

OPINION 6
SAMOSA
AND MORE

WORLD 8
FLOYD TESTED COVID +VE
IN APRIL: AUTOPSY

SPORT 12
NADAL NOT SURE
ABOUT 2020 US OPEN

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Unclog NCR border: SC to Delhi, UP, Hry

'Hold meeting, evolve common policy to facilitate inter-State travel'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Thursday stepped in to deal with massive hardship faced by commuters in traversing across National Capital Region (NCR) after Delhi, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh imposed restriction on inter-State movement in and out from their territories.

First Haryana and then Uttar Pradesh imposed restriction on entering of vehicles in their territories from Delhi to check the spread of coronavirus. The Delhi followed the suit and did the same by sealing its own borders. The result has been chaos and tremendous hardship to office-goers, common citizens, and those wishing to catch trains and flights, etc.



The SC on Thursday said the Governments of Delhi, Haryana and UP must hold a meeting and consider evolving a common policy and portal to facilitate inter-State movement in the NCR.

A bench headed by Justice Ashok Bhushan said these states should endeavour to find out a common programme and portal for inter-state movement within the NCR.

The bench, also compris-

ing Justices SK Kaul and MR Shah, further stated that there should be a consistent policy in this regard for the NCR.

The SC was hearing via video-conferencing a plea, filed through advocate Anindita Mitra, which has raised the issue of alleged restriction on movement for permissible activities in the NCR owing to sealing of borders due to the coronavirus pandemic.

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Unique virulent corona strain in India

CCMB scientists say 'Clade A3i' cause of high death rate in Maha, TN, Delhi

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Scientists at Hyderabad's Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology (CCMB) have discovered a new virulent strain of the coronavirus, known as Clade A3i, which could be responsible for the widespread death being witnessed in Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu and Delhi.

"Here is a fresh preprint on genome analysis of SARS-CoV2 spread in India. The results show a distinct cluster of virus population, uncharacterised thus far, which is prevalent in India — called the Clade A3i," CCMB tweeted.

"This cluster seems to have originated from an outbreak in February 2020 and spread through India. This comprises of 41 per cent of all SARS-CoV2 genomes from Indian samples, and 3.5 per cent of global genomes submitted into public domain," the CCMB further tweeted.

The research institute has named this unique cluster of the virus as 'Clade A3i'; which it says is found in 41 per cent



of the genome sequenced in India.

According to the study, by bioRxiv journal, Clade A3i has not been found in any other part of the world. The CCMB scientists say the virus has mutated in India because of the different genetic material found here. The coronavirus strains found in other countries have been named as A2a, A3, B and B4. This cluster has four different strains. Of these, C13730T has been found to be the most virulent.

The study said this strain has been found in the highest proportions in Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Maharashtra, and Delhi. It was found in lower concentrations in Bihar, Karnataka, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Gujarat, and Madhya Pradesh.

Scientists collected samples from Telangana on March 11 and subsequently from Delhi, Maharashtra and other States. When these samples were analysed, it was found that a new cluster had emerged in February and led to the mutation of the virus and further spread of the infection.

Unlock 2.0: Healthy can visit malls; no offerings in temples

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

As shopping malls, hotels/hospitality units, restaurants and religious places are set to open from June 8 except those in the containment zones, the Union Health Ministry has issued separate standard operating procedure (SOP) to ensure check on spread of coronavirus.

The SOP will be in addition to specific measures to be taken at particular places. The Government has advised persons above 65 years of age, persons with comorbidities, pregnant women and children below the age of 10 years to stay at home.

While disinfection of the premises is to be taken up if any person there is found positive, thermal screening, a minimum distance of 6 feet in public places as far as feasible, mandatory use of face covers/masks, practicing frequent hand washing with soap (for at

least 40-60 seconds) will be mandatory at all these places to ensure hygiene.

Only asymptomatic persons shall be allowed in the premises whether it is temple, mall or hotels. In temples, staggering of visitors has to be done and touching of statues/idols/holy books, etc, will not be allowed.

In view of potential threat of spread of infection, as far as feasible recorded devotional music/songs may be played and choir or singing groups should not be allowed while no physical offerings like prasad/distribution or sprinkling of holy water, etc, to be allowed inside the religious place.

Similarly, all restaurants will encourage takeaways, instead of dine-in. Food delivery personnel should leave the packet at customer's door. The staff for home deliveries will be screened thermally.

Continued on Page 2

2,550 Tablighis to be deported, 10 years bar on entry into India

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Centre has blacklisted 2,550 Tablighi Jamaat members from nearly 40 countries in the past two months for the visa rules violations. They will be deported after completion of judicial proceedings and would not be allowed to enter India for more than 10 years.

According to the Union Home Ministry officials, the 2,550 blacklisted Tablighis hail from Bangladesh, Myanmar, Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, US, UK, France, Australia, Russia, China, Sri Lanka, Kyrgyzstan, Vietnam, Saudi Arabia, Algeria, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ivory Coast, Djibouti, Egypt, Ethiopia, Fiji, Gambia, Iran, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Madagascar, Mali, the Philippines, Qatar, Senegal, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Sudan, Sweden, Tanzania, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia and Ukraine.

Detailed report on Page 4

9K plus cases 2nd day in a row; situation grim

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

North-eastern States as well as Jammu & Kashmir, Haryana, Uttarakhand, and Bihar saw a huge spike in the number of cases on Thursday that pushed the countrywide tally to 9,000 plus for the second day in a row amid indications that the coming days could see worsening of the situation in the country.

India's total count in the country to 2,26,634 as 9,910 cases were reported on Thursday including 274 deaths taking the toll to 6,363.

Maharashtra achieved yet another dubious feat on Thursday, as a record 123 people succumbed to coronavirus and 2,933 others tested positive for the pandemic, taking the total number of deaths to 2,710 and infected cases in the State

to 77,793.

A day after 122 people died of Covid-19, the State surpassed its earlier day's highest tally and registered a record 123 deaths on Thursday.

Mumbai accounted for 48 deaths, while there were 21 deaths in Jalgaon, nine deaths in Pune, eight deaths in Thane, seven deaths in Solapur, six deaths in Navi Mumbai.

Continued on Page 2

STATES	TOTAL CASES	DEATHS	RECOVERED
Maharashtra	77,793	2,710	33,621
Tamil Nadu	27,256	223	14,901
Delhi	25,004	659	9,898
Gujarat	18,609	1,155	12,667
Rajasthan	9,862	213	7,104
Uttar Pradesh	9,237	245	5,439
Madhya Pradesh	8,762	377	5,637
West Bengal	6,876	355	2,768
Bihar	4,420	28	2,120
Karnataka	4,320	57	1,610
Andhra Pradesh	4,112	71	2,529
Haryana	3,281	24	1,123
Telangana	3,147	105	1,587
Jammu & Kashmir	3,142	35	1,048
Odisha	2,578	9	1,481

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Mahatma Gandhi's statue outside Indian Embassy in US vandalised

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

Unknown miscreants have vandalised the statue of Mahatma Gandhi outside the Indian embassy in the US with graffiti and spray painting, prompting the mission to register a complaint with the local law enforcement agencies.

Vandalism of the statue of the apostle of peace happened during the week of nationwide protests against the custodial killing of African-American George Floyd in Minneapolis on May 25.

The incident is reported to have taken place on the intervening night of June 2 and 3, officials said.

The Indian embassy has informed the State Department and registered a complaint with local law enforcement agencies, which are now conducting an investigation into the incident.

On Wednesday, a team of officials from Metropolitan Police in consultation with the Diplomatic Security Service and National Park Police visited the site and are conducting enquiries.

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India, Oz to use each other's military bases, landmark defence pact inked

Deal is part of seven agreements signed between India and Australia in first-ever virtual summit

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Days after US President Donald Trump invited India, Australia and South Korea to join the G-7 summit in September and China slammed the gesture, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Aussie counterpart Scott Morrison held a video summit on Thursday and discussed a range of issues, including coronavirus pandemic, terrorism, maritime security challenges in the Indo-Pacific region and reforms in the World Trade Organization (WTO).

The two countries also inked an agreement for reciprocal access to military bases for logistics support besides firming up six more pacts to further broaden ties.

The Mutual Logistics Support Agreement will allow militaries of the two countries



Prime Minister Narendra Modi with Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison during the India-Australia Leaders' Virtual Summit in New Delhi on Thursday PTI

to use each other's bases for repair and replenishment of supplies besides facilitating boosing overall defence ties.

India has similar pacts with the US, France and Singapore, seen as part of broader security cooperation to balance China's growing economic and military weight in the region.

Given the ongoing face-offs on the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in Eastern Ladakh and diplomatic and military level efforts on to defuse tension, Ministry of External Affairs said the China issue was not

discussed during the talks between Modi and Morrison.

In his opening remarks, Modi favoured a coordinated and collaborative approach to come out of the adverse economic and social impact of the epidemic that has infected around 65 lakh people and killed 3.88 lakh globally.

He said a process of comprehensive reforms covering almost all areas has been initiated in India as his Government viewed the Covid crisis as an "opportunity".

Continued on Page 2

Pioneer of middle cinema Basu Chatterjee no more

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Filmmaker and screenplay writer Basu Chatterjee, best known for portraying middle class India with its realism and hope through such films like *Rajnigandha* and *Chitchor*, passed away in Mumbai on Thursday. He was 93 and the cause of his death is cited as age-related ailments.

Filmmaker Ashoke Pandit, president of Indian Film and TV Directors Association, took to twitter to confirm the news. He tweeted, "I am extremely grieved to inform you all the demise of Legendary Filmmaker Basu Chatterjee ji. It's a great loss to the industry. Will miss you, Sir." He also posted about Chatterjee's last rites, which were performed at the Santacruz Crematorium at 3 pm yesterday.

Born in Ajmer, Rajasthan, on January 10, 1930, Chatterjee began his career as an illustrator and cartoonist at the weekly tabloid *Blitz*. After working there for 18 years, he switched to filmmaking and made his directorial debut with *Teesri*



Basu Chatterjee
10 Jan 1930 - 4 June 2020

Kasam, starring Raj Kapoor and Waheeda Rehman, an ode to aspiration and wish fulfillment, a bridge he traversed in his many other films. Chatterjee was known for his innovations in cinema, which will be known for decades to come.

He scored on TV too. It was his *Byomkesh Bakshi* (1993) that grew to be the most loved series for India in the days of State television. Yet the show became such a huge success that even subsequent generations became fans. This is why it made a comeback with a second season in 1997 and

continues to have re-runs on Doordarshan.

Known to be a pioneer of the 70s' middle-of-the-road cinema, along with Hrishikesh Mukherjee, Chatterjee's film made it from small to medium-budget entertainers of the time and highlighted the everyday stories of common people, much like the genre of realism widely be seen in Bollywood today.

Besides a National Film Award for Best Film on Family Welfare (for *Durga*), Basu Chatterjee also won Filmfare for best screenplay for many of his films.

2 Gujarat Cong MLAs quit as RS poll nears

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Ahead of Rajya Sabha elections on June 19, the Congress on Thursday suffered a jolt in Gujarat after at least two of its MLAs resigned and a third one is said to be on the way out. The development can turn the Rajya Sabha elections into a close contest this time too.

Karjan MLA Akshay Patel and Kaprada MLA Jitu Chaudhary have submitted their resignations. Congress leaders said there are unconfirmed reports that a third MLA could also resign.

Congress leaders were taken back when the trouble reported last night and frantic attempts by leaders, the party could not reach the MLAs.

"India is in the midst of its independent history's biggest health, economic and humanitarian crises. The BJP, though, cannot think beyond putting all its energies in poaching legislators for RS polls, people be damned!" AICC in charge of Gujarat Rajeev Satav had tweeted.

Continued on Page 2

J'khand villagers rally around injured jumbo

VIJAY DEO JHA ■ RANCHI

In Birsa Bhagwan's own country, people are praying and offering medicines to save an injured elephant.

Unlike Kerala where a pregnant wild elephant suffered a painful death after unknown miscreants offered her fruit laced with explosives, villagers of Hesadih and Rigrigram of Ranchi in Jharkhand are supporting forest department to save the life of a 12-year-old wild elephant.

About a week back local residents found an injured, limping jumbo stranded in hillock of Mahilong forest range under Silli block of Ranchi district about 70 km from district headquarters and immediately informed the forest department.

The forest department contacted senior veterinary doctor of Bhagwan Birsa Biological Park, Dr Ajay Kumar, who gave the elephant broad spectrum antibiotic and non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs along with proteolytic enzymes.

Villagers have joined the drive along with forest depart-

ment officials and serving elephant pumpkins and bottle gourds stuffed with medicines for quick heal of injury. Besides they are offering paddy for feeding the jumbo.

They are desperate to save life of this elephant even knowing well that the same elephant had trampled two people to death last month and also damaged standing crops and houses in Rahe, Silli and Angarha blocks which are elephant corridors.

"The elephant has injury on his left leg caused when it trampled people when people hit elephants with stones to save life. After villagers informed us we started locating injured elephant and finally traced. Villagers are offering all kind of support. Though elephant and man clashes are very common in these localities, people never harm elephants. They are providing pumpkins and bottle gourds that we use to stuff medicines to cure injured elephant. We put it near the waterbody where elephant comes to quench thirst," said RK Singh, ranger of Angarha forest.

Continued on Page 2

Centre seeks investigation into tragic death of Kerala elephant

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Centre on Thursday said that it will seek probe into the horrendous killing of the pregnant elephant in a fruit blast in Kerala which has enraged the activists and the common man alike.

"Central Government has taken a very serious note of the killing of an elephant in Mallapuram, Kerala. We will not leave any stone unturned to investigate properly and nab the culprit(s). This is not an Indian culture to feed fire crackers and kill," tweeted Union Environment Minister Prakash Javadekar.

Earlier, Kerala Forest Minister K Raju assured strict action against those involved in the killing of the elephant and also clarified that the incident had taken place in Palakkad, and not Malappuram. The elephant had died on May 27 after she ate the pineapple stuffed with crackers and died standing in the river Vellyyur after it suffered an injury in its jaw.

Continued on Page 2

CAPSULE

PM'S PRIVATE SECRETARY MOVES TO WORLD BANK

New Delhi: Senior bureaucrat Rajeev Topno, Private Secretary to the Prime Minister, has been appointed as senior advisor to the Executive Director (ED), World Bank, a Personnel Ministry order issued on Thursday said. Besides him, Brajendra Navnit, who served in the PMO, has been appointed as Ambassador and Permanent Representative of India to the World Trade Organization (WTO), Geneva, Switzerland.

MAN DIES OF CORONA AS HOSP REFUSES TREATMENT

New Delhi: A woman has alleged that her Covid-19-positive father was not admitted in time by a Delhi Government hospital and died on Thursday, a charge denied by authorities of the facility.

ACT AGAINST THOSE NOT WEARING MASKS: BAIJAL

New Delhi: Delhi Lt Governor Anil Bajjal directed the district administrations to take action as per the law against those who are not wearing masks, amid the rising coronavirus cases in the city. On April 8, the Delhi Government made face masks compulsory for anyone stepping out of their house.

GLOBAL VACCINE SUMMIT

India vows \$15 mn for funding vaccinations

London: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday pledged \$15-million as India's contribution to the vaccines alliance GAVI at the Global Vaccine Summit hosted by the UK.

The summit, held virtually given the coronavirus pandemic lockdown around the world, was opened by British Prime Minister Boris Johnson to urge nations around the world to pledge funding for vaccinations to save millions of lives and protect the world from future outbreaks of infectious diseases.

Addressing the summit, Prime Minister Modi said, "Our support to Gavi is not only financial. India's huge demand brings down the global price of vaccines."

"In today's challenging context, I want to reiterate that India stands in solidarity with the world. Our proven capacity to produce quality medicines and vaccines at low cost, our own domestic experience in rapidly expanding immunisation, and our considerable

scientific research talent are all at the service of humanity," he said.

Modi was among around 35 heads of state and government participants, including US President Donald Trump, to virtually join the conference aimed at raising USD 7.4 million to immunise a further 300 million children in the world's poorest countries by 2025.

Modi pledged that the world can "count on India's support" in the critical mission of vaccination against infectious diseases, highlighting the country's role as the world's fourth-largest producer of vaccines.

The Indian prime minister also pointed to the government's Mission Indradhanush, which aims to ensure full vaccination of children and pregnant women, as a sign of the importance attached to immunisation within the country.

He said: "We are fortunate to contribute to the immunisation of about 60 per cent of the world's children. India recognises and values the work of Gavi, which is why we

became a donor to Gavi while still being eligible for Gavi's support."

"Gavi is not just a global alliance, it is also a symbol of global solidarity and a reminder that by helping others, we can also help ourselves," he said.

The UK government said the funding raised from the summit will not only protect children from deadly diseases like polio, diphtheria and measles and save up to 8 million lives, but will also help ensure a global recovery from the coronavirus.

