)

New Delhi: ES Ranganathan on Thursday assumed charge as Director (Marketing) of GAIL (India) Limited.

An Instrumentation & Control Engineer from NSS College of Engineering, Palghat in Kerala, Ranganathan is an MBA with specialization in Marketing. He has close to 35 years of rich and diverse experience in Oil & Gas sector, particularly in Project Execution along with Operation & Maintenance of Natural Gas pipelines, Gas Marketing, Business Development and Business Information Systems entailing engineering and planning, process management, scope management, resource management, schedule management, Enterprise Resource



Planning, Technology Upgradation, Vendor Management and Quality Assurance.

Prior to his appointment as Director (Marketing), Ranganathan served as Managing Director, Indraprastha Gas Limited and Executive Director (Corporate O&M), GAIL and was instrumental in commissioning Dahej-Vijaiapur, Vijaiapur-Dadri and Bawana Nangal Pipeline Projects. A firm believer in

leveraging technology for business solutions, Ranganathan played a pioneering role in using technology towards SMART working in the field of O&M and project Management.

As Managing Director, IGL, Ranganathan spearheaded the expansion of operations into Haryana, UP and Rajasthan and also entered in an international foray into New Yangon Project in Myanmar. He is actively involved in various industry forums in India and overseas, including Member Technical of Fluid Control and Research Institute, Member of Coordination Team of Indian Standards for Metering Design and Construction of Bureau of Indian Standards.

Information Technology Development Agency (I.T.D.A.) (Department of IT, Government of Uttarakhand)
 IT Bhawan, Plot No. IT-27, IT Park, Sahasrinarara Road, Dehradun - 248001
 Ph: 9135-268230, email: dir@ita-uk.org

Ref: 7517DAD/Office/2020 Date: 02/07/2020
 Tender Notice No. 02/ITDA-PRJ/DEPT/2020-Project dated 02/07/2020
 Notice of Invitation for e-Tender

Selection of Service Provider for Procurement of Smart Phone & Tablet
 RFP (Request for Proposal) is being issued by ITDA, Department of IT, Uttarakhand to the reputed IT companies meeting the qualification criteria, for Selection of Service Provider (SP) for Procurement of Smart Phone & Tablet. The RFP document can be downloaded from www.uktenders.gov.in from 02/07/2020 (16:00 Hrs). The tender document fee of Rs 10000/- (Rupees Ten Thousand Only) through demand draft (non-refundable) favouring Director, ITDA payable at Dehradun should be submitted along with the Bid. The parties willing to participate in the bidding will have to apply through the Electronic Tendering Procedure (e-Tendering) as per the guidelines issued by Government of Uttarakhand available on the above mentioned website under the link "Bidders Manual Kit".
 Director/ITDA reserves the right to cancel the tender at any point of time, without assigning any reason therefor.
 DIRECTOR

UJVN LTD.
 H.O.: 'UJJWAL', Maharani Bagh, G.M.S. Road, Dehradun-248006
 Telephones : 0135-2763808 & Fax : 0135- 2763508
 CIN No. UJ40101UR2001SGC025866 Website: www.ujvn.com

Letter No. 416 e-Tender Notice Dated 02.07.2020
 Office of Executive Engineer (Maint.), Khodri Power Station, Dakpathar (Dehradun), invites online tenders for following work:
Tender No: 5/EE(Maint.)/Khodri/2020-21- Automation of pumps for Dewatering & Drainage, gland and drinking water system at Khodri Powerhouse
 Estimated cost : Rs. 19,52,000/-
 Earnest money deposit : Rs. 60,000/-
 Tender Fee : Rs. 1180/-
 Date of availability of tender on website : 02.07.2020 from 18:00 hrs.
 Last date for submission of bid on website : 23.07.2020 up to 16:00 hrs.
 Last date of submission of hard copy of bid : 24.07.2020 up to 16:00 hrs.
 Date of opening of bid : 25.07.2020 at 11:00 hrs.
 For downloading tender documents and other details, please visit e-procurement portal "https://uktenders.gov.in"
 Executive Engineer(Maint), Khodri
 "Avoid wasteful use of Electricity"

APPEAL FOR IDENTIFICATION

General public is hereby informed that one male was found dead on 29.06.2020 at Angoori Bagh Cut Footpath, Near Market, Delhi in the area of PS Kotwali, Delhi. In this regard a DD No. 56A u/s 174 CrPC, Dated 29.06.2020 has been lodged at P.S. Kotwali, Delhi. The description of the dead body is given as under:
Name: Unknown, **S/o:** Unknown, **R/o:** Unknown, **Age:** about 55-60 years, **Height:** 5' **Feet, Face:** Flat, **Complexion:** Shallow, **Build:** Medium, **White Beard Black and White Hair, Wearing:** White Colour Shirt and White Colour Pajama.
 Sincere efforts have been made by local police to trace out the information about the dead male but no clue has come to light so far. If any one is having any information about this dead male please inform the undersigned.
 S.H.O
 P.S. Kotwali, Delhi.
 DP/325/N/2020 Ph. No. 011-23977100, 23953442, 8750870121

UNIDENTIFIED DEAD BODY

General Public is hereby informed that an Unknown male person was found dead at footpath near toilet Jama Masjid Metro Gate No. 4, Red Fort, Delhi on dated 26.06.2020. In this regard a DD No. 40A dated 26.06.2020 has been registered at PS Kotwali, Delhi.
 The description of the dead body is given as under **Name:** Unknown, **S/o:** Unknown, **R/o:** Unknown, **Age:** 35-40 years Approx, **Height:** 5'5", **Built:** Thin, **Complexion:** Sallow, **Wearing:** Grey Colour Underwear and bare foot.
 Sincere efforts have been made by local police to trace out the dead person but no clue has come to light so far. If any one having any information about this dead person please inform undersigned.
 SHO, PS Kotwali, Delhi
 Ph.: 011-23797100, 23953442, 8750870121
 DP/322/N/2020

Trend Slazer

Saif trolled for claim on nepotism

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

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

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



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

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

—Neha Dhupia

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

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

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



Never Have I Ever renewed

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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



Sleep well

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

By AYUSHI SHARMA

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

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

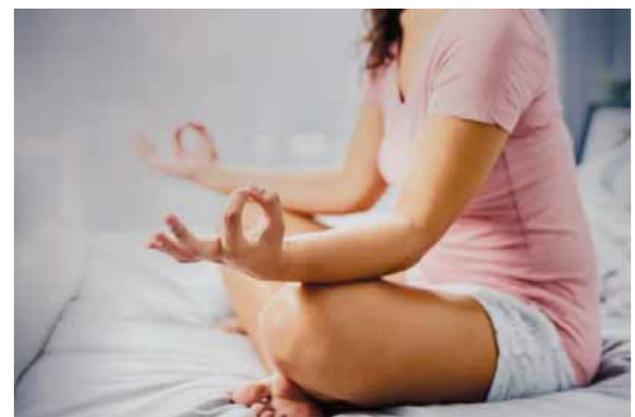
30 minutes can help to improve mood, alertness and performance.

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

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

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

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



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

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

Worthy successor

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

‘People have seen enough of formula’

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

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

She adds, “People are always looking to immerse themselves into something new. That’s been our biggest strength. From *Phillauri*, *Pari* and now *Bulbbul*, while we have accidentally

created a sub-genre of supernatural feminism films, we have consciously told the story through the lens of clutter-breaking visual effects.” Karnesh is delighted that *Bulbbul*’s VFX has been hailed unanimously. The use of symbolism like the red moon to evoke elements of rebellion, passion and revolution has been lapped up by the audience and critics alike.