"Just as the UK is the single biggest donor to the international effort to find a coronavirus vaccine, we will remain the world's leading donor to Gavi, contributing 1.65 billion pounds over the next five years. I urge you to join us to fortify this lifesaving alliance and inaugurate a new era of global health cooperation, which I believe is now the most essential shared endeavour of our lifetimes," Johnson said in his address.

Australia-India virtual summit wraps up with 'Samosa-Khichdi' diplomacy; Morrison misses 'Modi hug'

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

After trying his hand on the crunchy samosas and delicious mango chutney, Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison on Thursday promised his Indian counterpart Narendra Modi that he will prepare Gujarati khichdi in his kitchen before their next meeting in person.

The two leaders shared some lighter moments during the first-ever India-Australia virtual summit amidst the COVID-19 pandemic.

"It doesn't surprise me, this is how (virtually) we'd continue to meet in these circumstances. You (PM Modi) are the one who started hugging in your campaigning many years ago, maybe next time we can have a hugging of you here," he said, recalling Modi's 'hugging' campaign ahead of the 2014 Lok Sabha elections.

The virtual summit was wrapped up with "Samosa-Khichdi" diplomacy.

"I thank you for the samosas... We had a lot of fun with it over the weekend," Morrison said, referring to him making the samosas and tweeting about it. Morrison said he wished he could be there for what has become the famous 'Modi hug' and share his samosas with his Indian counterpart.

"Next time, it will have to be the Gujarati khichdi. I will try that in the kitchen before next time we meet in person," he said.

Responding to Morrison, Prime Minister Modi said, "Your samosas have become a topic of discussion in India. As you spoke about khichdi, the Gujarati will be very happy to know this. There are so many Gujaratis settled in Australia. However, khichdi is a very common cuisine that is known by different names across the country."

LS Secretariat restricts entry of MPs' personal staff into Parliament

New Delhi: In view of the COVID-19 pandemic, the entry of the personal staff of MPs inside the Parliament House was restricted by the Lok Sabha Secretariat on Thursday.

The presence of over 800 personal assistants (PAs) of members of Parliament (MPs), when the House will be in session, will make the situation vulnerable, Lok Sabha Secretary General Snehlata Shrivastava said in an order.

"In compliance with the social-



distancing norms, it is decided to restrict the entry of PAs of MPs inside Parliament till further orders," the order said. Besides, the Lok Sabha Secretariat, which is the nodal

authority of the Parliament complex, also restricted the entry of retired officers, personal guests and visitors of officers below the joint-secretary level.

The measures were taken after more than four officers posted at Parliament tested positive for COVID-19 after Parliament resumed operations on May 3.

Two floors of the Parliament Annex building were sealed and re-opened after the entire complex was sanitised. PTI

CRPF jawans in J&K take pledge to boycott Chinese products

New Delhi: In what appeared to be a spontaneous show of emotion, few personnel of an Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) unit based in Jammu & Kashmir took pledge to boycott all China made products amid the recent standoff between the forces of both the countries in Ladakh.

The pledge was taken on Tuesday in Jammu and Kashmir's Sopore district.

In a viral video, the CRPF personnel in uniform could be heard taking a pledge to boycott 'Made in China' products like eatables, clothing and electronic gadgets.

A CRPF spokesperson at its

Delhi headquarters, M. Dhinakaran, called the act an "emotional activity" done at the local level, saying the matter was under consideration.

"It was not an official announcement. It was done at a local level on emotional grounds. We are looking into it," Dhinakaran told IANS. The 3.5 lakh strong paramilitary force is mandated to maintain law and order in Maoist-hit states, carry out anti-terror operations in Jammu and Kashmir and perform other internal security duties across the country. IANS



9K plus cases...

From Page 1
There were five deaths in Aurangabad, three deaths each in Raigad and Nashik, two deaths in Kolhapur, Washim and Parbhani, one death each in Vasai-Virar, Palghar, Panvel, Dhule, Jalna, Latur, Osmanabad, Nanded and Yavatmal.

There have been a total of 939 deaths in Maharashtra during the previous 10 days. On May 26 (Tuesday) the State had witnessed 97 deaths, while there were 105 deaths on May 27, 85 deaths on May 28, 116 deaths on May 29 and 99 deaths on May 30, 89 deaths on May 31, 76 on June 1, 103 on June 2, 122 on June 3 and 123 on June 4.

The Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir on Thursday recorded the biggest ever jump of 285 cases of coronavirus, taking the total tally of cases to 3,142 and active cases to 2,059. With one more death reported from Kashmir the death toll too has gone up to 35 while the total recoveries touched 1,048 on Thursday.

While 63 cases were reported from Jammu division, 222 cases were reported from Kashmir division on Thursday.

Haryana stood at 3,281 cases with a steep hike of 327 cases and one fresh death taking the casualties to 24. Uttarakhand recorded 60 new cases from the base of 1,085, more than five per cent jump in a single day, taking the total number of cases to 1,145 and death figure to 10.

The focus on Thursday was clearly on the North-East, which had largely remained untouched by the coronavirus till the beginning of May.

Mallya extradition could be delayed, he may seek political asylum: Agencies

New Delhi/London: With a pending legal issue remaining unresolved, Indian fugitive businessman and founder of the now defunct Kingfisher Airlines, Vijay Mallya, may escape his extradition to India for some more time. He remains out on bail in England.

Sources in London said Mallya was likely to use all his left to thwart the extradition process.

A top Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) officer said on condition of anonymity, "Mallya is going to exploit all legal remedies. First the official order has to come out and Indian Mission has to be informed."

The officer said the investigating agencies are aware of the possibility that Mallya, being a former Rajya Sabha Member, could seek political asylum in the UK. They said they had information to this effect.

Another CBI source said on Thursday that Mallya's extradition would take time as "formal extradition order in this regard has not been issued" by the United Kingdom. Further, there is a legal option for the fugitive liquor baron to exploit.

On May 14, the UK High Court rejected Mallya's plea seeking permission to file an appeal in the Supreme Court in London. IANS

Unclog NCR border: SC to Delhi, UP, Har

From Page 1
The Bench said a recommendation suggests that there should be one common pass for NCR which should be recognised in these states. It asked Solicitor General Tushar Mehta to take instructions on this issue and posted the matter for hearing after a week.

The counsel appearing for Haryana informed the bench that the state has lifted the

restrictions on movement at its borders. On May 15, the apex court had sought responses from the Centre and governments of Uttar Pradesh, Haryana and Delhi on the plea which has alleged that "complete sealing of borders" within the NCR and restrictions imposed on movement of citizens was in violation of the new guidelines of the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA).

Unlock 2.0: Healthy can...

From Page 1

Disposable menus are advised to be used. Instead of cloth napkins, use of good quality disposable paper napkins has to be encouraged.

Buffet service should also follow social distancing norms among patrons. "For air-conditioning/ventilation, the guidelines of CPWD shall be followed which inter alia emphasises that the temperature setting of all air conditioning devices should be in the range of 24-30°C, relative humidity should be in the range of 40-70 per cent, intake of fresh air should be as much as possible and cross ventilation should be adequate, the SoP said.

Tables will have to be sanitised each time customer leaves while gaming arcades/children play areas (wherever applicable) will remain closed.

As per the SOP on preventive measures to contain spread of Covid-19, shopping mall management should facilitate work from home wherever feasible, while proper crowd management in the parking lots and outside the premises - duly following social distancing norms shall be ensured.

As per the SOP ensuring preventive measures in hotels and other hospitality units efforts should be to minimise all possible physical contacts between staff and guests and maintain social distancing and other preventive and safety measures against Covid-19.

All employees who are at higher risk i.e. older employees, pregnant employees and employees who have underlying medical conditions, to take extra precautions. They should preferably not be exposed to any front-line work requiring direct contact with the public.

Details of the guest (travel history, medical condition etc.) along with ID and self declaration form must be provided by the guest at the reception while hotels must adopt contactless processes like QR code, online forms, digital payments like e-wallet etc. for both check-in and check-out.

Centre seeks investigation into elephant...

From Page 1

Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan also said his Government's investigation would also try to address the increased instances of human-wildlife conflict. "Climate change could be adversely affecting both the local communities and animals," he tweeted.

The tragic incident has angered people from all walks of life. Many took to social media to express their resentment over the act and demanded action against the culprits. People also came up with posters and sketches. Thiruvananthapuram MP Shashi Tharoor demanded action against the criminals saying Kerala must bring these criminals to book to preserve its reputation for protecting nature.

Actor Randeep Hooda also tweeted and demanded action against those who were involved in the dastardly incident.

2 Gujarat Cong MLAs quit as RS poll nears

From Page 1

The Congress had suffered a jolt in March when five of its MLAs resigned, bringing down its tally to 68. The latest developments have left the Congress dismayed as it has injected an element of uncertainty in its plans to win two of the four Rajya Sabha seats.

The BJP has 103 members in the House and is in a position to win two seats. The Congress, which had 68 members after the resignation of five MLAs in March, will find it tough for win the second seat after the fresh desertions. The BJP has fielded a third candidate — Narhari Amin, a former Congress leader.

J'khand villagers rally around injured jumbo

From Page 1

Singh said that the treatment was started about four days back. "But for the past two days the injured elephant is not eating medicine stuffed vegetables. This may be due to reason that around four other wild elephants have come to this place. We are trying to segregate injured animal from the rest so that it starts eating medicine stuffed vegetables. This

elephant can't walk and it is suffering from acute pain," said Singh.

Like unfortunate elephant of Kerala, this injured elephant was also seen standing in water. "Standing in water is the way of elephant to get relief from pain. Treating a wild elephant is itself a challenging job because there is a possibility of attack. However, this elephant is very calm," said Singh.

India, Oz to use each other's military bases, landmark...

From Page 1

Referring to the virtual summit, the PM termed it "a new model of India-Australia partnership, a new model of conducting business". It was the first time that Modi held a "bilateral" virtual summit with a foreign leader.

The PM described his talks with Morrison as "an outstanding discussion", covering the entire expanse of ties between the two strategic partners. Incidentally, Modi and Morrison have met four times in the last one and half years. "Our Government has

decided to view this crisis as an opportunity. In India, a process of comprehensive reforms has been initiated in almost all areas. It will soon see results at the ground level," Modi said.

The PM also thanked Morrison for taking care of the Indian community in Australia, especially the students during the "difficult time".

Morrison complemented Modi for his "constructive and very positive" role including at the G-20 role in pushing for a concerted global approach in dealing with the coronavirus crisis. He described India-Australian partnership as natural and comfortable one between two confident and sovereign nations who are trusted partners.

Modi said he believed that it is the "perfect time and perfect opportunity" to further strengthen the relationship between India and Australia. "We have immense possibilities to make our friendship stronger," he said, adding, "How our relations become a 'factor of stability' for our region and for the world, how we work together for global good, all these aspects need to be considered."

Meanwhile, a joint statement issued after the talks also said besides the defence pact, the other agreements included bilateral cooperation in areas of cyber and cyber-enabled critical technology, mining and minerals, military technology, vocational education and water resources management.

The two countries recog-

nised that terrorism remains a threat to peace and stability in the region and strongly condemned the menace in all its forms and manifestations, stressing that there can be no justification for acts of terror on any grounds whatsoever.

The joint statement said both sides support a comprehensive approach in combating terrorism, including by countering violent extremism, preventing radicalisation, disrupting financial support to terrorists and facilitating prosecution of those involved in acts of terror. The two sides also called for early adoption of a Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism (CCIT).

The statement also said both sides discussed the issue of taxation of offshore income of Indian firms through the

use of the India-Australia Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement (DTAA) and sought early resolution of the issue.

Modi tweeted after the talks "India-Australia ties have always been close. As vibrant democracies, from Commonwealth to cricket to even cuisine, our people-to-people relations are strong and the future is bright!(sic)."

During the discussion, Modi referred to Morrison's tweet on samosas. In response, he said that now ScoMosas has become a very popular word, Vijay Thakur Singh, Secretary (East), Ministry of External Affairs said later. She also said the Australian Prime Minister said next time he would like to make "Gujarati khichdi" and share it with Modi.

Mahatma Gandhi's statue outside Indian Embassy in US vandalised

From Page 1

Efforts are on to clean up the site at the earliest. US Ambassador to India Ken Juster on Thursday apologised for the desecration of Mahatma Gandhi's statue outside the Indian embassy in the US capital.

"So sorry to see the desecration of the Gandhi statue in Wash, DC. Please accept our sincere apologies. Appalled as well by the horrific death of George Floyd & the awful violence & vandalism. We stand against prejudice & discrimination of any type. We will recover & be better," Juster

tweeted. Several protests in the US against police brutality against African-Americans have turned violent. In some cases, the violent protests have damaged some of the most prestigious and sacred American monuments.

In Washington DC, protesters this week burnt a historic church and damaged some of the prime properties and historic places like the national monument and Lincoln Memorial.

One of the few statues of a foreign leader on a federal land in Washington DC, the statue of Mahatma Gandhi

was dedicated by the then Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, in the presence of the then US president Bill Clinton on September 16, 2000 during his state visit to the US.

In October 1998, the US Congress had authorised the government of India to establish and maintain a memorial "to honour Mahatma Gandhi on Federal land in the District of Columbia."

According to the Indian Embassy website, the sculpture of Mahatma Gandhi is cast in bronze as a statue to a height of 8 feet 8 inches.

It shows Gandhi in stride, as a leader and man of action evoking memories of his 1930 protest march against salt-tax, and the many padyatras (long marches) he undertook

throughout the length and breadth of the Indian sub-continent. The statue, the design of which was created by Gautam Pal, is a gift from the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR). The pedestal for the statue of Mahatma Gandhi is a block of new Imperial Red also known as Ruby Red a block originally weighing 25 tonnes reduced to a size of 9'x7'x3'4". It now weighs 16 tonnes.

JWAWJI UNIVERSITY, GWALIOR
(NAAC Accredited "A" Grade)
REVISED ADMISSION NOTIFICATION 2020-21
Jiwaji University, established in 1964, as M.P. State Govt. University has invited online applications for admission to the various academic programs being offered by the University at its Campus for the academic year 2020-21. Due to lockdown announced by M.P. government and Covid-19 situation University has extended the dates of admission process. For revised dates and other details please visit Jiwaji University website (<http://www.jiwaji.edu>).

GOVERNMENT OF GOA
DIRECTORATE OF HEALTH SERVICES,
CAMPAL-PANAJI - GOA.
No:- 3/DHS/PD/Pest Control /20-21/409 Date:- 04/06/2020
TENDER NOTICE
(E-TENDERING MODE ONLY)
The office of Directorate of Health Services, Government of Goa, Campal, Panaji- Goa, on behalf of the Governor of Goa, invites tender on online mode only for carrying out Pest Control for all PHCs, CHCs and Hospitals under Directorate of Health Services, Campal, Panaji-Goa, from specialized agencies/contractors having minimum 3 years experience in the field. The schedule dates for the tender may be downloaded from our website <http://www.goaenvidha.gov.in>.
The eligibility documents, Earnest Money Deposit, Cost of tender and tender processing fee alongwith the tenders may be submitted online from the date of uploading till 17/06/2020 by 01:00pm & hard copy may be submitted on 17/06/2020 upto 5:00pm in the office of the Purchase and Disposal Section, Directorate of Health Services, Campal, Panaji-Goa.
The details of Tender can be downloaded from our website <http://www.goaenvidha.gov.in>.
Sd/-
(Dr. Jose O.A. D'Sa)
Director of Health Services

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(NAAC Accredited "A" Grade)
REVISED ADMISSION NOTIFICATION 2020-21
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Sd/-
(Dr. Jose O.A. D'Sa)
Director of Health Services

Metro Railway, Kolkata
Kolkata's Pride
CANCELLATION OF E-TENDER
Abridged E-Tender Notice No. Civil-2325-2020 (Open)
The above e-tender notice which will be scheduled to be closed on 22.06.2020 at 12.00 hrs. is hereby cancelled on administrative ground.
Principal Chief Engineer/Metro Railway/Kolkata
FASTER • SAFER • SMOOTHER • CLEANER

SISODIA'S ORDER

Keep 20% beds for Covid care, pvt hospitals told

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia on Thursday directed all private hospitals to reserve 20 per cent beds for patients undergoing Covid 19 treatment.

"There are a few private hospitals that are facing difficulties in reserving 20 per cent of their bed capacity for Covid 19 patients. If they do not agree to the Delhi Government directions to keep aside 20 per cent of their bed capacity for treatment of Covid 19 patients, then we will have to convert them into fully dedicated Covid 19 hospitals.

While hospitals in Delhi have been given a deadline till Friday, Sisodia asserted that if hospitals are not able to treat both Covid and other illness, the hospital will be transformed into Covid care," Sisodia said citing examples of Moolchand, Gangaram and Saroj hospitals.

Pertinently, the state health department on Wednesday constituted a five member committee. The committee submitted its report about Covid health infra on Thursday to the department.