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

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THAT RIGHT INGREDIENT

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

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

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

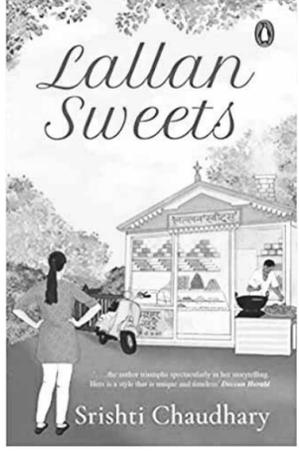
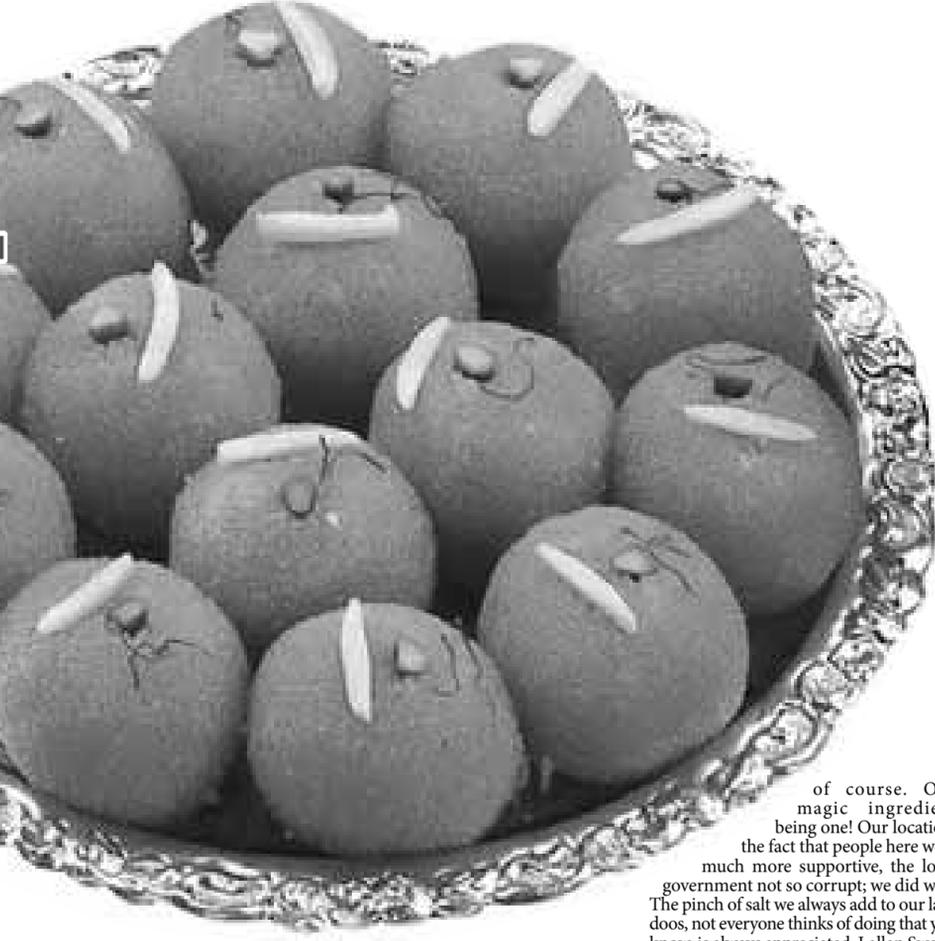
HERE ARE TWO EXTRACTS:

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

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

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

I glanced at Pappu Uncle. While he might have known more of this than us, we still didn't know why Lalaji had decided to bring it up now. 'Some things helped us,



'I MIXED THE BESAN AND KESAR, ADDING WATER IN MEASURED POURS, PUTTING IN THAT PINCH OF SALT THAT LALAJI LOVED SO MUCH, MIXING IT ALL INTO THE BATTER. THE SUGAR BOILED ON THE STOVE, AND I KEPT AN EYE ON IT, MY MIND FOCUSED'

of course. Our magic ingredient being one! Our location, the fact that people here were much more supportive, the local government not so corrupt; we did well. The pinch of salt we always add to our laddoos, not everyone thinks of doing that you know, is always appreciated. Lallan Sweets is the labour of love of not one generation but two, an effort at trying to rebuild all that we had lost due to the cruelties of fate. I don't want to see it crumble again.' Pappu Uncle put his hands on the table and pushed his chair back. 'I see what this is about. About our talk yesterday, isn't it? You don't trust my sons to handle it, do you? What? You want Taru to take it on — or perhaps her mother?' Aunty looked at Pappu Uncle in horror. We too were shocked at this sudden hostility. There was always some jealousy and rivalry between us but it was always concealed beneath a veneer of friendliness. Nothing was spelt out in this manner. 'What about us then?' Pappu Uncle continued. 'My two sons? They will have wives too, children to feed, families to take care of — you want to give Lallan Sweets to Taru who has no credibility at all, who might run off with the next DJ she finds, dishonouring the family name!' 'Pappuji!' my mother stood up, indignant. 'Please mind what you are saying, I will not hear my child being spoken

ill of like this!' 'Pappu, enough!' Lalaji said, putting his hand up. 'I'm not finished yet and you're not so wise yet to be able to interrupt your father.'

Pappu Uncle went as red as it was possible to, his bald head looking like it would explode. 'The time has come to settle the matter,' Lalaji went on. I bent forward. 'I will not bear to see any injustice happening to my grandchildren, be it my grandsons or granddaughter. There might have been a time when girls were not considered important-enough members of the family, but, Pappu, I am not barbaric, and I hope to God you are the same. Now I will tell you how it will work, something that my own father did for me: Lallan Sweets will not be inherited at all.'

'Not inherited?' Pappu Uncle asked blankly.

'It will not be inherited. It will be earned.' Silence followed: not because it was a shocking statement, but because it was incomprehensible in this scenario. How do you earn your inheritance?

'And what,' I asked, clearing my throat, 'exactly will we have to do to earn it?' Lalaji looked at me, a wide smile on his face. 'You'll have to find out the magic ingredient, of course.'