Interacting digitally, Sisodia



and Health Minister Satyendar Jain said, "We do not have to get into the data or any competition with other states, our focus is to save the lives of the people."

Sisodia said Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal also believes that our attention should be more on helping people recover by providing them with apt medical facilities.

"Covid 19 cases are on the rise, and that is why we are also increasing the number COVID dedicated hospitals. 5 Govt. and 3 Private hospitals are fully Covid 19 dedicated hospitals," "Delhi government has also directed 61 private hospitals to reserve 20 percent of their bed capacity for patients coming for Covid 19 treatment,"

The intent behind doing this is to facilitate patients to continue getting treated in these hospitals after they are also tested positive for Covid 19. "Our aim is to make sure that Covid

19 patients in Delhi do not get to suffer owing to the lack of available beds in hospitals. Hence we are constantly reminding all private hospitals to reserve 20% beds," he said. "Asymptomatic patients do not have to be scared and rush to the hospital. Home isolation is a very good option for patients with no or very mild symptoms."

Explaining about Delhi's Covid care hospitals, Jain said, "There are three types of Covid 19 patients. There are asymptomatic patients with no or very mild symptoms - with slight fever and mild cough. They can be treated and recover in home quarantine. The second category of patients have moderate symptoms with a respiratory rate of more than 15 within a minute. And then there are ones with severe symptoms. Their respiratory rate is more than 30 in a minute. Cases when oxygen level goes from 90 to 94 per cent and breathing is more than 15 in a minute (moderate category), and when oxygen level goes below 90 per cent and the patient's breathing rate is more than 30 in a minute (severe category), then they should be hospitalised."

Jain: Six private hospitals made Covid-dedicated



STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Health Minister Satyendar Jain on Thursday announced that six private hospitals have been made fully Covid-dedicated in the national Capital with three new hospital added on Wednesday.

Addressing the media, Jain said that in order to ensure sufficient beds, a number of steps are taken including five of Delhi Government hospitals have been made fully Covid-dedicated.

Jain further said that some private hospitals were finding it difficult to have mixed beds -- Covid and non-Covid -- and so they will be made fully Covid-dedicated in the coming times.

The government had earlier issued a direction to private hospitals to reserve 20 per cent beds for Covid patients.

"We had three private Covid-dedicated hospitals till yesterday and three new ones were made fully dedicated from Wednesday," "Those having no or mild symptoms should not run to hospital and can stay at home and be cured," he added.

G'gram sees record 215 cases in a day

PARVESH SHARMA ■ GURUGRAM

Millennium city witnessed a spike in coronavirus cases on Thursday. According to the district health department, the city registered a record single-day spike of over 215 cases on Thursday.

With this, the total number of positive cases has reached 1,410 in Gurugram including 1,114 active cases and 288 discharged from hospitals. The city has also reported four deaths.

In view of the rising cases, the district administration has suggested home isolation.

"It has been observed that 80% corona-infected patients may recover from it if they fol-

low necessary guidelines of the health department," said the administration official.

The spike in numbers kept rising in the city with more than 800 cases registered in the last week. Some of the places like Sarhaul, Dundehera, Rajendra Park, Khandsa, Hari Nagar, Om Nagar, Shivaji Nagar, Sector-9A, Rajiv Nagar, Sector-10, DLF and Basai are turning out to be hot spots in the district.

"During home isolation, one should have separate wash-room facilities. The patient's activities should be monitored round-the-clock. The district administration has already constituted a separate medical team which will call every patient daily and register

progress reports. If needed, the team will also visit them for medical assistance," he said.

As per the data of the health department, 68 infected persons were detected on May 28, 115 on May 29, 157 on May 30, 97 on May 31, 129 on June 1, 160 on June 2, 132 on June 3 and 215 on June 4.

Apart from this, the virus has increased in the urban of the district, barring districts bordering Delhi, the infection now seems to be spreading in the rural belt.

The villages like Kasan, Manesar, Dundaheera, Mullaheera, Pataudi, Farrukhnagar, Garhi, Harsaru and Sarhaul are now reporting more corona cases.

Health experts claim that

this is mainly because of workers, vegetable dealers and vegetable vendors especially those who escaped medical screening or were asymptomatic.

Dr J.S. Punia, Civil Surgeon of Gurugram, said, "With this large-scale influx of migrants from urban cities to villages, the rural areas cannot be ignored and need special attention as far as monitoring is concerned. Infected people are being home quarantined or admitted to hospitals with the help of the community management."

The district authorities have roped in block development officers, besides village heads and Civil defence volunteers, to take due care to avoid the spread.

Three chargesheets filed in N-E Delhi riots

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Police on Thursday filed three chargesheets in a local Delhi court in connection with the North-east Delhi riots that took place in February this year.

In first charge sheet police said that Dilbar Negi, who worked at a sweet shop in Northeast Delhi's Shiv Vihar area, was burnt alive inside the shop when a Muslim mob targeted properties of Hindus during the communal violence in northeast Delhi. Police had named 12 persons as accused in the murder case of Dilbar Negi.

The Crime Branch of Delhi Police filed the chargesheet before Metropolitan Magistrate Richa Parihar who has put up the matter for further hearing on June 18.

All the accused, who have been charged for offences of murder, rioting, promoting enmity between groups on the ground of religion and criminal conspiracy, are in judicial custody.

According to the charge



north-east district starting from Kardampur Maujpur, Chand Bagh and Shiv Vihar Tiraha near DRP School and Rajdhani Public School. At about 3.00 pm a mob of Muslim community came from Brijpuri Pulia side and started rioting.

"The rioting mob targeted the properties of Hindus, that is, M/S Anil Sweets, Anil Dairy, pastry shop, book shop, DRP School and godown of M/S Anil Sweets etc by torching them till late night and the mob of the same rioters community remained dominant till late night," the charge sheet said.

The charge sheet has been filed under various sections including 147 and 148 (rioting and punishment for rioting), 149, 153A (promoting enmity between different groups on grounds of religion, race etc), 302 (murder), 201 (causing disappearance of evidence of offence) and 34 (common intention) of the Indian Penal Code.

Meanwhile, the police on Thursday filed two charge sheets. In on charge sheet in the murder case of Hashim Ali police named nine persons as

accused, the other filed in the murder case of Amir Ali police named 11 persons as accused.

The chargesheets were filed under sections 147 and 148 (rioting), 149 (unlawful assembly), 302 (murder), 201 (causing disappearance of evidence) of the Indian Penal Code. The offences entail a maximum punishment of death sentence.

On February 27, four dead bodies were recovered from north east Delhi's Johripur area of which two were of the Ali brothers, police said.

The brothers were allegedly beaten to death by a mob when they were returning to their house in the area on February 26 in the night, the charge sheet said.

During investigation, it was found that a WhatsApp group was created in the intervening night of February 25-26 during the peak rioting and two of its members have been arrested, the charge sheet said.

The group had 125 members and while some of its members were only sending and receiving chats, few others were involved in "active rioting", police said.

Hospitals not taking virus patients despite beds: Congress

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Congress has alleged that hospitals, earmarked exclusively for Covid-19 patients by the Delhi Government, have refused to admit patients infected with coronavirus.

"The 'Delhi Corona' App has turned out to be a non-starter as despite the availability of beds in hospitals, they are not admitting corona cases," Delhi Congress president Anil Kumar said.

Kumar further said that Kejriwal had claimed that the status of beds in these hospitals will be updated twice a day through the newly-launched App, but this is also not happening.

Cop accused of raping 33-yr-old woman on run

SHEKHAR SINGH ■ NEW DELHI

After one and a half month of registering a First Information Report (FIR) against a Delhi Police constable for alleged rape, the victim is still seeking justice. The accused constable is still on the run.

The 32-year-old woman has also alleged that she is also getting harassed by the brother of the accused, who is also in Delhi police.

Meanwhile, a senior police official said that teams have been formed and a manhunt has been initiated to nab the culprit. "Police are also enquiring into the complaint given against the brother of the accused," he said.

According to FIR registered at South Delhi's CR Park police station on April 17, the woman, a resident of Greater Kailash

area, stated that the accused constable and the woman were friend for last six months.

"On April 13, the accused police constable, Virender Singh, posted in GK range area, came to victim's house. He threatened her to show some secrets pics to her husband, who lives in Australia," stated the FIR.

"The accused then took her to a local hotel in South Delhi's Mahipalura area where he sexually and physically assaulted the woman," stated the FIR.

The woman in her complaint also alleged that she, as per demand of the accused, had also given four to five lakhs to him.

Meanwhile, the medical report of the victim confirmed physical and sexual assault on the victim. "There are

bite mark's on face and left arm. History of multiple sexual assault," doctor opined.

Meanwhile, days after the FIR was registered, the woman on May 20 approached Assistant Commissioner of Police (ACP), CR park police station with a complaint in which she alleged that the brother of the accused, is threatening her of dire consequences.

"The brother of the accused had threatened to kill my children. The accused and his brother even call on landline number and threatened me to change my statement or they will send pics to my husband," said the woman in her complaint to ACP.

When asked about it, a senior police official said that the complainant is being looked into and efforts are being made to bring the accused to justice.

Capital's diesel sales drop 79% in May, rise in VAT rate blamed

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Automobile fuel dealers in the national Capital have reported a 79 per cent dip in monthly diesel sales during May 2020, compared to May 2019. Despite the lockdown being eased, the drop is attributed to a hike in Value Added Tax (VAT) on both diesel and petrol by the Delhi State Government.

According to the Delhi Petrol Dealers Association (DPDA) The decision to increase VAT, although taken with a good intention to increase revenue is proving to be counterproductive as Delhi is losing both sales and revenue.

Anil Bijlani, President DPDA said "we

acknowledge the effort of the Delhi Govt. for the measures taken by the Delhi govt. in the fight against the pandemic situation arisen due to corona virus. The government has also taken various measures to implement the unlock to tackle the economic impact caused by the lockdown".

VAT on Petrol & Diesel was increased to the highest slab of 30% on 5th of May. The sales drop in the month of April was around (-)84% in Diesel compared to historical sales. Even with partial unlocking of the state in May, the sales drop in Diesel is still at (-) 79%. Whereas the neighboring states of Haryana & Uttarpradesh have recovered most of their Diesel sales.

Online, manual property tax filing options available

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

SDMC announced to provide both online and manual facility for filing of property tax returns and making payment of property tax through cheque.

The civic body has also added a new feature on its website keeping in view of the future necessities.

In due course of time residents will enable not only to make payment of its property tax but to obtain the general or health trade licences through the identity of property tax login and make license fees and other payments to the department in a single click through UPIC ID, a senior SDMC official said.

Rlys takes 28 projects for 1,273 new tracks

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Adding impetus to the infrastructure development, Indian Railways has commissioned 28 projects to extend tracks to 1,273 km length during financial year 2019 to 20.

"The allocation for capital expenditure of ₹1,61,351 in the revised budget of the year 2019-2020 was 20.1 per cent higher over 2018-2019. Utilization till end of March 2020 was ₹1,46,507 Cr, which is 90.8 per cent of the total allocation," it said.

With a proposed investment of ₹50 lakh crores until 2030, budget 2019 laid the road map for Railways to become the growth engine of the country, it said.

The Ministry has also completed electrification works on a total of 5,782 route km during the year. "Many projects completed in last financial year including a 58.5 Km long new line project from Thaiyat Hamira-Sanu in Rajasthan, 10.7 Km long bypass line from Chhapra Gramin to Khairali in

Bihar, 67.07 Km long new line project from Rajgir-Hisua-Tilaiya including Islampur-Nateshar in Bihar and 47.72 Km long Super Critical Doubling Project from Hajipur-Ramdayalu Nagar," it said.

Besides, the railways has also completed projects such as 320.04 Km long gauge conversion project from Jaipur-Ringus-Sikar-Churu and Sikar-Loharu in Haryana and Rajasthan, seven Km long pending super critical doubling project in Delhi (which is very important to decongest New Delhi Station) between New Delhi to Tilak Bridge.

It further said in a statement that new line, doubling and gauge conversion commissioning increased to 2,226 km in 2019-20, which is nearly 50 per cent more with reference to average annual commissioning achieved during 2009-14 (1,520 km/year). During 2019-20, the expenditure incurred by Railway on New line, Gauge conversion and Doubling Projects has been ₹39,836 crore, which is the highest ever expenditure in the history of Indian Railways, it added.

Expenditure by Railway for doubling projects alone in 2019-20 is at ₹22,689 crore, which is over 9 times the average annual expenditure during

2009-14 (₹2,462 crore). Doubling commissioned in 2019-20 has been 1458 Km, which is nearly 4 times of average annual commissioning achieved during 2009-14 (375 Km/year).

Cash reward for constable who ran along moving train to deliver milk for infant

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Minister of Railways and Commerce and Industry Piyush Goyal praised the commendable deed of a constable (Rapid Protection Force) Inder Singh Yadav and announced a cash award to honour him.

Yadav demonstrated an exemplary sense of duty when he ran behind a train to deliver milk for a four months old child.

"Sharif Hashmi was travelling with her husband Shri Hasen Hashmi along with her four months old child in the

Shramik Special train from Belgaum to Gorakhpur. Her baby was crying for milk, as she did not get to feed milk for her child at any previous station and asked help from the constable Shri Yadav at Bhopal Station," the railways said in a statement.

Yadav immediately raced and brought a packet of milk from a shop outside Bhopal Station but the train started moving, it further said, adding that the constable showed his humanity and courage by running behind a moving train and provided the packet of milk to the lady in the coach.



दिल्ली सरकार
आप की सरकार

CHIEF MINISTER'S MESSAGE ON WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY

Today the people of Delhi celebrate World Environment Day in extraordinary circumstances. The events of the last few months remind us that the environment around us is delicately balanced. It takes very little for this balance to be destroyed. But this is also a time of opportunity. Over the last few months the people of Delhi have come forth hand in hand to fight COVID-19 and save thousands of lives. The work has been hard, the sacrifices have been many. But we will prevail.

The fight to protect the Earth's environment will be much harder. And it will not be something that the people of Delhi or India can win alone. But if we come together again, with a common purpose, we can once again achieve tremendous things. I wish all the people of Delhi a very happy World Environment Day. Together let us build a city filled with clean air, pure water and happy, healthy people.

- Arvind Kejriwal
Chief Minister, Delhi



Department of Environment, Forests and Wildlife
Government of NCT of Delhi

COVID-19 OUTBREAK

10 yrs entry ban, 2,550 Tablighis to be deported



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

For the first time, the Union Home Ministry has blacklisted as many as 2,550 Tablighi Jamaat members from nearly 40 countries in the past two months for visa rules' violations. These blacklisted persons will be deported soon after the court procedures and would not be allowed to enter India for more than 10 years.

According to Union Home Ministry officials, the blacklisted Tablighis are basically from Bangladesh, Myanmar, Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand among others. The blacklisted Tablighis are also from the US, the UK, France, Australia, Russia, China, Sri Lanka, Kyrgyzstan, Vietnam, Saudi Arabia, Algeria, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ivory Coast, Djibouti, Egypt, Ethiopia, Fiji, Gambia, Iran, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Madagascar, Mali, the Philippines, Qatar, Senegal, Sierra Leone, South Africa,

Sudan, Sweden, Tanzania, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia and Ukraine.

This is perhaps for the first time that the Government has blacklisted a large number of people in one stroke and banned their entry into India for such a long duration under the Foreigners Act.

The action has been taken by the Home Ministry after various State Governments provided details of the foreigners who were found to be illegally living in mosques and religious seminars across the country. Almost all of these foreign Tablighi Jamaat activists had come to India on tourist visas but were engaged in missionary works, thus violating the visa conditions, the officials said.

Action against the foreign Tablighi Jamaat members was first taken after over 2,300 people, including 250 foreigners, belonging to the Islamic organisation, were found to be living at its headquarters located at Delhi's Nizamuddin soon

SOP for school buses: Only 50% seats to be filled

DEEPAK KUMAR JHA ■ NEW DELHI

With the possibility of reopening of schools post-lockdown, the HRD Ministry is preparing a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for the school transport system wherein 50-55-seater school buses will accommodate a maximum of only 25 students at a time.

While it anticipates that a majority of the guardians will give up transportation provided by the schools and that parents will make alternate arrangements to drop and pick their kids from school, nevertheless, those opting for private vans can have only one child accommodated on one row of seat. In case of autorickshaws too, only one child will be allowed in it.

A senior HRD Ministry official said social distancing needs to be maintained not only during classes but also during transport facilities like school bus service.

The guidelines are likely to mandate that even on a three-seater row in a bus, only one child will be seated. A big bus with seating capacity of about 50 will carry only 25 students and the bus operators and the school administration have to ensure that the buses are sanitised after every trip and they have a medical kit with hand sanitiser in place.

"They will have to ensure and check that only masked children are allowed to board and alight. While public



schools can mandate face shields though there will be no strict directions from the government, mask will be compulsory for all schools," said an official of the Department of School Education at HRD Ministry.