Chapter 19:
I mixed the *besan* and *kesar*, adding water in measured pours, putting in that pinch of salt that Lalaji loved so much, mixing it all into the batter. The sugar boiled in the water on the stove, and I kept an eye on it, heating up the ghee in the kadai, my mind focussed. I put my finger in the batter to feel the consistency. Satisfied, I took out the perforated boondi ladle. It was like everything was clear now. My answer started to make sense. I spread the batter over the ladle as it fell into the kadai in drops, frying up to be little boondis: the pride of Lallan Sweets. The boondis, meanwhile, sizzled and glistened in the oil, frying to a warm and delicious yellowish-orange.

I removed them from the *kadai* in bunches and placed them in the sugar syrup. For two hours I was busy preparing the laddoos, putting everything together with care and detail. This was it—the final competition. Everything that we had been working on for the past few weeks, even our lives, came down to this. Rohit and Mohit were in their own kitchen across the verandah, making laddoos. I had told my mother not to help me. This was my job. At the core of it all, of Lallan Sweets and our traditional business, it was all about making laddoos, wasn't it? And if I couldn't do this on my own, who was I and what was I even fighting for?

I was bathed in sweat when I left the laddoos to set. I crossed the verandah and went to Lalaji's room. I waved away the hookah smoke. 'I'm ready Lalaji,' I told him. He nodded.

R E C I P E S



CALIFORNIA WALNUTS KULIYE KI CHAAT

WHAT YOU NEED
● Seasonal fruits, cut into squares: 1 cup
● Seasonal vegetables cut into squares: 1 cup

● Black eyed peas (boiled): 1/4 cup
● California walnuts, (chopped roughly): 1/2 cup
● Fresh pomegranate seeds: 2 tbsp
● Salt to taste
● *Chaat masala*: 1 tsp
● Red chilli powder: 1/2 tsp
● Lemon juice: 1/2 tsp
METHOD
● Place all the fruits and vegetables in serving plate. Squeeze the lemon juice and sprinkle salt, red chilli powder and *chaat masala*.
● Add black eyed peas, pomegranate seeds, chopped California walnuts and mix.
● Serve immediately.

Courtesy: Celebrity Chef Varun Inamdar, California Walnuts.

BETROOT KACHORI

WHAT YOU NEED
● Refined flour: 1 cup
● Semolina: 1/4 cup
● *Ghee*: 3 tbsp
● Beetroot *puree*: 1/2 cup
● Honey: 1 tsp
● *Gulab Jamun*: 4
● Oil
● Cardamom powder: 1 tsp
METHOD
● In mixing bowl, add refined flour, semolina, *ghee* and mix well.
● Add beetroot *puree*, honey and start kneading into dough.



● Divide the dough into equal portions and make smooth round ball.
● Crumble the *gulab jamun* in medium large chunks.
● Stuff *gulab jamun* in the prepared dough balls and smooth it out.
● Deep fry the *kachories* in oil, on medium heat till nice and crisp.
● Remove on kitchen towel and drain the excess oil.
● Sprinkle cardamom powder over the *kachories* and serve hot.

Courtesy: Chef Manish Mehrotra, Corporate Chef, Indian Accent.

TOASTED ALMONDS AND TOMATO UTTAPAM PIZZA

WHAT YOU NEED
● Uttapam batter: 75 ml
● Almonds cut into half (unpeeled): 15 gm
● Tomato (deseeded and chopped): 10 gm
● Onion (chopped): 10 gm
● Ginger (chopped): 2 gm
● Coriander (chopped): 2 gm
● Pizza sauce: 5 gm
● Parmesan cheese (grated): 3 gm
● Salt to taste
● Refined oil: 5 ml



METHOD
● Pour the uttapam batter in the centre of a heated non-stick pan.
● Sprinkle chopped tomato, onion, ginger and coriander, evenly on top.
● Turn the uttapam upside down to cook it from top for about a minute. Then, turn it back and spread the pizza sauce. Add almond halves and turn it over, once again.
● Then, remove from the pan and sprinkle grated parmesan on it. Cut it into four pieces like a pizza. Serve hot.

Courtesy: Chef Manish Mehrotra, Corporate Chef, Indian Accent.

NILGIRI TURKEY KORMA

WHAT YOU NEED
● Turkey meat: 750 gm
● Spinach: 100 gm
● Mint leaves: 1 bunch
● Coriander leaves: 2 bunches
● Green chilli: 10
● Onion: 150 gm
● Ginger garlic paste: 25 gm
● Turmeric powder: 1/2 tsp
● *Shahi jeera*: 10 gm
● Curd: 100 gm
● Coconut paste: 100 gm
● Coriander powder: 1

tbsp
● *Garam masala* powder: 10 gm
● Oil: 100 ml
● Salt to taste
● Water for use
METHOD
● In a cooker, add turkey meat, salt, turmeric powder and water.
● Cover with lid and boil it. Put it aside when the turkey is boiled.
● In a mixer jar, add spinach leaves, mint leaves, coriander leaves, green chilli, water and grind it into a fine paste.