The SOP will also have the schools use different gates in a staggered manner for transport operations. The same guidelines will be for those using private transport facility like vans, mini buses and three wheelers.

"After all, the stakeholders of education including the parents and guardians have to be cautious round the clock in maintaining the SOP and education simultaneously during the crisis and no leniency will be accepted," added the official.

Earlier, the HRD Ministry had announced modified seating arrangements, change in timings and further division of the class into different sections as the measures to be followed in schools when they re-open by July end.

As part of the Centre's unlock plan, schools and academic institutions have been put in the last league and will be opened phase wise in consultation with the Centre and State administration.

Stimulus package 'too little' to revive economy: Rajiv Bajaj

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Industrialist Rajiv Bajaj on Thursday came out with a strong criticism of the Centre's "hard" but "porous" lockdown, which he said, flattened the "wrong curve" and termed the stimulus package "too little" to revive the economy.

In a candid online conversation with Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, Bajaj said, "We tried to implement a hard lockdown which was still porous. So, I think we have ended up with the worst of both worlds. On one hand, a porous lockdown makes sure that the virus will still exist and as you said, it is still waiting to hit you when you will unlock. So, you have not solved that problem," said Bajaj.

Bajaj commented that a hard lockdown implies an airtight, impervious lockdown. "And to the best of my knowledge, this has not happened anywhere in the world. To physically constrain yourself to your home and see absolutely no one," he noted.

Coming hard on the Centre's stimulus package, Bajaj said: "Only a tenth of the 20 trillion worth of stimulus the Centre announced last month, to help people and businesses to tide over the covid-19 crisis, makes for direct support which is way less than what other countries have offered."

"In many places in the world, two thirds of what the Government has handed out had gone to organisations and people as direct benefits. Whereas in India, it has only been 10 percent," he added.

He cited examples of direct cash benefits given to

big and small businesses as well as citizens from Governments in other countries to stay afloat during the crisis.

He said the Centre's lockdown to slow the spread of coronavirus ended up "flattening the wrong curve" and left the country with the worst of both worlds.

When Rahul praised Rajiv Bajaj for his bravery for speaking to him, Bajaj said, "I'm speaking with Rahul and the first reaction was from a friend, don't do it. I said, but why not? "Mat karna, this can get you into trouble". But I said, I may have said some things, perhaps a little too vehemently."

He also shared how his father (Rahul Bajaj) raised a similar point last year in the presence of the Home Minister.

Bajaj said he strongly believes that to revive demand, the government must do something to boost sentiment.

"We need some mood elevator. And I do not understand why there is no strong initiative, even if it is for a period of 6 months-1 year to strongly lift the mood of the people and provide a stimulus to demand," said the managing director of Bajaj Auto.

This was fourth in the series of online conversations that Rahul Gandhi has been holding with experts to discuss the fallout of the pandemic and the ensuing lockdown.

Earlier, Rahul did similar sessions with former RBI Governor Raghuram Rajan, Nobel Prize winning economist Professor Abhijit Banerjee, and Prof Ashish Jha from Harvard University.

SC rejects CBI's review plea against bail granted to PC

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court has dismissed the plea filed by the CBI seeking review of its verdict granting bail to former finance minister P Chidambaram in the INX Media corruption case.

The apex court had on October 22 last year granted bail to Chidambaram in the case saying he was neither a "flight risk" nor was there a possibility of "his abscondence from the trial".

A bench headed by Justice R Banumathi rejected the review plea filed by the CBI saying the last year verdict does not suffer from any error apparent warranting its reconsideration.

"Application for oral hearing the review petition in open court is rejected. We have perused the review petition and the connected papers carefully and are convinced that the order, of which review has been sought, does not suffer from any error apparent warranting its reconsideration," the bench, also comprising Justices A S Bopanna and Hrishikesh Roy, said.

SC extends order of no coercive action against employers for non-payment of full wages

IMD forecasts orderly progress of nascent monsoon in country

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) on Thursday announced the outlook for a fresh low-pressure area forming over the eastern parts of West-Central Bay of Bengal (off the Myanmar coast) in the next four days (June 8), which promises to sustain the orderly progress of a nascent monsoon over the country. According to IMD, southwest Monsoon has further advanced into some parts of Central Arabian Sea, entire Kerala and Mahe, some parts of Karnataka, some more parts of Comorin Area and Southwest Bay of Bengal, most parts of Southeast Bay of Bengal and some parts of East central Bay of Bengal.

IMD said that fresh low pressure area forming due to cyclone Nisarga from the Arabian Sea that crossed the West Coast near Alibaug in Maharashtra on Wednesday was meandering its way across Central India towards the

foothills of the Himalayas, accompanied by moderate to heavy rain and high winds.

"In the next few hours, it will further weaken into low pressure area over Madhya Pradesh. It is expected to cause some rainfall activity over east Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and adjoining areas during next 24 hours," Mrityunjay Mohapatra, Director General, IMD.

The IMD said a depression lay over the contiguous Vidarbha and Madhya Pradesh about 60 km North-West of Akola and 220 km west-northwest of Nagpur (both in Maharashtra) and 230 km South-South-East of Bhopal (Madhya Pradesh). As a result of the cyclone, parts of Madhya Pradesh has been receiving rainfall since Wednesday.

According to the forecast for western parts of the state, heavy to very heavy rainfall and thunderstorm accompanied by lightning is most likely to occur at isolated places in next 24 hours.

Poll for 24 seats in MP may be put off in times of Covid

DEEPAK K UPRETI ■ NEW DELHI

The elections to 24 Assembly seats in Madhya Pradesh, results of which would be crucial for the stability of the State BJP Government, are unlikely to be held any time soon and dates may get pushed ahead "indefinitely" on account of the Coronavirus pandemic and related Central Government guidelines against public gathering or meetings.

BJP leaders are expecting that the bypoll results in Madhya Pradesh would yield a result "similar to Karnataka" where the party had "successfully toppled" the HD Kumaraswamy government as Congress MLAs crossed over to the BJP after quitting their seats and later won their bypolls on BJP tickets.

BJP leaders point out that the party has a stronghold in the Gwalior-Chambal region where it won "even the seat of Jyotiraditya Scindia" who is now with the BJP. A majority of bypoll seats are to be contested in the Gwalior-Chambal division in the North Madhya Pradesh.

The Pandemic, which does not seem to be reversing its trend, however, has put a ques-

tion mark on the dates for the by polls to MP assembly seats and also seemingly cast a shadow of uncertainty over a firm schedule for Bihar Assembly elections, due later this year, said a senior BJP leader.

The Rajya Sabha polls, to be held on June 19, were rescheduled due to the outbreak of coronavirus but since MLAs exercise their franchise in the RS poll, the Lockdown norms could be easily observed, said the key BJP functionary who affirmed that assembly poll and voting cannot be held under the current laid down norms of Ministry of Home Affairs.

"RS poll is not a public election but assembly elections would involve active participation of large public for voting. The election commission will have to take a call on this, situation is unprecedented," said the BJP leader.

The bypoll to Madhya Pradesh assembly is mandatorily to be held before September as resignations by 22 Congress MLAs who crossed over to the BJP at the behest of erstwhile Congress General Secretary Jyotiraditya Scindia in March, this year.

The high stake bypolls in

the Gwalior-Chambal region could swing the balance of power in the state assembly where BJP now commands majority in the 230-member assembly after 22-Congressmen quit the erstwhile Kamalnath government, leading to the installation of the Shivraj Singh Chauhan Government.

Since a majority of seats would be contested from Gwalior-Chambal region, the role of former Congress General Secretary Jyotiraditya Scindia who joined BJP in March and played central role in the fall of Congress Government, would be tasked the BJP to play the key role to win most of the 24 seats for the party.

Scindia who has been nominated to Rajya Sabha by the BJP would be required to prove his political mettle in the region which is considered his family bastion.

The BJP, which currently commands 107 seats in the reduced House strength of 204, will need to win at least 10 more seats to cross the magic figure of 116 in the 230-member Assembly and stabilise the government comfortably in the State.

SC seeks Finance Ministry's reply on waiver of interest on loans during moratorium period

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court Thursday sought finance ministry's reply on waiver of interest on loans during the moratorium period after the RBI said it would not be prudent to go for a "forced waiver of interest" risking financial viability of the banks.

The top court said there are two aspects under consideration in this matter — no interest payment on loans during the moratorium period and no interest to be charged on interest.

A bench of Justices Ashok Bhushan, Sanjay Kishan Kaul and M R Shah said that these are challenging times and it is a serious issue as on one hand moratorium is granted and on other hand interest is charged on loans.

The bench was hearing a

plea, filed by Gajendra Sharma, in which he has sought a direction to declare the portion of RBI's March 27 notification "as ultra vires to the extent it charges interest on the loan amount during the moratorium period, which create hardship to the petitioner being borrower and creates hindrance and obstruction in "right to life" guaranteed by Article 21 of the Constitution of India."

Sharma, a resident of Agra, has also sought a direction to the Government and the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to provide relief in re-payment of loan by not charging interest during the moratorium period.

Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the Centre, said that he would like to file the reply of finance ministry on the issue and sought time.

NORTH EASTERN RAILWAY Auction Notice No. 01/2020-21

E-Auction Program for the Month of June -2020

All prospective bidders are invited to participate in the on-line public auctions being conducted for sale of scrap material.

E-Auction Dates	Jurisdiction of lots	Contact No.
16 & 26 June 2020	Dy. CMM/GSD/Gorakhpur	0551-2283558
17 & 25 June 2020	Dy. CMM/GSD/Izzatnagar	0581-2547173
18 & 30 June 2020	Sr. DMM/Lucknow	0522-2233113
17 & 25 June 2020	Sr. DMM/Varanasi	0542-2224819
16 & 26 June 2020	Sr. DMM/Izzatnagar	0581-2547327

Type of material: Scrap Rail, Cast Iron, Melting, MS, condemned Rolling Stock (Coaches, Wagons and Locomotives), Turning & Boring, Non-Ferrous such as copper, Aluminium, Batteries etc. In the event of Auction not being completed on the same day, Auction June be continued on the subsequent days also. Details of Auction catalogue, Procedure and Conditions of Sale are available at www.reps.gov.in. This auction program is also available on North Eastern Railway website www.ner.indianrailways.gov.in.

Principal Chief Materials Manager
CPMO-S-05
About any passenger amenity complain SMS on Mobile No. 0979484955
"Never travel on roof and foot boards"

Covid-19 has adversely affected children's overall health: Survey

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Changes in eating habits and an overall decrease in physical activity due to the closing of schools, playground and summer camps in the wake of the Coronavirus lockdown have negatively impacted overall health of the children with obesity, researchers have said.

"The tragic Covid-19 pandemic has collateral effects extending beyond direct viral infection," said study co-author Myles Faith from the University at Buffalo in the US.

"Children and teens struggling with obesity are placed in an unfortunate position of isolation that appears to create an unfavourable environment for maintaining healthy lifestyle behaviours," Faith added. In a study published in the journal Obesity, they have suggested need for establishing and evaluating telemedicine programs that encourage families to maintain healthy lifestyle choices during periods of lockdown.

Children and adolescents typically gain more weight during summer vacation than during the school year, which led the researchers to wonder if being homebound would have a similar effect on the kids' lifestyle behaviours.

For the findings, the researchers surveyed 41 children and teens with obesity under confinement throughout March and April in Verona, Italy.

Lifestyle information regarding diet, activity and sleep was collected three weeks into Italy's mandatory national lockdown and compared to data on the children gathered in 2019.

Questions focused on physical activity, screen time, sleep, eating habits, and the consumption of red meat, pasta, snacks, fruits and vegetables. The results confirmed the negative change in behaviour, indicating that children

with obesity fare worse on weight control lifestyle programs while at home compared to when they are engaged in their school curriculum.

Compared to behaviours recorded a year prior, the children ate an additional meal per day; slept an extra half hour per day; added nearly five hours per day in front of the phone, computer and television screens; and dramatically increased their consumption of red meat, sugary drinks and junk foods.

Physical activity, on the other hand, decreased by more than two hours per week, and the number of vegetables consumed remained unchanged, the study said. "Recognising the adverse collateral effects of the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown is critical in avoiding the depreciation of hardfought weight control efforts among youths afflicted with excess weight," Faith said.

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APPEAL FOR IDENTIFICATION

General public is hereby informed that an unidentified dead body of male **Namely: Unknown, S/O: Unknown, R/o: Unknown, Age: 25 years, Height: 5', Complexion: Shallow, Face: Long, ID: A tattoo mark (R.K.) on right hand, Wearing: Green colour Sanda baniyan and blue colour underwear, who was found dead in Delhi.** In this regard a case DD No. 37-A dated 21.05.2020 has been registered at P.S. Narela Industrial Area, Delhi.

Any person having any information or clue about the deceased may kindly inform to the undersigned on the following address or telephone nos.

Sd/- SHO
P.S. Narela Industrial Area, Delhi
DP/253/ON/2020
Tel.: 011-27280435

ADITYA BIRLA CAPITAL

PROTECTING INVESTING FINANCING ADVISING

Aditya Birla Finance Limited

Registered Office: Indian Rayon Compound, Veraval, Gujarat - 362 266
 CIN: U65990GJ1991PLC064603

NOTICE OF DEMAND U/S 13 (2) OF THE SECURITISATION AND RECONSTRUCTION OF FINANCIAL ASSETS AND ENFORCEMENT OF SECURITY INTEREST ACT, 2002 READ WITH SECURITY INTEREST (ENFORCEMENT) RULES, 2002 AS AMENDED.

- Mothers Pride Education Personna Pvt. Ltd. Having Address at :- 11/77, West Punjabi Bagh, New Delhi- 110026.
- M/s. Marvel Infra Projects Pvt. Ltd. Having Address at:- A-119, Ground Floor, Meera Bagh, Paschim Vihar, West Delhi, Delhi- 110063.
- Mrs. Raj Rani Gupta R/O A-172, Outer Ring Road, Meera Bagh, Paschim Vihar, West Delhi, Delhi- 110063 And Also at:- A-119, Ground Floor, Meera Bagh, Paschim Vihar, West Delhi, Delhi- 110063
- Mr. Mahesh Kumar Bansal S/O Late Babu Ram Bansal R/O C-1/25, Near Sardar Colony, Sector-16, Rohini, North West, Delhi-110089
- Mrs. Sudha Gupta R/O A-172, Outer Ring Road, Meera Bagh, Paschim Vihar, West Delhi, Delhi - 110063 And Also at:- A-119, Ground Floor, Meera Bagh, Paschim Vihar, West Delhi, Delhi - 110063
- Mr. Prateek Gupta S/O Devendra Gupta R/O A-172, Outer Ring Road, Meera Bagh, Paschim Vihar, West Delhi, Delhi-110063
- Mrs. Paras Gupta R/O A-172, Outer Ring Road, Meera Bagh, Paschim Vihar, West Delhi, Delhi- 110063
- Ms. Rubal R/O 54 A Janta Flats, LAL QTRS., Punjabi Bagh West, New Delhi-110026

REFERENCE : LOAN ACCOUNT NO. LAP0000027557

Whereas Aditya Birla Finance Limited, a Company incorporated under the Companies Act, 1956, having its registered office at Indian Rayon Compound, Veraval, Gujarat 362 266 and having one of its offices at 2nd Floor, UCO Bank Building, 5, Parliament Street, New Delhi-110001, (hereinafter referred to as "ABFL") had extended credit facility to you, the Addressee. The said credit facility is secured inter alia by way of mortgage has been created on the built-up property - Residential Property being Plot No. A-119, Entire Ground Floor and Basement, admeasuring area 300 Sq. Yds. Situated at Meera Bagh, Paschim Vihar, Delhi- 110063 (hereinafter referred to as "Secured Asset"). The said secured asset is owned by you the above-named addressee No.2.

That you, the Addressee have failed to maintain financial discipline in the loan account as mentioned above and as per the books of accounts maintained in the ordinary course of business by ABFL there exists an outstanding amount of Rs. 2,70,19,127/- (Rupees Two crores Seventy lakhs Nineteen Thousand one Hundred Twenty Seven Only) by way of outstanding principal, arrears (including accrued late charges) and interest as on 8th May, 2020. In addition to the said outstanding dues, you are also liable to pay interest and penal interests and/or other charges due in future till the entire outstanding dues are paid. Due to persistent default on the part of you the addressee the Loan account has been classified by ABFL as Non-Performing Asset on 15.01.2020 within the norms stipulated by the Reserve Bank of India.

In view of the above default, ABFL hereby calls upon you the addressee to discharge in full your liabilities towards ABFL by making the payment of the entire outstanding dues including up to date interest, costs, and charges within 60 Days (Sixty Days) from the date of publication of this notice, failing which, ABFL shall be entitled to take possession of the Secured Asset and shall also take other actions as is available to ABFL in law.

That please be informed that you are hereby restrained from alienating (including by way of transfer, sale, lease or otherwise) or creating third party interest or dealing with the secured asset in any manner except with specific prior written permission from ABFL. Be informed that any contravention thereof shall be punishable with imprisonment upto a period of one year or with fine or both.

That please note that this is a final notice under Section 13(2) of the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002. Needless to say that ABFL shall be within its right to exercise any or all of the rights referred to above against you the Addressee entirely at your risk, responsibility and costs.

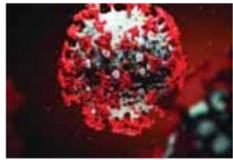
ADITYA BIRLA FINANCE LIMITED
Sd/-
PLACE : New Delhi
DATE : 05-06-2020
AUTHORIZED OFFICER

TN sees 1,384 new cases: Total 27,256

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI/CHENNAI

With 1,384 persons testing positive for covid-19 on Thursday, the total number of persons tested positive for the pandemic in Tamil Nadu till date reached 27,256. But taking into account the number of persons discharged from various hospitals on Thursday, the number of active covid cases in the State stood at 12,132, according to a release issued by the Government of Tamil Nadu on Thursday.

The death toll in the State reached 220 with 12 persons succumbing to the pandemic on Thursday. The release said 14,901 persons have been cured of the disease till date. More than 5.2 lakh persons have been tested in the State till Thursday evening. There are 74 laboratories all over the State testing the samples and Tamil Nadu remained ahead of all South Indian States in testing maximum number of persons. Out of the 12 deaths record-



ed today, eight persons were those admitted to hospitals with diabetes/mellitus/hypertension co-morbid issues. A 25-year old female had bronchial asthma and a 52 year old person had acute respiratory distress syndrome while a 33 year old female was suffering from recurrent gestational diabetes mellitus.

J Radhakrishnan, the IAS officer who has been appointed as the special nodal officer for Chennai Corporation to control the spread of coronavirus in the metropolis and known for his soft demeanour warned those violating guidelines that they would be slapped with police case and may have to face severe punishment.

In the backdrop of the ever increasing number of covid-19

cases in Chennai and surrounding districts, Radhakrishnan, who has put up commendable job in his previous role as Tamil Nadu's health secretary said that covid patients who are under home isolation and found moving freely outside would be put under institutional quarantine (which could be in some government hospitals). "We will also initiate police case against them for violating the instructions to be observed during quarantine period," said Radhakrishnan. He said there were many instances of persons who were under orders of home quarantine flouting the laws and putting the lives of others in jeopardy. "This is the only option available to make them fall in line," said the IAS officer.

Speaking to reporters at Chennai on Thursday during his field visit, Radhakrishnan said that following the guidelines prescribed by the medical experts (wearing of face masks, frequent washing of hands and staying indoors) have paid rich dividends.

Corona creeps into UP's rural areas now

Lucknow: While the spread of coronavirus has stabilised to a certain extent in the urban and A-class cities of Uttar Pradesh, barring districts bordering Delhi, the infection now seems to be spreading in the rural belt.

The districts like Kannauj, Auraiya, Farrukhabad, Unnao, Etawah, Sultanpur, Firozabad, Basti and Ayodhya are now reporting more corona cases.

Health experts claim that this is mainly due to the return of migrant workers, especially those who escaped medical screening or were asymptomatic.

In Kannauj, for instance, a mother-daughter duo who had returned from Gurugram, infected ten members of their family in the Galla Mandi area of Chhibramau, which has turned from green to orange zone now. Kannauj had reported 12 cases on Tuesday.

On Wednesday, three more persons tested positive for COVID-19 in Farrukhabad, six positive patients were detected in Auraiya, five in Unnao and four in Etawah.

Kannauj Chief Medical Officer Krishna Swaroop said, "With this large-scale influx of migrants from

urban cities to villages, the rural areas cannot be ignored and need special attention as far as monitoring is concerned. Infected people are being home quarantined or admitted to hospitals with the help of community management."

The district authorities have roped in block development officers, besides village heads and Civil defence volunteers, to take due care to avoid the spread.

A senior health official said that the situation is alarming in rural pockets where the majority of the people use one water source - whether a well or a hand pump. "Migrants who have returned to the villages, are escaping quarantine centres and violating safety protocols. There is no resistance from the local people too, because most cases are asymptomatic," he said.

The official further said that social distancing was an alien concept in rural areas where people tend to collect even at the slightest provocation.

"Besides, the wedding season is beginning and social distancing will be hard to maintain. We can only step up the awareness campaigns and increase testing," he added.

J&K reports 285 more cases, total mounts to 3,142

PNS ■ JAMMU

The Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir on Thursday recorded the biggest ever jump of 285 cases of coronavirus, taking the total tally of cases to 3,142 and active cases to 2,059.

Meanwhile, with one more death reported from Kashmir the death toll too has gone up to 35 while the total recoveries touched 1,048 on Thursday.

According to the media bulletin, 63 cases were reported from Jammu division while 222 cases were reported from Kashmir division on Thursday.

Moreover, 41 more Covid-19 patients were recovered and discharged from various hospitals, 24 from Jammu division and 17 from Kashmir division.

According to the media bulletin, out of 3,142 positive cases, 2,059 are

Active Positive, 1,048 have recovered and 35 have died; 04 in Jammu division and 31 in Kashmir division.

In Kashmir valley, out of 222 positive cases, Kulgam district reported maximum number of 49 cases, Shopian reported 35 cases, Baramulla 29 cases, Anantnag 27 and Srinagar 25 fresh cases.

With fresh surge in Coronavirus cases, now five districts of Anantnag, Kulgam, Srinagar, Kupwara and Baramulla in Kashmir valley have reported 300 plus cases so far. Out of these five, two districts have recorded more than 350 plus cases so far.

In Jammu division, Ramban and Jammu districts have recorded over 150 cases so far followed by Udhampur which has recorded 97 cases, Kathua 83 cases while the frontier districts of Rajouri and Poonch have reported 46 and 63 cases respectively.

Three dead, 94 new cases in Kerala



IANAS ■ THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Kerala on Thursday saw the highest-ever number of Covid positive cases on a single day — 94 — and three deaths, Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan said.

"With the three deaths, the total death toll has reached 14. Of the new cases, 47 came from abroad, while 37 reached the state from within the country. On Thursday, 39 people under treatment turned negative. Presently 854 are under treatment and in all, 1,588 have had this disease," he said.

Ten more hotspots were added on Thursday, taking the state's tally to 124 while 1,68,578 people are under observation at homes or in corona care centres, while 1,487 are in the hospitals.

Kerala's couple make designer masks to encourage people

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI/CHENNAI

Much before Prime Minister Narendra Modi and US President Donald Trump told their countrymen that the coronavirus pandemic was a challenge which could be converted into an opportunity, a couple based in Kochi, saw the potential offered by the dreaded disease and decided to take on the virus by its horns.

E M Bipin, formerly of Indian Navy and his wife Neethu, a fashion designer, who were running a sports garments manufacturing unit in North Paravoor in Ernakulam district faced labour problems with the onslaught of covid-19.

The workers employed by them in the unit were from Assam, Orissa and Bengal and most of them left for their



native villages. As part of the nationwide lockdown, the couple too was forced to down the shutters. But there were issues. A dozen workers employed in their unit chose to stay back forcing Neethu and Bipin to find out a source of income to look after their trusted labours.

It was then that Neethu came to know about the need for face masks all over the country. "Though we were into manufacturing face masks they

were meant for hospitals. The challenge before us was to make the people in the State to wear face masks. The initial days saw people openly flouting the appeals made by Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan and Health Minister K K Shylaja to wear face masks," said Neethu.

An idea struck Bipin, who was the main star of the Indian Navy's volleyball team and this resulted in designer face masks. The masks made by their unit



spotted pictures of personalities, wild animals and cartoon characters. "The demand was so high that we had to deploy all the labourers who stayed back into production. It was a God-given idea as we were struggling to take care of the

needs of these migrant labourers who were left helpless in this State," said Bipin.

Today, the unit is working two shifts per day to meet the demand. "The most sought after face masks are those featuring the pictures of football players Messi, Lukaku and Neymar. Masks with photographs of Pinarayi Vijayan and Shylaja too are in demand. Children prefer masks with cartoon characters, especially Micky Mouse, Tom and Jerry," said Neethu.

Of late, many customers send them their pictures with the request to make face masks spotting their own pictures. The unit with nine workers is equipped to manufacture 2000 masks daily. Bipin said they take care to manufacture masks which do not cause any inconvenience to the persons wear-

ing it and also to those who watch it.

The couple is happy that the masks have come as a blessing in disguise to save the unemployed migrant labours who had trusted their employers and stayed back. "Till the unit resumes its normal production, the face masks will keep as going," said the couple.

K Divya, a Trivandrum based young fashion designer is also into manufacturing face masks but her speciality is kids and children. The fashion designer got the basics about face masks from social media and since then has not looked back. Masks made by her have a niche market in the State and are priced at ₹50 apiece. There is money to be made in the time of the pandemic, for those who are willing to think and work.

Andhra records day high of 98 cases, tally at 3,377

IANAS ■ AMARAVATI

For the second time in 4 days, Andhra Pradesh registered an all time high, single day count of Covid-19 cases. On Thursday, the tally of positive cases zoomed to 98, the all-time high tally first reported on Sunday. The latest update takes the state's tally to 3,377 cases detected till date.

On Thursday, the state nodal officer reported that 9986 samples were tested over the preceding 24 hours, compared to 8,086 tests conducted in the preceding testing cycle.

With 29 persons discharged from hospitals, the cumulative tally of cured persons rose to 2,273 on Thursday. The number of active cases in Andhra Pradesh stands at 1,033.

However, the death of 3 persons in different districts raised the death toll in the state to 71 on Thursday morning, with Krishna, Guntur and Kurnool districts reporting 1 death each. Andhra Pradesh's mortality rate of 1.69 percent ranked 10th among the states of India, according to figures issued by the Andhra Pradesh government on Wednesday.

The cumulative tally of Covid-19 cases among returnees from other states climbed to 616 from 573. The tally of active cases climbed to 372 from the 362 cases reported on Wednesday. Thirty three persons from this category were discharged on Thursday.

With no new cases detected among foreign returnees, their cumulative tally remained static at 119 on Thursday.

Maha Guv permits MUHS exams

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Two days after he hit out at Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray over the cancellation of university examinations, Maharashtra Governor Bhagat Singh Koshyari on Thursday granted his permission to conduct all undergraduate and post-graduate examinations of the Maharashtra University of Health Sciences (MUHS), as proposed by the University.

While conveying his approval for the conduct of the examinations, the Governor — who in his capacity as Chancellor of universities in the State — appreciated the detailed plan of conducting the medical examinations presented to him by Maharashtra Minister of Medical Education and Cultural Affairs Amit Deshmukh who met him at Raj Bhavan in south Mumbai on Thursday morning.

In a letter submitted to the Governor, Deshmukh stated that the University of Health Sciences had unanimously decided to conduct all its Summer examinations as per three alternative plans, depending on the situation, from July 15 onwards.

According to the first plan, the Theory examinations will be held between July 15 and August 15 in

a staggered manner if the situation is conducive.

According to the second plan, if the examinations cannot be held as per the first plan due to Covid-19 situation, the same will be held between August 16 and September 15.

According to the third plan, if examinations are not held as per above plans, then the University will take guidance from Central Medical Council regarding the conduct of examinations such as online examinations.

The Minister informed the Governor that he had discussed the issue of conducting of examinations with all the stakeholders and regulatory authorities besides some of the former Vice Chancellors and Pro Vice Chancellors.

Deshmukh apprised the Governor that the University had held consultations with the Indian Nursing Council, the Medical Council of India and other central bodies before preparing the examination plans.

It may be recalled that on Tuesday, the Governor had described chief minister Uddhav Thackeray's announcement about cancellation of University examinations as 'unprecedented' and made "without any profound think-

ing on the legal repercussions". He had gone onto assert that as the Chancellor of Universities, he had the final authority over all University matters as per the provisions of Maharashtra Public Universities Act.

Koshyari conveyed Uddhav that decision regarding holding of the examinations of final year students shall be taken in consonance with the provisions of the Act.

Flagging the university examinations issue for the second time during the last 11 days, the Governor had said that he was 'surprised' to learn through media reports that Uddhav had declared that 'no examinations shall be conducted this year', while he was still awaiting a response to his letter to the Chief Minister.

In his letter to the chief minister, the Governor wrote that even though the Committee of Vice Chancellors constituted by the Minister for Higher and Technical Education to analyse the situation and to explore various options available to conduct the examinations had given its report to the Secretary, Higher and Technical Education Department on May 6 2020, the same had not been presented to him till date.

Cyclone Nisarga: Maha CM orders panchnama of losses suffered by people

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Amid official reports that Cyclone Nisarga claimed six lives and caused considerable damage to agriculture crops and property in various parts of the State on Wednesday, Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray on Thursday directed the officials in the various affected areas, particularly worst-affected Raigad district, to do "panchnama" of the losses suffered by the people during the severe cyclonic storm.

Ahead of and during the Cyclonic storm, as many as 78,191 living in coastal and low-lying areas were shifted to safer places.

According to official sources, six persons were killed in the cyclonic storm, while 15 others were injured. As per preliminary information, as many as 5033 hectares of farm land was damaged in the cyclone.

The state government announced a compensation of Rs.4 lakh to each of the families of persons killed in the natural calamity.

Reviewing the situation in

the Cyclone-affected areas with the various district officials and cabinet colleagues, the chief minister said: "Raigad has suffered huge losses. In houses where roofs or walls crashed, the people do not have drinking water. Apart from electric supply and making available drinking water, the district officials should provide food grains.

The officials should take the people into confidence while deciding on compensation for the losses suffered by them." In Raigad district, nearly 13,000 'kutcha' houses destroyed, while around 100,000 trees, thousands of electric poles were uprooted. As many as 14 electric substations and 1962 transformers were damaged, while 500 mobile towers were and 10 fishing boats were damaged.

Relief and Rehabilitation Minister Vijay Wadettiwar, who was among the ministers present at the meeting said that as many as 14 districts which is nearly one-third of Maharashtra's 36 districts — have been affected by Cyclone. He said undertake a tour of the

cyclone-affected areas from Saturday to assess the damages

Thane Guardian Minister Eknath Shinde said that 162 'kutcha' homes had been destroyed and there were 360 incidents of big or small tree branches crashing.

Revenue Minister Balasaheb Thorat said that the priority would be to restore power in the affected areas. "It is only after the restoration that we will be able to provide relief to the affected people," he said.

Meanwhile, State Energy Minister Nitin Raut on Thursday rushed to Raigad district to take stock of the power situation and restore electricity supply in the affected areas.

Raigad Guardian Minister Aditi Tatkare urged the state government to announce a special relief package for her district which has borne the maximum brunt of Wednesday's severe cyclone storm.

Apart from Raigad, the other districts which were affected by the cyclone included: Thane, Palghar, Pune, Nashik and Ahmednagar.

Rajouri encounter on, 1 ultra killed

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

A heavily armed terrorist was neutralised by the joint teams of security forces during the cordon and search operations launched in the Mayari area of Kalakote in Rajouri district late Thursday evening.

According to preliminary reports, "the cordon and search operations were launched after receiving reports of movement of a group of heavily armed terrorists in the area."

Local reports claimed, at least four terrorists were trapped by the security forces when the first contact was established and firefight started in the area.

According to preliminary reports, the group of terrorists trapped in the area had recently crossed over from Shopian via

Mughal road axis to escape the counter terrorist operations. Till the time of filing the report, official sources confirmed to *The Pioneer*, "one of the terrorists has been neutralised while firing was still going on in the area."

Additional reinforcements have been rushed to the area to plug the possible routes of escape in the area.

The security forces were taking all necessary steps to prevent any collateral damage while maintaining a tight cordon in the area.

Local reports claimed, at least four terrorists were trapped by the security forces when the first contact was established and firefight started in the area.

Tollywood to resume shooting from June 10

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Come June 10, India's one of the oldest film cities at Tollygunge — more popularly known as Tollywood — will be back to its usual bustling self.

Most television serials will start shooting from June 10 onwards, State Minister Arup Biswas said after a meeting with the functionaries of the East India Motion Pictures and other such organisations.

"The Tollygunge film studios will begin work after a 75-day hibernation ending the Corona lockdown phase," Biswas said on Thursday adding however "film shooting will however take some more time to start as we have certain issues to be sorted out."

The Minister said that after consultation with the television

companies "it has been decided that shooting with television serials will start with certain new measures particularly an insurance of ₹25 lakh for those involved in shooting." The premium will be shared partly by the serial companies and artists, he maintained.

"Unlike other professions where one can maintain social distancing film shooting demands physical proximity triggering the chances of corona infection," actor and singer Arindam Ganguli said adding a lot of precautions will be taken while the shooting are carried out. The new step will ensure the shooting of the mega Bengali tele-serial Rani Rashmoni awaited by cores of people, said an artist, Tollywood locals said.