VIRGINIA PEANUT SOUP

WHAT YOU NEED
● Butter: 2 tbsp
● Onion (chopped): 1
● Chicken stock: 6 cups
● All-purpose flour: 2 tbsps
● Heavy cream: 1 cup
● Natural peanut butter: 1 1/2 cups
● Hot sauce: 2 tsp
● Limes (juiced): 2
● Peanuts (chopped): 2 tbsps
● Scallions (chopped): 2
METHOD
● Melt the butter in a heavy bottomed pot over medium heat.

● Add the onion and cook until translucent for about 10 minutes. Bring the chicken stock to a boil in a medium saucepan.
● Whisk in the flour all at once and cook until the mixture has a toasty aroma. Whisk the stock into the flour mixture in a slow, steady stream until smooth.
● Add the heavy cream and peanut butter to the soup and stir to combine. Stir in the hot sauce and lime juice and season, to taste.
● Garnish with the chopped peanuts and scallions.

Courtesy: Chef Chris Carey, Ashby Inn.

● In a pan, add oil, then add *shahi jeera*, chopped onions, ginger garlic paste, and fry for five minutes.
● Add boiled turkey meat pieces and mix well. Then add fresh curry leaves and mix well. Cook for 10 minutes.
● After that add coconut paste and mix well until the oil oozes out.
● Add curd, salt to taste, ground spinach paste and mix well for five minutes. Fry until aromatic.

● Add one glass of water and mix well, then add coriander powder and mix again.
● Cover with lid to boil the turkey meat for 10 minutes.
● After 10 minutes, open the lid and stir well.
● When curry is almost done, add *garam masala* powder and stir. Add fresh coriander leaves, put in a serving bowl, and serve hot.

Courtesy: Chef Shadab Ahmed Quershi, Chef-de cuisine Sofitel.

HAMMERS BLOW

Yarmolenko's last minute counter strike dash Chelsea's top-four hopes; Aubameyang makes Gunners history



Andriy Yarmolenko, center celebrates with West Ham teammates after scoring his side's third goal

AFP ■ LONDON

West Ham rocked Chelsea's top-four hopes and boosted their survival bid with a dramatic 3-2 win, while Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang struck twice as Arsenal climbed back into European contention with a 4-0 thrashing of Norwich on Wednesday.

Chelsea were hoping to take advantage of third-placed Leicester's 2-1 defeat at Everton earlier in the day, but instead the Blues were beaten for the first time since the Premier League restart.

West Ham were denied the opening goal at the London Stadium when VAR ruled Michail Antonio was offside as he lay on the ground while Tomas Soucek

to qualify for the Champions League hot up with six games left.

"It's the story of our season. It's been a good season but there have been so many of these moments," Chelsea boss Frank Lampard said.

"I'm not happy with any of the goals. There were details in the game which we knew but we lost because we didn't get them right. It's why we are fighting for the top four and not first or second. We don't get things right as much as the big boys do."

West Ham's crucial first win since the restart moved them three points clear of the relegation zone.

Willian fired Chelsea ahead from the penalty spot five minutes before half-time after Issa Diop tripped Christian Pulisic. Soucek headed home in first-half stoppage time as West Ham finally scored their first goal since the restart.

Antonio put West Ham in front in the 51st minute when he slid in to convert Jarrod Bowen's cross.

Willian's superb 70th-minute free-kick drew Chelsea level, but it was West Ham who broke away to win it in the 89th minute when substitute Andriy Yarmolenko finished a brilliant counter attack. Chelsea are one point behind Leicester and only two ahead of Manchester United and Wolves as the race



Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang scores Arsenal's opening goal against Norwich City at Emirates stadium

to reach that landmark.

"A player that is able to score as many goals as he has done in that short space of time tells you everything about the importance that he has for us," said Arsenal boss Mikel Arteta.

Aubameyang turned provider for Granit Xhaka to make it 2-0 before half-time and was then handed another gift when Norwich striker Josip Drmic teed him up to make it 3-0.

Cedric Soares, signed from Southampton in January, made his debut one to remember with a long-range strike nine minutes from time to round off the scoring.

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51% COUNTING

At the Emirates Stadium, Aubameyang moved alongside Jamie Vardy as the Premier League's top scorer on 19 goals on a night of contrasting fortunes for the Golden Boot contenders.