The mega serial is shot

after the life and times of a fearless, spiritual and one of the richest woman zamindars of the country living in the early 19th century and playing not only an important role in the reformation and renaissance movement besides constructing the famous Dakshineswar Kali Temple but also challenging the mighty British rulers on several occasions through her indomitable spirit and grit. The serial also brings into play the life of Ramakrishna Paramahansa the spiritual guru of Swami Vivekananda.

Though the State Government took steps towards gradual opening up of the economic activities, authorities decided to clamp night curfew from 9 pm to 5 am in view of steady proliferation of corona infections, sources said.

The State has witnessed 726 cases the period intervening June 2 and 3, sources said adding in the past 24 hours the number of cases has gone up by 368. Out of these, 210 cases have been reported from the four districts of Kolkata, Howrah, Hooghly and North 24 Parganas.

In a view to balance containment protocols and economic activities the Government came out with new "containment zone" protocols, Kolkata Municipal Corporation Chief Administrator and Minister Firhad Hakim said.

"We will now place only such buildings under containment where reports of corona infections have come releasing the adjoining areas from other prohibitions," he said adding

only the slum those slum areas will be declared containment zones where people have used the same toilets with those who have been infected by the virus."

Meanwhile, two renowned food chains of the country have started delivering alcohol in partnership with authorised retailers and wine shops in a couple of cities of the State, sources said adding the alcohol was being delivered in Kolkata and Siliguri after obtaining necessary approvals from the Bengal Government. One of these companies may soon start operations in other 24 cities of the State, sources said.

Elsewhere, protests broke out at several quarantine centres in districts where the migrant works complained of lack of facility and food.

123 die, 2,933 test positive in Maha

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Maharashtra achieved yet another dubious feat on Thursday, as a record 123 people succumbed to coronavirus and 2,933 others tested positive for the pandemic, taking the total number of deaths to 2,710 and infected cases in the State to 77,793.

A day after 122 people died of Covid-19, the state surpassed its earlier day's highest tally and registered a record 123 deaths on Thursday.

Of the deaths, Mumbai accounted for 48 deaths, while there were 21 deaths in Jalgaon, nine deaths in Pune, eight deaths in Thane, seven deaths in Solapur, six deaths in Navi Mumbai, five deaths in Aurangabad, three deaths each in Raigad and Nashik, two

deaths in Kolhapur, Washim and Parbhani, one death each in Vasai-Virar, Palghar, Panvel, Dhule, Jalna, Latur, Osmanabad, Nanded and Yavatmal.

There have been a total of 939 deaths in Maharashtra during the previous ten days. On May 26 (Tuesday) the state had witnessed 97 deaths, while there were 105 deaths on May 27, 85 deaths on May 28, 116 deaths on May 29 and 99 deaths on May 30, 89 deaths on May 31, 76 on June 1, 103 on June 2, 122 on June 3 and 123 on June 4.

With 2933 fresh positive cases reported from across the state, the total number of infected cases in the state went up to 77,793. With 2710 deaths and 33,681 others discharged from the hospitals, the health authorities said that the total number of "active cases" in the

state was currently 41,393.

Of the dead, 85 were men while 38 were women. Seventy one of them were aged over 60 years, 44 were from the age group 40 to 59 years and 8 were aged below 40 years. "Ninety two out of 123 patients (75%) had high-risk co-morbidities such as diabetes, hypertension, heart disease," a state health bulletin said.

Out of the total deaths reported on Thursday 30 deaths occurred in the last two days and the rest are from the period April 30 to June 1. With 48 new deaths and 1442 fresh infections, the total number of deaths in Mumbai mounted to 1465, while the infected cases rose to staggering 44931. The authorities pegged the number of "active cases" in Mumbai at 25364.

Now, rural hotspots

The real test of COVID-19 management is now as the countryside turns red



There seems to be no end to apocalyptic headlines. First, the Coronavirus robbed lives and livelihoods, then came Cyclone Amphan that led to massive displacement of people and destruction of property, only to be followed by the invasion of desert locusts that destroyed thousands of hectares of farm land. Thankfully, Cyclone Nisarga spared Indians. And now the reverse exodus of migrants means that the poor in India's vast countryside are exposed to the killer virus thanks to the carriers among their returnee villagers. Worst, community spread, though not officially confirmed,

has started showing signs. Rural towns, which had hitherto remained insulated from a largescale assault of the virus except as scattered dots, have started seeing a surge. According to official data, a sizeable number of the 145 new Corona hotspots in the country were detected from virgin areas. That States, which received a massive influx of workers, have seen a sharp rise in COVID-19 cases in the last three weeks, is proof enough that reverse migration contributed big time to rural incidence. Around 2,147 active cases, accounting for 2.5 per cent of the total cases in the country, were reported from Assam, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Uttar Pradesh, Odisha and Madhya Pradesh. Both Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, the two States which received the maximum number of migrant workers, have seen a two-fold increase in COVID-19 cases ever since they started welcoming them back. In the case of the former, 75 per cent of the migrants from Mumbai and 50 per cent of returnees from Delhi had extremely high positivity. As for Bihar, 26 per cent of the labourers returning from Delhi tested positive. In part, limited mobility of the lockdown and to a greater extent, the lower density of population were the reasons why rural India comparatively saw a low incidence of the disease than its urban counterpart. And if indeed rural India becomes the hub for the pandemic, the number of daily new cases would grow exponentially, much more than what we are registering at present. As the numbers are set to rise, it would be a no brainer to guess the plight of this lot simply on account of the differential treatment it receives. Inarguably, challenges are many. First and foremost, rural areas have a less robust healthcare infrastructure to deal with Coronavirus cases. Of the 23,582 Government hospitals with 7,10,761 beds in the country, 19,810 hospitals are in rural areas with 279,588 beds and 3,772 hospitals in urban areas with 431,173 beds. In short, rural India has just 3.2 Government hospital beds per 10,000 people. It also lacks specialists, units and equipment that health systems in the city have mobilised to take care of an unexpected swamp. With 70 per cent of the total population residing in rural areas, a spread of the disease on a wider scale could lead to a total collapse of the health infrastructure. Further, rural areas have a significant older population with many vulnerabilities.

This demonstrates another round of blunderous planning. First, the migrants should have been either held at their work sites with food and doles or moved in a systematic manner before enforcing lockdown protocols. The infectivity was at least not as high then as it is now. Second, knowing they were returning, there should have been isolation shelters, camps and medical testing units to mitigate a potential epidemic in these areas. Towards this end, the Centre had already cautioned respective States to undertake precautions well in advance to prevent the spread of the disease. Ideally, the local authorities had to track infected returnees and conduct periodic assessments of their health before letting them bleed into the community. Already shocking incidents of migrants pulling emergency chains on trains and some even jumping out of them before arriving at their destination, in a bid to escape the mandatory 14-day quarantine protocol, have been reported. With the Government's focus completely relegated towards ramping up preparedness in the metropolitan cities during the lockdown, there's a need for a shift in focus now. Testing needs to be ramped up in the rural belt while zoning and mapping need to be done for containment. Considering the poor knowledge of health providers as well as the people in India's vast hinterland, the former must be given at least basic training to deal with what's coming. The latter, too, needs to be communicated clearly about the symptoms of the virus and most importantly, on the need to not panic and stay calm. Seamless communication and coordination, right from the Central to the State and the district level and empowerment of local self-help groups in COVID management strategies are the need of the hour. There is no time for political blame games if we want to save the real Bharat.

More to quake about

Experts believe a temblor is on its way given the wave of seismic activity in Delhi-NCR over a short span



Delhi-NCR, already reeling under the onslaught of the Coronavirus, seems to be headed for big trouble of a different kind if any of the recent seismic activity is any indication. The National Centre for Seismology recorded an earthquake measuring 3.2 on the Richter scale late on the night of June 3, the epicentre of which was 19 km south-east of Noida. And though there were no reports of casualties or damage to properties, the tremors were felt in the entire Delhi-NCR, causing panicked residents to check on each other through frantic messages on social media and messaging apps. What is scaring residents the most is the fact that the latest quake is the 11th to strike the Delhi-NCR region in a span of just 45 days, with two previous earthquakes measuring 4.6 and 2.9 being recorded on May 29. And the common man is not the only one worried, this wave of seismic activity over such a short span has led some of India's foremost geologists to believe that a temblor of a much greater magnitude may very well be on its way, although they cannot predict the exact time, scale and location of an earthquake. Sitting on several fault lines, Delhi-NCR falls in the high-risk seismic zone IV region apart from being just 300-odd km away from the main boundary thrust fault of the Himalayas.

The authorities were apprised of the vulnerabilities of Delhi-NCR as early as the 1960s when a moderate earthquake shook Delhi, resulting in a major power outage. Then the Geological Survey of India had advised the Government to make the city's buildings structurally sound enough because the city is a mix of low and high-rises and built on hard and soft soil. The areas next to the Yamuna are particularly vulnerable as the water from the river would turn the water-soaked subsoil to jelly, making the buildings collapse like a pack of cards. And despite this knowledge being in the public domain for decades, both the Centre and the State Governments have done little to quake-proof Delhi-NCR. They have ignored repeated reminders by the High Court to get their act together, in its orders issued in 2015, 2016 and 2019, asking them to prepare an action plan to fortify buildings as per the norms set by the National Building Code 2005. Meanwhile, there has been an exponential growth and development in Delhi-NCR in the last few decades, resulting in a high population density. The Centre and respective State Governments are already stretched to breaking point, both in terms of facilities, money, manpower and healthcare facilities. How well they can cope with the added burden of major disaster and relief operations is anybody's guess.

Samosa and more

The virtual bilateral summit between PMs Modi and Morrison has come at an opportune time when both nations face threats from China. This may herald a new strategic partnership



ASHUTOSH MISRA

Aussie Prime Minister Scott Morrison's tweet about sharing a "samosa platter" with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the latter's response saying, "Connected by the ocean, united by the samosa" made for a good banter before the inaugural of the first-ever virtual summit between them. ScoMo with the "samosa fame" and NaMo with the "chai fame" make for an unbeatable combo to welcome winters in Down Under and plug a gap in diplomatic ties. Coming in the backdrop of both India and Australia facing tense relations with China, the summit was hugely significant. As for the former, it faces tensions along the Line of Actual Control (LAC). The latter has been economically hit for asking for an independent inquiry into the origins of the novel Coronavirus.

More than anything else, the virtual summit gave a fresh momentum to the bilateral agenda with both nations inking several pacts. While the focus of the media has more or less remained on similar issues — ranging from Quad/Quad-plus talks, RCEP, Indo-Pacific strategic cooperation, Malabar/AUSINDEX Naval exercises, Indian students in Australia to cyber security and mutual logistics support agreement among others — what had escaped their attention was their bilateral journey. This was highlighted by Australian High Commissioner Barry O'Farrell in a compelling speech in New Delhi recently. He said, "Over the last few months and years, India and Australia have grown closer together. They are at a historical high." This journey extraordinary beholds a dozen of key determinants and political path-breakers that deserve a roll call here.

In the early 2000s, the then Prime Minister John Howard's role in placing bilateral business and trade ties on the high road is incontrovertible. But the setback came with former Prime Minister Kevin Rudd's refusal to supply uranium, the "monkey-gate" cricket controversy, Muhammad Hanef case and Indian students' safety concerns. If Prime Minister Julia Gillard acted timely and decisively to reverse this decision to resurrect plummeting ties, her successor, Tony Abbott addressed the students' issue effectively by cracking down on dubious education providers, tightening visa rules and stamping out corruption in the industry. To some extent, both leaders also dispelled New Delhi's perception of Australia's pro-China tilt under the Mandarin-speaking Rudd.

New Delhi has remained grateful for Canberra's stellar support to India's entry into the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) and securing a waiver from the



group to enable uranium export and get rid of the nuclear outsider tag. Over time, both have mastered the art of employing the allure of culture to galvanise relations. If a garlanded Malcolm Turnbull sat on the footsteps of the Akshardham temple in New Delhi alongside Modi, Morrison, taking a cue from former US President Barack Obama, who once cited a famous Hindi dialogue from a Shahrukh Khan blockbuster to charm the Indian audience, tweeted a selfie with Modi in Hindi saying, *Kitna achcha he Modi* (How good is Modi). And Modi returned the courtesy the Australian way by tweeting, "Mate, I'm stoked about our energy in bilateral relations."

During his visit to Australia in 2014, Modi had acknowledged Canberra's leadership in sports. While Australian cricketers enjoy star attraction in the Indian Premier League (IPL), legends like Matthew Hayden, Brett Lee and others grace the commentary box. Now, the Australian Olympic swimming gold medalist Stephanie Rice also commmentates in the Indian kabaddi league (a local sport). Other professionals, too, have been encouraging marginalised children and youth to take up sports in a bid to improve livelihoods.

Both nations possess a more nuanced mutual under-

standing of opportunities and challenges. That is thanks to Peter Varghese's report, 'An India Economy Strategy to 2035: From Potential to Delivery,' and the complementary Australia Economic Strategy (AES) report by Ambassador Anil Wadhwa that provide a blueprint for business and trade engagements.

Besides, Australia is addressing its Asian literacy deficiency, too. The New Colombo Plan supports over 10,000 research fellowships in 40 Asian countries, including India, and produces around 900 Australian undergraduates undertaking research, study and internships in India. But Australia must reinvent the old 3Cs (Curry, Cricket and Commonwealth) by nurturing a new paradigm: Constituencies of Country Champions. It must invest in people and institutions with language, cultural and area expertise.

Following the Valentine's day terrorist attack that killed 41 Indian security personnel in Pulwama, Jammu & Kashmir, the bipartisan Australian support from Morrison, Foreign Minister Marise Payne and Penny Wong, leader of the Opposition in the Senate, castigating Pakistan for its role in nurturing cross-border terrorism, was warmly noted and acknowledged by the Modi Government.

Stunned by the 2019 feder-

al elections debacle, the Palaszczuk Government's swift approval to the Adani Mining operation that remained enmeshed in unending litigations and factional political bickering in Queensland for over eight years, infused fresh life in bilateral ties. In hindsight, the decision could not have been better timed from the business and trade perspective.

In the fight against COVID-19, an Australian NGO, Doctors for You, has provided upgraded medical equipment and set up 20 isolation and treatment beds in Patna, Bihar. Prime Minister Morrison has also been in admiration of Prime Minister Modi's SAARC COVID-19 regional initiative and had urged him to initiate the G-20 COVID-19 summit, which materialised in March. Now secretary-level meets with Quad-plus counterparts, including Australia, India, Japan and the US, on a weekly basis is gathering coordinated response. In Australia, Indian students are also playing an outstanding role in providing care to the aged, distributing food and helping emergency services.

Both sides also seem to have overcome their mutual inhibitions over the China factor. India's military standoff in Doklam and now in Ladakh and Australia's discomfort over cybersecurity concerns,

Beijing's alleged interference and influence in internal affairs, in politics and academic institutions, Hong Kong protests and human rights abuses against Uyghurs Muslims have brought the two partners closer strategically.

The pandemic has also created a global synergy among liberal democracies for a more transparent, accountable and rule-based order. Australia's demand for an international inquiry into the origins of the Coronavirus found favour in New Delhi. This, along with the backing of 137 countries, for a review of the origins of the virus under the aegis of the World Health Organisation (WHO) has put more pressure on it.

Lastly, Australian Senator Simon Birmingham, who led a trade delegation to New Delhi in February, had said, "Australia must look into alternative markets in the European Union and India." His call must have been heard loud and clear by New Delhi. As Australian barley farmers look to divert exports to India, Australian businesses are turning to India for answers. Undoubtedly, the bilateral journey of the two vibrant democracies has braved extraordinary and testing times which must be remembered as the two leaders herald a new dawn in strategic partnership.

(The writer is CEO, Institute for Australia India Engagement, Brisbane)

SOUNDBITE

You don't upset the bear, you don't upset Kohli or Dhoni, you don't upset certain players, because this is what they love. They love confrontation. Don't give him any oxygen.

Former Australia cricketer —Dean Jones

Wars, pandemics, deaths, racism, rapes, diseases, calamities and many more... all by our hands! We are murderers. We seem to be immune to learning from our mistakes.

Actor —Hina Khan

Donald Trump is the first president in my lifetime who does not try to unite the American people — does not even pretend to try. Instead, he tries to divide us.

Former US defence secretary —Jim Mattis

We have already lived through our democracy for so many years. People definitely have sentimental values for present name. It (the renaming idea) only has nuisance value.

Congress leader —M Veerappa Moily

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Act responsibly

Sir — The total number of Coronavirus cases in the country is now over two lakh. This is a deadly warning to those citizens, who are not following basic guidelines issued for their own safety. The Central as well as the State Governments have taken a collective decision to restart the economy with hopes that the citizens would scrupulously follow all the guidelines while commencing their economic activities. People should fight the Corona battle with vigour and courage. And if they flout norms, it will be difficult for the Centre and States to handle the situation if the virus becomes widespread.