Arsenal registered a third straight win to move up to seventh against a Norwich side ever more resigned to relegation.

Canaries keeper Tim Krul did his side no favours by gifting the opener to Aubameyang when he was caught trying to dribble past the Gabon international.

Aubameyang's first saw him reach 50 Premier League goals in 79 appearances — making him the fastest Arsenal play-

FOXES OUTFOXED

Leicester are headed in the opposite direction as their winless run since English football's restart from the coronavirus pandemic stretched to four games.

Richardson and Gylfi Sigurdsson's penalty gave Everton the perfect start at Goodison Park.

Kelechi Iheanacho's fortunate goal as the ball ricocheted in off his face reduced Leicester's arrears and they pressed hard for an equaliser in the closing stages.

"Our form hasn't been the best for a period now but we still have it in our

NUMBER GAME

10 Chelsea lost their 10th league game of the season on Wednesday; only in 2015-16, when they finished 10th, have they suffered more defeats in a single campaign in Roman Abramovich era (12)

18 Only West Ham (22) & Aston Villa (19) have dropped more points from leading positions in this season than Chelsea (18)

1 Willian is the first player to score a penalty and a direct free-kick goal in the same PL game since Cesc Fabregas did so for Chelsea against West Ham in March 2016

2 Tomas Soucek is the 12th Czech player to score a Premier League goal and the second to do so for West Ham after Radoslav Kovac

12 Willian is the first player to score a Premier League goal in every month of the year

2 Following their 1-0 win at Stamford Bridge in November, West Ham complete their first league double over Chelsea since 2002-03 — a campaign in which the Hammers were relegated from the Premier League

9 Everton are unbeaten in their last nine PL games at Goodison Park (W5 D4); their longest run without a league defeat there since between April and December 2016 (11 games)

1 Everton were awarded their first penalty of the season in the PL on Wednesday, having been the only side yet to win one. They had gone 38 league games without taking a spot-kick

50 Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang has scored his 50th PL goal in fewer appearances (79) than any other Arsenal player, and is the 6th fastest to this total among all PL players

3 Allan Saint-Maximin has become just the third Newcastle player to assist three goals in a single PL game, after Moussa Sissoko v Norwich in Oct 2015 and Andy Cole v West Ham in March 1994

SINGLES

WI LEGEND EVERTON WEEKES DIES AGED 95

BRIDGETOWN: Legendary batsman Everton Weekes, the last of the famed Windies 'Three Ws', died on Wednesday at the age of 95 and was hailed as "a founding father" of the sport in the Caribbean. "Our hearts are heavy as we mourn the loss of an icon. A legend, our hero, Sir Everton Weekes," tweeted Cricket West Indies. "Our condolences go out to his family, friends and many fans around the world. May he rest in peace." Barbadian Weekes was part of a feared post-World War II West Indies team which also featured Clyde Walcott and Frank Worrell.

FULTON QUILTS AS BLACKCAPS BATTING COACH

AUCKLAND: Peter Fulton has quit as New Zealand's batting coach to take up the job of head coach of the Canterbury men's team. Fulton, a former int'l player who featured in 23 Tests and 49 ODIs for Kiwis, took up the position with the national team in August 2019 and travelled to Sri Lanka and Australia besides being part of the home tours against England and India. Fulton said he had enjoyed his time with the national team but the Canterbury offer was hard to ignore.

CA TO NOT USE DUKES BALL IN FC CRICKET

MELBOURNE: Cricket Australia has decided to not use the Dukes ball from this summer's Sheffield Shield, having used it alongside Kookaburra for four seasons. Australia has been using Dukes ball since the 2016-17 season in Shield matches with an aim to help its cricketers prepare for the hostile English conditions. CA's Head of Cricket Operations, Peter Roach, said the ineffectiveness of spinners in first-class cricket in recent times played a role in CA's decision to do away with the Dukes. The CA official, however, didn't rule out the possibility of re-introducing it later.

PAULINHO OUT OF GERMAN CUP FINAL

LEVERKUSEN: Bayer Leverkusen will be without forward Paulinho for the German Cup final against Bayern Munich on Saturday and the Europa League mini-tournament after he tore an anterior cruciate ligament in his right knee, the club said on Thursday. According to club the 19-year-old Brazilian injured his knee in a training session on Tuesday. He has been scheduled for an operation in Austria on Friday and will be out for several months.

SL CRICKET KEEN TO HOST IPL IN AUGUST

COLOMBO: Sri Lanka Cricket is optimistic of conducting its inaugural T20 league from August 8 to 22 despite the Govt's decision to postpone the reopening of the country's Int'l airport till August 1. SLC has got the green signal from the sports ministry, but the Lanka Premier League's fate depends on the Govt's decision to open the country's borders for foreign arrivals.

PUNJAB FC HANDED 3-WINDOW TRANSFER BAN

KOLKATA: Punjab FC, formerly known as Minerva Punjab FC, has been handed a three-window transfer ban by FIFA's Dispute Resolution Chamber (DRC) for failing to pay the dues of North Macedonian footballer Hristijan Denkovski. The fiasco took place in August last year when Ranjit Bajaj was still an active decision-maker at the club and the ban was handed on Tuesday. The ban on signing any player, nationally or internationally, is from the upcoming summer transfer window. The ban will be lifted once the payment is made and the proof of payment is sent to FIFA.

Inter hits 6

Sanchez takes centre stage in Nerazzurri's rout of Brescia

AFP ■ MILAN



Alexis Sanchez celebrates after scoring Inter's second goal against Brescia

Young, with Roberto Gagliardini rising to head home a Sanchez free-kick as Inter grabbed a fourth on 53 minutes.

Christian Eriksen bagged his first Serie A goal since his January move from Tottenham, forcing in from point-blank range after an excellent Jesse Joronen save denied Romelu Lukaku.

Antonio Candreva completed the romp two minutes from time with a crisp low drive into the corner as Inter clawed back to within eight

points of leaders Juventus with nine games still to play.

"We kept our foot on the gas and the fact that we didn't concede is a big positive," Inter coach Antonio Conte told broadcaster DAZN.

Sanchez, who made just his fourth league start this term, had his loan deal from Manchester United extended earlier in the day until the end of the Italian season.

Brescia, who were again without Mario Balotelli due to

an ongoing contract dispute, dropped to the foot of the table. They remain eight points from safety and are winless in 14 games.

ZLATAN RETURNS

SPAL surrendered a two-goal lead and squandered two precious points in their fight against relegation as a 94th-minute own goal by Francesco Vicari gifted Milan a late equaliser in a 2-2 draw.

First-half goals from Mattia Valoti and Sergio Floccari, the second a magnificent dipping 30-yard strike, put SPAL on top but the home side lost Marco D'Alessandro to a red card before half-time for a poor challenge on Theo Hernandez.

Zlatan Ibrahimovic returned to action for the first time since Italian football's restart following a calf injury, replacing the in-form Ante Rebic on the hour, but it was another substitute Rafael Leao who gave Milan hope with a calm finish on 79 minutes.

SPAL coach Luigi Di Biagio was sent to the stands after two yellow cards in quick succession and could only watch in despair as a lunging Vicari diverted a cross into his own net right at the death.

Milan stayed seventh despite the late fightback.

Promising victory against Qatar will be suicidal: Stimac

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India's draw against Asian champions Qatar in a World Cup qualifier last year was one of their best results but coach Igor Stimac does not want to put pressure on his players by promising a victory in the return leg.

India play Qatar in Bhubaneswar on October 8 before taking on Bangladesh (away match) on November 12 and Afghanistan in Kolkata on November 17.

India are already out of contention for a berth in the 2022 World Cup but they are still in the reckoning for the 2023 Asian Cup as it is a joint qualification campaign.

The 52-year-old Stimac said promising victory against Qatar will be suicidal but his side will play not to lose the match.

"With strong belief in what we do and a clear mindset, everything is possible. We are certainly not going to come out on the pitch to lose the game. But to promise victory against Asian champions and such a great team as Qatar would be suicidal," Stimac said from his home in Croatia.

"We are in the process of building up a new respectable team and I am trying to avoid putting our youngsters under extra pressure so they can enjoy their football and gain experience for the future."

IPL 13 likely overseas, toss-up b/w UAE & Lanka

NEW DELHI: The 13th edition of the Indian Premier League is in all probability headed to foreign shores with UAE and Sri Lanka in the race to host the 2020 edition of the cash-rich league. The final announcement is expected soon as the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) is still awaiting an official decision on the fate of the T20 World Cup which was to be held in Australia in October-November.

A BCCI official in the know of developments told IANS that while the idea was to play the league in the country, the situation with regards to the coronavirus pandemic might force the board to ultimately take the tournament to either UAE or Sri Lanka.

"We are yet to decide on the venue but in all probability it is going outside this year. The condition in India doesn't look suited to have so many teams come in at one or two venues and then create an atmosphere which will be safe for the players as well as the general public even though the games may be played behind closed doors.

"The race is between UAE and Sri Lanka and we will need to decide on where we host the league depending on the situation there with regards to the coronavirus pandemic. Logistics also need to be looked into, so we will decide soon," the official said.