Katuru Durga Prasad Rao
Hyderabad

Economic travails

Sir — Lowering of India's sovereign rating by Moody's and slowing of economic growth to an 11-year low cumulatively are a warning for India. The foremost take-away from these two assessments is that though they have surfaced during the pandemic, which has

Not an American dream

This refers to the editorial, "Boots on the street" (June 3). Violent protests across the US over the death of an unarmed Black man, George Floyd, at the hands of a Minneapolis police officer lay bare the deep frustration over continuing racial discrimination in the country. The protests are not just about Floyd's killing, which was just a trigger. Underlying the demonstrations is pent-up anger over systemic violence against the Blacks. Although affirmative action has reduced racial inequality to some extent, the situation of Blacks with regard to income, housing and medicare lags far behind.

The Floyd video displays the prejudice against Blacks that runs deep and negative stereotypes define how people relate to them in society. Worsening unemployment situation and political polarisation ahead of the presidential elections, too, appear to be driving the protests. Once again, US President Donald Trump has put on display his inept and insensitive leadership. His controversial comments, suggesting looters in Minneapolis be shot and that the protesters are "thugs" marked the latest



example of the President choosing to stoke long standing racial divides rather than trying to comfort a hurting community. White nationalists and supremacists, his core support base, are reported to be out on the streets, provoking protesters. Their mobilisation will energise Trump supporters and could boost chances of his re-election.

N Sathasiva Reddy
via mail

Radical reforms

Sir — This refers to the editorial, "Another push" (June 2). Within a span of one month, the

Government failure

Government has increased the turnover and investment limit of Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) to bring more units under the new definition. Further, the distress fund of ₹20,000 crore, if utilised judiciously, will help stressed MSMEs. And the decision with respect to farmers will help them decide which kharif crop they should grow as sowing will pick up with the onset of the monsoon season. The Government has increased the MSP for 14 crops. This decision needs to be communicated to the farmers.

Bal Govind
Noida

Governance failure

Sir — Had the current dispensation used its mandate for genuine governance, India would have been in a better position to face the social and economic crises. Instead of opting for a radical approach, it is introducing half-baked reforms.

Rishi Gupta
Via email

Send your feedback to:

letterstopioneer@gmail.com

FIRST COLUMN

A three-headed monster

Wearing of masks, regular washing of hands with soap and social distancing are next to impossible for slum dwellers in India due to practical reasons



AMIT KUMAR RAHUL RANJAN

Over 65 million or 22 per cent of India's total population live in urban slums, which are characterised by acute poverty, over-crowding, unhealthy living conditions and a weak urban public health set-up. The three important health behaviours prescribed as preventive measures for COVID-19 by various governments and international health organisations are wearing of masks, regular washing of hands with soap or sanitiser and social distancing. While all these measures are easy to adopt for the middle class and those belonging to the upper strata of society, it is extremely difficult for slum populations to do so due to practical reasons.

According to the latest National Sample Survey (NSS) on drinking water and sanitation, in order to meet their daily water requirement slum dwellers have to walk over 200 metres on an average daily to fetch water. This is because a significant number of slum households depend on public taps/tube wells for drinking water. For instance in States like Uttar Pradesh (UP), West Bengal, Odisha and Chhattisgarh, this percentage ranges from 60 to 82 per cent, while in Karnataka, Delhi, Madhya Pradesh (MP), Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat and Tamil Nadu (TN) it ranges from 24 to 48 per cent.

Also, a large number of households living in slums don't have private toilets/bathrooms. In States like Odisha, Gujarat, West Bengal and UP respectively, the percentage of households that reported no access to private toilets/bathrooms ranged from 47 to 60 per cent.

Social distancing is also a major problem for slum dwellers as most of them live in one-room tenements and given the national average household size of five members, it is safe to say they have a cheek-by-jowl existence. Washing/sanitising of the hands with soap/sanitiser is an important health hygiene behaviour to tackle the current pandemic crisis. But worryingly, most of the slum households wash their hands only with water before having their meal, forget about using a soap. Given the low levels of education and also household incomes, it is not surprising that health hygiene awareness is very poor among slum households, making them a hotbed of germs and diseases.

One of the major problems that slum dwellers face is the fact that they are not able to get Government facilities/services like water and sanitation, either because of low awareness about Government programmes or because of the fact that they are ineligible for them as they are living in a non-notified slum. Odisha accounts for 72 per cent, Gujarat for 61 per cent, UP for 49.91 per cent and TN for 41.49 per cent of the total slum households who live in non-notified slums. Hence, slum populations are more vulnerable to COVID-19 because of the low provision of basic amenities and poor outreach of municipality services in non-notified slums due to their legal status.

Data from COVID-19India.org as on May 30 show that 10 major cities account for almost 60 per cent of the total confirmed cases of the contagion, namely Mumbai (21.15 per cent), Delhi (10.15 per cent), Ahmedabad (6.15 per cent), Chennai (7.70 per cent), Thane (5.02 per cent), Pune (4.15 per cent), Indore (1.89 per cent), Jaipur (1.08 per cent), Kolkata (1.13 per cent) and Surat (0.86 per cent).

The census 2011 report identified that 13.8 million households — about 64 million people — are located in city slums nationwide. That is 17.4 per cent of all urban households in the country. In fact, in India's financial capital Mumbai, over 41 per cent of the city's 12.44 million inhabitants live in slums. It is no wonder then that COVID-19 cases have been rapidly spreading in Mumbai's Dharavi slum.

Except for Mumbai's Dharavi, till now we have not had to face a situation where the contagion has spread majority across the slums in the country. The implications of a COVID-19 outbreak in the urban slums can be disastrous for the urban poor and the public health set-up. In the absence of affordable and quality public healthcare, families living in slums run the risk of deep impoverishment, disease and death. On the other hand, the public health system runs a high risk of getting overrun by patients, only at a scale much worse than the previous swine-flu outbreaks.

COVID-19 has an urban face so far and it is going to stay for a long time. In the short term, the Government must intervene via aggressive administrative measures, starting with affordable or free testing, identification and quarantine of bearers of the virus in slum areas. This has to be followed by the provision of door-to-door drinking water and mobile toilet facilities to avoid crowding around water points or community toilets.

In the medium-term, the Government must decongest cities by developing rapid public transport transit systems and shifting production networks to different parts of the country. In the long-term, the Government must aim for slum-free cities via low cost housing to the poor strata of population and creating urban agglomeration centered on production of high value services such as education, health, information technology and so on.

(Kumar is a Young Professional in the Financial Resource division at NITI Aayog, while Ranjan is a Senior Research Associate at the Institute for Human Development, New Delhi)

POINT COUNTERPOINT

IT IS MURDER. MALAPPURAM IS FAMOUS FOR SUCH INCIDENTS. THEY THROW POISON ON ROADS SO THAT 300-400 BIRDS AND DOGS DIE AT ONE TIME.
 —BJP MP AND ANIMAL RIGHTS ACTIVIST MANEKA GANDHI



WE ARE SAD THAT SOME HAVE USED THIS (TUSKER) TRAGEDY TO UNLEASH A HATE CAMPAIGN AND EVEN TRIED TO IMPORT BIGOTRY INTO THE NARRATIVE.
 —KERALA CHIEF MINISTER PINARAYI VIJAYAN

Status quo is not the answer

India will always be subjected to pinpricks at will by China. Is this the way we want to tame the dragon and let it become a threat from a challenge? The answer obviously is 'no'



ANIL GUPTA

The stand-off at Doklam in 2017 has been followed by another and bigger face-off in Eastern Ladakh now, with defence analysts, diplomats and strategic experts predicting the frequency to be almost annual due to the ostensible Chinese annoyance at the rapid rate of development of infrastructure along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) by India which neutralises the asymmetry created by the former till now. While on one hand China was actively trying to build a new image of a responsible global power by its increasing participation in Military Operations Other Than War (MOOTW) like peacekeeping, anti-piracy and humanitarian assistance, on the other it has not shed its belligerent attitude on the border with India due to the potential threat it perceives from India in its quest to become a superpower. It continues to encircle India through its "Strings of Pearl" and Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) doctrine. Despite the desire expressed by Xi Jinping in his early years of presidency to speedily resolve the border dispute with India, China appears to be in no hurry to resolve the boundary dispute and on the contrary is becoming increasingly aggressive to reach areas as claimed by it and marked in our maps as "Claim Line".

China's national goal is to achieve unification and build a moderately prosperous society by 2050, which would coincide with the centenary year of Communist rule. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has directed its army, the Peoples Liberation Army (PLA) to ensure that no internal or external forces should be able to sabotage China's economic engine or embarrass its national honour. The current stand-off is a result of this mandate to the PLA because it feels threatened in Aksai Chin, a safe bet for the PLA till now. Both Aksai Chin and Karakoram Pass are China's jocular veins.

In response to the offer of US President Trump for a mediation to resolve the stand-off which as per the US assessment is "very serious", Indian Defence Minister Rajnath Singh has informed his US counterpart that, "It has been India's efforts to ensure that the tension does not escalate. It should be resolved through talks at the military and diplomatic levels. We have already developed a mechanism for the same. Negotiations are ongoing between the two countries at the military and diplomatic level."

Going by the statements of the spokesperson of the Chinese Foreign Ministry and the Chinese Ambassador to India, Beijing, too, wants to resolve the issue mutually. China, before ordering the stand-off, would have war-gamed the Indian responses and worked out an exit strategy to match each Indian response. New Delhi's response, though firm and clear, has been traditional and nothing "out of the box." Hence, as in the past, if China is keen to resolve the issue, it would buy time, coerce India through psychological operations, deception and threat of a conflict to seek a withdrawal on its terms. But India this time is adamant not to succumb to any type of pressure keeping in mind the prevailing geopolitical environment loaded heavily in its favour. In that case, China may agree to find a face-saving settlement for the time being but the dragon is known for its vengeance and non-forgiving behaviour.

The threat from the dragon may only be deferred for the next campaigning season but not eliminated. Can the present stand-off be China's revenge for Doklam with a new recalibrated response and so on? Status quo, therefore, is advantage China.

In the mind of our security policymakers China is not a threat but a challenge. The threat/challenge posed by an adversary is assessed by the policymakers based on their capabilities and intent. The major



IF OUR STRENGTH IS ON THE HIGH SEAS AND NOT IN THE MOUNTAINOUS REGIONS, THEN WHY ARE WE STILL OBSESSED WITH OUR FRONTIERS? INDIA MUST TAKE ADVANTAGE OF ITS GEO-STRATEGIC LOCATION IN THE INDO-PACIFIC REGION AND DEVELOP THE MARITIME STRENGTH TO TAME THE DRAGON. WHILE DOING ALL THIS, WE NEED TO MAINTAIN OUR STRATEGIC AUTONOMY

difference lies in assessing the intent of the adversary. If an adversary has hostile intentions as well as a matching military capability to pursue those intentions it is categorised as a "threat." In the assessment of our policymakers, though China possesses a strong military capability, it does not harbour "hostile" intentions, hence categorised as a "challenge." Rightly so, because of the stated national goal as mentioned above. But it does not take time for a militarily strong nation to change its intentions, particularly when the country is known for expansionist and extra-territorial ambitions.

Such a policy is good to justify the ongoing debate of "Gun versus Butter" in a developing economy and a nation burdened with a yawning gap between the rich and the poor. Fortunately India falls quite low in China's current threat assessment and "worst-case scenarios." But can India remain happy with status quo or must it plan alternatives to meet growing Chinese aggressiveness and assertiveness?

"India can end Chinese transgression if the conflict is taken to Beijing's worry spot(s)," says Ram Madhav, National General Secretary of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). Besieged by a geopolitical situation, which led to a global assault against it, the dragon has decided to be proactive rather than succumb to the global pressure led by the US. It decided to convey a subtle message to the US potential allies through posturing and aggression in what is referred to as "signalling" in strategic terminology. In doing so, it made the cardinal mistake of opening up too many fronts simultaneously. The South China Sea (SCS), Taiwan, Hong Kong and the Sino-Indian border. Even Australia, a friend of China, joined the global onslaught against it. Japan was also becoming aggressive. China felt that it had been cornered and its move against India may prove costly.

China knows that in the current stand-off, militarily, both the Chinese and the Indian Army are equally strong, with India enjoying shorter lines of communi-

cation as compared to China. In case of a conflict, India would be at an advantage and will be able to concentrate more forces than China could deploy. No doubt China would bank on collusion with the Pakistan Army to tie down Indian troops, but even then, it could at best lead to a stalemate. A stalemate would definitely hit China's image globally and in other areas of conflict and would be a definite loss of face. China has the knack of springing surprises. Beijing may well begin with a non-contact battle; Information Warfare (IW), Electronic Warfare (EW), cyber-attacks, precision munitions followed by a surgical strike. Will we be able to match the Chinese capabilities in the conflict zone? In the end, if China does not vacate Indian territory, New Delhi should have other options to exercise. In such a scenario, India should have the option to signal the Chinese obliquely (through media, strategic community, diplomatic means and so on) that the conflict may not remain localised in the trans-Himalayan region but may spread to the high seas.

If the Indian policymakers consider Indo-Pacific as a soft underbelly of China, have they done enough to encash this advantage through capacity and capability build-up? The zone of peace and tranquility along the LAC espoused between the two nations in the beginning of this century has slowly been turned into a line of asymmetry through rapid development of infrastructure on its own side by China, thus providing it the capability of rapid deployment. India is fast trying to catch up but lags behind due to many domestic factors.

There was also an attempt to maintain peace through a series of border management and Confidence Building Measures, including the mechanism to resolve the boundary dispute. But China more often than not has been violating these because of its better capability to man the LAC viz a viz India. Any effort by the Indian Army to improve infrastructure on its side is objected to and resisted by the Chinese.

China believes in buying time and

wearing out the opponent while building its own strengths. It has been able to achieve the asymmetry on the LAC as well as reorganise and modernise its army. In the process it has begun to be more assertive on its "Claim Line" by not just patrolling but by camping and digging in those areas. Of late, even in those areas where the claim line and the LAC coincide, China has begun to transgress in order to provide grazing grounds to the locals. It is testing India's response so that it can enhance its claim line in those areas as well. In a nutshell, the PLA has become very strong in the mountainous sector through which the LAC runs. Our response has been to meet the Chinese threat through enhanced deployment and efforts to improve the infrastructure. In other words we have been trying to pit our strength against the enemy's strength. China is happy with status quo and is not keen to resolve border issues. It feels confident of "managing" conflicts along the LAC. India will always be subjected to pinpricks at will by the dragon. Is this the way we want to tame the dragon and let it become a "threat" from a "challenge?" The answer obviously is "No."

Strength begets respect and instils fear in potential adversaries. China also respects strength. India's strength does not lie in the lofty trans-Himalayas but in the high seas. "The lion cannot protect himself from traps and the fox cannot defend himself from wolves. One must, therefore, be a fox to recognise traps and a lion to frighten wolves," said Machiavelli, the famous Italian philosopher and writer. In relation to China, India needs to develop both the qualities.

If our strength is on the high seas and not in the mountainous regions, then why are we still obsessed with our frontiers? India must take advantage of its geostrategic location in the Indo-Pacific region and develop the maritime strength to tame the dragon. While doing all this we need to maintain our strategic autonomy.

(The author is a Jammu-based veteran, political commentator, columnist, security and strategic analyst.)

It is high time we make time for nature

India must ensure that by the time World Environment Day 2021 rolls around, significant progress is made in restoring nature to its former glory



KOTA SRIRAJ

Today is World Environment Day (June 5) and it is usually marked by functions organised to raise environmental awareness and encourage action to protect our planet. Last year, as the world celebrated environment day in the usual manner, it could not have imagined that a year later the very same environment which had been degraded for centuries would be regarded with a new-found respect and humil-

ity. They could not have foreseen that people would start realising the value of the smallest of pleasures in life, such as taking a walk in the park, meeting friends and family or eating out at a restaurant. All because of COVID-19 and the huge impact it has had on our lives and the global economy.

The pandemic has changed the global outlook on the environment and biodiversity. And as India and the world try to limp back to normalcy, we need to build on this new-found regard for the environment and incorporate it into our post-COVID-19 recovery plans. This must get reflected in the form of creation of healthy cities where nature and people can thrive harmoniously.

This year's environment day theme is "Time for Nature", wherein humanity's relationship with

nature is sought to be reimagined and brought back into focus.

We must realise that nature gives humans the diversity that is needed for survival, provides resources to develop medicines, helps absorb carbon, reduces pollution and, therefore, mitigates climate change. But when the same nature and biodiversity is exploited to a breaking point, the consequences are dark and stark.