It was earlier reported that the decision-makers in the BCCI were divided in 3:2 ratio with regards to deciding on the venue of the league. "See, it is a case of the



decision makers being divided 3-2 if that is how you wish to understand the current scenario.

"There are a couple of voices who feel that having the tournament should be the priority and if that means taking it out of the country, so be it. So, while we are working on the overall plan, the venue is an area which will need further deliberation. Also, at the end of the day safety of the players and everyone involved is priority," the official had explained.

Villarreal maintain CL push



AFP ■ MADRID

after just seven minutes from the penalty spot and added a fine individual goal on the half-hour mark.

Moreno's 15 goals are just two back from Real Madrid's Karim Benzema with Barcelona's Lionel Messi leading the way with 22.

Real Betis' hopes of a fight-back were undone just before the half-time whistle when French international Nabil Fekir was red-carded.

Villarreal have now won five and drawn one of their six games since La Liga resumed after a three-month coronavirus suspension.

Next up is a home clash with Barcelona at the weekend.

Meanwhile, veteran midfielder Raul Garcia scored twice to move Athletic Bilbao four points from the Europa League places in a 2-0 win at Valencia.

Garcia, 33, took his tally for the season up to 13 with his efforts either side of the break at the Mestalla.



Novak & wife test corona -ve

BELGRADE: Novak Djokovic and his wife have tested negative for the coronavirus, his media team said on Thursday, 10 days after announcing they had contracted the virus.

The top-ranked player tested positive for the virus after playing in an exhibition series he organized in Serbia and Croatia amid the pandemic. "Novak Djokovic and his wife Jelena are negative for Covid-19. That was shown by the results of the PCR tests that both had in Belgrade," his media team said in a statement.

Both Djokovic and his wife had no symptoms and were in self-isolation in the Serbian capital since testing positive.

The news comes amid a new spike of cases in Serbia and the reintroduction of some restrictive measures, such as wearing of masks and social distancing.

Simmons rejoins Windies team

PTI ■ MANCHESTER

West Indies head coach Phil Simmons has rejoined his team ahead of the opening Test against England after being in mandatory quarantine and clearing the Covid-19 tests following his decision to attend a family funeral.

"Phil Simmons is back on the job. The West Indies head coach returned to the field with his players on Thursday after his mandatory quarantine and Covid-19 tests," Cricket West Indies said on Thursday.

"He was part of the warm-up and pre-match preparations as West Indies continued their four-day warm-up match at the Old Trafford," it further stated.

Simmons had found himself in a soup after board member Conde Riley had sought his "immediate removal" for moving out of the team's bio-secure location



in the UK to attend his father-in-law's funeral.

However, the 57-year-old Simmons received the backing of Board president Ricky Skerritt, who insisted that he had taken permission before venturing out and made it clear that Simmons' job is "not in any way threatened".

"I want to assure West Indies cricket fans that Phil Simmons still has the full

'The Ruth Strauss Foundation Test'

The England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) on Thursday announced that the third Test between England and West Indies will be named "The Ruth Strauss Foundation Test" to support families facing the death of a parent to cancer.

The players will wear special Ruth Strauss Foundation branded Test shirts with red caps being presented before play.

backing of Cricket West Indies no matter what has been said. When all is said and done, Phil's job is not in any way threatened by that letter," Skerritt said during a conference call.

"He went through a very vigorous recruitment process nine months ago and was the best man we could have found for the job. He's still the best man."

MS didn't look rusty in CSK camp: Chawla

CHENNAI: Chennai Super Kings captain MS Dhoni was not looking rusty in the nets while practicing for the 2020 edition of the Indian Premier League, according to spinner Piyush Chawla. Dhoni was set to make his comeback to competitive cricket in this IPL before the coronavirus pandemic forced its indefinite postponement. Before the start of the tournament, the CSK management held a training camp at the Chepauk Stadium in early March where Dhoni was present.

"Honestly speaking, whenever a cricketer makes a comeback after such a long break, people think that he will be a bit rusty. But I am sure he was doing something at Ranchi because when Dhoni landed in the camp, he didn't look rusty at all. His routine work was — he played five-six balls and then used to clear the fence," Chawla told Aakash Chopra on the latter's YouTube channel.



"He batted for long. In fact, Suresh Raina, Ambati Rayudu, Dhoni and Murali Vijay...there were limited players in the camp and there were a number of bowlers. So everyone batted for long — 2-230 hours every day. Every batsman played 200-250 balls," said Chawla.

Dhoni has last played competitive cricket in India's semi-final tie against New Zealand in the 2019 ICC World Cup on June 10, 2019.