The speed of human progress and growth is impressive and unprecedented but sadly detrimental for the environment. In the last 50 years, the human population has doubled, the global economy has quadrupled and international trade has increased by ten times. This warp-speed development is making such demands on nature that it would need 1.6 planets like the Earth to fulfill all human needs.

We need to realise that this spiralling demand on nature and biodiversity is also increasingly exposing human life to hitherto unknown dangers. The emergence of COVID-19 has underscored the fact that when biodiversity is destroyed the natural system that intuitively supports and secures human life is also destroyed.

The more diverse the ecosystem, the more difficult it is for one pathogen to spread rapidly and dominate. A severe loss of biodiversity enables harmful pathogens to cross over from animals to humans. COVID-19 is an unfortunate example of this.

Nature is already sending us a message but humans are unable to decipher the same. This is evident by the fact that the number of zoonotic infectious diseases, or those diseases that are transmitted from ani-

mals to humans, are rising rapidly and it is estimated that in future they would comprise 75 per cent of the global disease burden.

Anthropogenic activities such as deforestation, urban expansion, intensification of illegal wildlife trade and thriving wet markets are unwittingly building a highway of diseases between the animal world and the human population and this needs to be stopped immediately.

The ongoing pandemic has taught some very painful lessons to humanity. India, too, has seen a never-before societal awareness regarding the environment. This awareness has ensured a uniform response from all spheres of the society to battle a common enemy. This unity in civil society is priceless and can be utilised for furthering common causes.

Given the deteriorating state of

the environment and biodiversity, India must leverage the new-found awareness levels of the population to secure the interests of nature and ensure that a robust biodiversity is established as a check dam between harmful viruses and the precious health of the population.

India must ensure that by the time World Environment Day 2021 rolls around, significant progress is logged in restoring nature to its former glory. As part of the same, efforts need to be made to ensure that humanity moves closer to nature and learns to put nature first in the order of priority. This will not only ensure that we leave a better world for our children but it will also lend true meaning to the theme of this year's World Environment Day — Time for Nature.

(The writer is an environmental journalist)



FOREIGN EYE



GIVE THE STATE A STAKE

The Government will play a central role in enabling an economic recovery after the pandemic. It can pursue strategic targets by taking equity stakes in some rescued companies. It should use that role and the leverage it affords, to help shape the post-COVID-19 economy in the wider public interest.

(The Guardian editorial)

GLOBE TROTTER

NY COP SHOT NOT CLEAR IF PROTEST RELATED: POLICE

New York: New York police said an officer was shot and another knifed in the borough of Brooklyn shortly before midnight on Wednesday, but it was unclear if the attack was related to mass protests over the death of an unarmed black man. The names and conditions of the officers were not released, but media said the injuries were not life-threatening.

ROUHANI CONDEMNNS FLOYD'S KILLING

Tehran: Iranian President Hassan Rouhani has called George Floyd's killing "brutal" and criticised President Donald Trump for posing for photos while holding a Bible. Rouhani in a televised speech said Floyd "was killed in the most brutal way."

6.8-MAGNITUDE QUAKE HITS INDONESIA

Jakarta: An earthquake measuring 6.8 on the Richter scale jolted Indonesia's North Maluku province on Thursday, but did not trigger a tsunami alert, the meteorology and geophysics agency said. The agency initially issued the quake at 7.1 magnitude before revising it down to 6.8. Wahyu Kurniawan, official in charge at the agency, told *Xinhua* news agency.

TALIBAN TO PURSUE BOTH PEACE TALKS, JEHAD

Kabul: Sirajuddin Haqqani, the deputy leader of the Taliban, said that despite its belief in the peace negotiation talks as one of the core components of the solution to the conflict in Afghanistan, the group will still continue the path of jihad and strengthen its military power.

OIL SPILL: PUTIN DECLARES EMERGENCY

Moscow: Russian President Vladimir Putin has declared a state of emergency after 20,000 tonnes of diesel oil leaked into a river within the Arctic Circle, the media reported on Thursday. The spill took place when a fuel tank at a power plant near the Siberian city of Norilsk collapsed on May 29, reports the BBC.

Floyd tested Covid +ve in April: Autopsy

PTI ■ NEW YORK

George Floyd, the African-American, who died in police custody last month, had tested positive for the coronavirus in April, according to the medical examiner's report.

A report in *The New York Times* (NYT) cited the full autopsy released by the Hennepin County medical examiner and said that the 46-year-old had tested positive for the coronavirus on April 3.

The county's top medical examiner Andrew Baker said that the Minnesota Department of Health had swabbed George Floyd's nose after his death and he had tested positive for the virus, the NYT report said.

The positive result at the time of his death was likely a lasting positive result from his previous infection, it said.

The report added that there is no indication that the virus played any role in his death. Protests across New York and the US intensified as thousands of demonstrators took to the streets demanding an end to police brutality after Floyd was killed when a white

police officer knelt on his neck for nearly nine minutes while he lay handcuffed and pinned to the ground gasping for breath on May 25.

"Please, I can't breathe," were George Floyd's last words and have become a clarion call for the protesters demanding action against police brutality.

Former New York City medical examiner Michael Baden, who was among two doctors who conducted a private autopsy for George Floyd's family last week, said county officials did not tell him that Floyd had tested positive for Covid-19.

"The funeral director wasn't told, and we weren't told, and now a lot of people are running around trying to get tested," Michael Baden said.

"If you do the autopsy and it's positive for the coronavirus, it's usual to tell everyone who is going to be in touch with the body. There would have been more care," he said.

Michael Baden has said that the four police officers who arrested Floyd should also get tested for Covid-19 as should some of the witnesses.

"I'm not angry," he said in

the NYT report. "But there would have been more care."

Michael Baden added in the NYT report that the full autopsy includes information he did not have access to, such as the toxicology results showing Floyd had fentanyl in his system.

Michael Baden said that when he conducted the autopsy report, a part of the heart was not provided — the part that showed coronary artery disease.

Forensics expert at John Jay College of Criminal Justice Lawrence Kobilinsky said he was struck by the difference between

the county's official autopsy and the results of Michael Baden's private autopsy. Kobilinsky said defense lawyers could make a point of the amount of fentanyl in George Floyd's body.

The NYT report said while the amount required to be lethal varies from person to person, fentanyl can stop a person's heart and breathing.

"It seems to me, it's high enough where a defense attorney would argue that this kind of predisposes him to heart failure, when you are on a drug like this," Kobilinsky said.

Protests large but peaceful after new charges

AP ■ MINNEAPOLIS

Demonstrations across the US to condemn racism and police abuses remained large but mostly without the violence of previous nights on the eve of a Thursday memorial service for George Floyd that kicks off a series of events to mourn the man whose death empow-

ered a national movement. The calmer protests followed a decision by prosecutors to charge three more police officers and file a new, tougher charge against the officer at the center of the case.

The most serious new charge Wednesday was an accusation of second-degree murder against Minneapolis Police officer Derek Chauvin, who was caught on video pressing his knee to Floyd's neck. The three other officers at the scene were charged for the first time with aiding and abetting second-degree murder and second-degree manslaughter.

If convicted, they could be sentenced to up to four decades in prison. The move punctuated an unprecedented week in modern American history, in which largely peaceful protests took place in communities of all sizes but were rocked by bouts of violence, including deadly attacks on officers, rampant thefts and arson in some places.



Detained US Navy veteran freed by Iran, en route home

Washington: A Navy veteran detained in Iran for nearly two years has been released and started making his way home, with the first leg on a Swiss Government aircraft, US officials said on Thursday.

"The nightmare is over," his mother said. The US special envoy for Iran, Brian Hook, flew to Zurich with a doctor to meet freed detainee Michael White and will accompany White to the United States aboard an American plane, the officials said.

White's release was part of an agreement involving an Iranian-American doctor prosecuted by the Justice Department, and followed months of quiet negotiations over prisoners.

The two countries are at bitter odds over US penalties imposed after President Donald Trump withdrew the US from the 2015 nuclear deal and over the killing by American forces of a top Iranian general in Iraq at the beginning of this year. AP

40 students, teachers stabbed by security guard in China

AGENCIES ■ BEIJING

Around 40 students and staff members of a primary school in China were stabbed by a security guard, official media reported on Thursday.

The incident happened at a school in China's Guangxi province, state-run *China Daily* said in a brief report.

Knife attacks by disgruntled people have been taking place in different parts of China in the past few years, reported news agency *Press Trust of India*.

The attackers targeted mainly kindergarten and pri-

mary schools besides public transport, the news agency reported.

All the victims, including teaching staff, were sent to hospital but were not in a life-threatening condition, authorities in Cangwu County, Guangxi region, said.

Schools in the region had only reopened in May after being closed for months due to the coronavirus outbreak.

In November, a man climbed a kindergarten wall in southwest Yunnan province and sprayed people with a corrosive liquid, wounding 51 of

them, mostly students.

Last September, eight schoolchildren died and two others were wounded in a "school-related criminal case" in the central Hubei province, with a 40-year-old man arrested.

A knife-wielding man killed two people and wounded two others at a primary school in central Hunan province in April last year.

In April 2018, a man killed nine middle school students as they were returning home, in one of the deadliest knife attacks seen in China in recent years.

HK outlaws insulting China's national anthem

AP ■ HONG KONG

Hong Kong's legislature approved a contentious bill on Thursday that makes it illegal to insult the Chinese national anthem.

The legislation was approved after pro-democracy opposition lawmakers tried to disrupt the vote. The bill was passed with 41 lawmakers voting for it and just one voting against. Most of the pro-democracy lawmakers boycotted the vote out of protest.

The pro-democracy camp sees the anthem bill as an infringement of freedom of expression and the greater rights that residents of the semi-autonomous city have compared to mainland China. The pro-Beijing majority

said the law was necessary for Hong Kong citizens to show appropriate respect for the anthem. Those found guilty of intentionally abusing the 'March of the Volunteers' face up to three years in prison and a fine of up to 50,000 Hong Kong dollars (USD 6,450).

Hong Kong marks Tiananmen anniversary, defying police ban

AP ■ HONG KONG

Thousands of people in Hong Kong defied a police ban on Thursday evening,



breaking through barricades to hold a candlelight vigil on the 31st anniversary of China's crushing of a democracy movement centered on Beijing's Tiananmen Square.

With democracy all but snuffed out in mainland China, the focus has shifted increasingly to semi-autonomous Hong Kong, where authorities for the first time banned the annual vigil to remember victims of the 1989 crackdown.

Beijing is taking a tougher stance following months of anti-government protests last year, in what activists see as an accelerating erosion of the city's rights and liberties.

COVID-19 OUTBREAK

Covid-19 TRACKER

TOTAL CASES: 6,625,957

DEATHS: 3,89,197

RECOVERED: 3,200,700

COUNTRY	TOTAL CASES	TOTAL DEATHS
USA	1,908,370	109,350
Brazil	5,90,485	32,688
Russia	4,41,108	5,384
Spain	2,87,406	27,128
UK	2,79,856	39,728
Italy	2,34,013	33,689
Germany	1,84,492	8,701
Peru	1,78,914	4,894



HCQ may not prevent Covid-19 illness if exposed to virus: Study

PTI ■ TORONTO

The malaria drug hydroxychloroquine may not prevent Covid-19 illness or stop novel coronavirus infection when used as preventive medicine within four days after exposure to the virus, according to a study.

Scientists, including those from the McGill University in Canada, assessed whether the drug hydroxychloroquine (HCQ) can prevent sympto-

matic infection after exposure to the novel coronavirus, SARS-CoV-2, is unknown.

In the study, published in the *New England Journal of Medicine*, the researchers conducted a randomised placebo-controlled trial across the US and parts of Canada testing HCQ as a preventive medicine, or prophylactic, following potential exposure to SARS-CoV-2.

"We enrolled adults who

had household or occupational exposure to someone with confirmed Covid-19 at a distance of less than 6 feet (ft) for more than 10 minutes while wearing neither a face mask nor an eye shield (high-risk exposure), or while wearing a face mask but no eye shield (moderate-risk exposure)," the scientists wrote in the study.

Almost 90 per cent of the participants (719 of 821), according to the study, report-

ed a high-risk exposure to a confirmed COVID-19 contact. The researchers then randomly assigned the 821 symptomless participants to receive either a placebo (a fake drug), or HCQ within four days after exposure.

According to the study, the drug treatment involved 800 milligrammes (mg) of HCQ given once, followed by 600 mg in six to eight hours, then 600 mg daily for 4 additional days.

NZ to mark June 15 as Covid-19 elimination day

IANS ■ WELLINGTON

New Zealand has planned to mark June 15 as the Covid-19 elimination day after health authorities detected no new coronavirus case for the 13th day in a row on Thursday.

The country, which has won global praises for its Covid-19 management, had reported the last positive case on May 22, reports *Efe* news.

A health ministry spokesperson told *New Zealand Herald* that the last community transmission case of a person, whose source of infection was not known, came out of isolation on May 18.

That could be taken as the reference point for the 28-

day coronavirus-free period to mark its elimination day, a health ministry spokesperson told *Efe* news.

That means that the period will finish on June 15.

"Elimination does not mean eradicating the virus permanently from New Zealand. It is being confident that we have eliminated chains of transmission in our community for at least 28 days and can effectively prevent or contain any future imported cases from overseas," the spokesperson said.

New Zealand has so far confirmed 1,154 Covid-19 cases with 22 deaths.

Director-General of Health Ashley Bloomfield told

reporters on Thursday that New Zealand was in the position now "that is the envy of many countries internationally and that is due to the hard work and sacrifice of so many Kiwis".

He, however, stressed the need to maintain precautionary measures as the pandemic is still prevalent remains present exist in other countries.

Bloomfield said the international situation was still serious with June 1 marking the day when most cases were reported in a single day worldwide.

"If we want to stay in a good position here, we can't act as if it's all over globally," he said.

Study: US braces for big wave of mental illnesses post-Covid

IANS ■ NEW YORK

There has been a massive increase in psychological distress among adults in the US during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Young adults aged 18-29 years, adults across ages in low-income households and Hispanics across ages have expressed the highest psychological distress, according to a new survey by Johns Hopkins University.

The survey by researchers at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health and the SNF Agora Institute at Johns Hopkins University found more than threefold increase in the percentage of US adults who reported symptoms of psychological distress - from 3.9 per cent in 2018 to 13.6 per cent in April 2020.

The percentage of US adults aged 18-29 years who reported psychological distress increased from 3.7 per cent in 2018 to 24 per cent in 2020.

South Africa's hotspot limits most testing to above age 55

AP ■ CAPE TOWN

South Africa's worst hotspot for the coronavirus is no longer testing most people under age 55 as it tries to clear a backlog of 27,000 tests amid a shortage of kits.

Western Cape province, centered on the city of Cape Town, will test people under 55 only if they have serious health conditions, have been admitted to a hospital or are a front-line health worker, Premier Alan Winde said.

"If you're younger than 55 and you have symptoms, assume you have Covid-19... After 14 days, you'll be fine. There's no purpose in getting a test," Western Cape head of health Keith Cloete told radio station Cape Talk this week. People who are younger than 55 and generally healthy are advised to isolate themselves if they show symptoms.

"We want to preserve tests for where it makes the most difference," Cloete said.

2nd Chinese city orders mass testing after Wuhan

Beijing: A Chinese city close to the Russian border has ordered the Covid-19 tests for all 2.8 million residents, becoming the second city in the country after Wuhan, the first virus epicentre, conducted mass testing of its entire population, state-media reported on Thursday.

According to the China's National Health Commission (NHC), one imported case was

reported in Guangdong Province on Wednesday.

Also, four new asymptomatic cases were reported in the country. In all, 326 asymptomatic cases, including 245 in Wuhan were under quarantine, it said.

As of Wednesday, the overall confirmed cases in the country reached 83,022. Among the total, 69

patients were still being treated, 78,319 had been discharged after recovery, and 4,634 people died of the disease, the report said.

Meanwhile, Mudanjiang city in China's Heilongjiang province bordering Russia has ordered the coronavirus tests for its 2.8 million people, official media here reported. PTI

UK hosts vaccine summit amid calls for free virus vaccine

AP ■ LONDON

The British Government is hosting a vaccine summit Thursday, hoping to raise billions of dollars to immunise children in developing countries and to discuss how any potential vaccine against the new coronavirus might be distributed globally — and fairly.

The event is a pledging conference for the vaccines alliance GAVI, which says the funds will be used to vaccinate about 300 million children in dozens of countries against diseases like malaria, pneumonia and HPV.

GAVI is also expected to start a new "advance market commitment" mechanism that it hopes will enable developing countries to get any effective Covid-19 vaccine when available. The United Nations and the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement have urged that "a people's vaccine" be developed that would be freely available to everyone, calling it a "moral imperative." PTI

UN, Red Cross ask Govts to unite in developing vaccine

AP ■ LONDON

The United Nations and the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement are urging that governments and others unite in developing a "people's vaccine" to protect everyone against the coronavirus.

Their appeal came ahead of a vaccine summit in London organised by the Global Vaccine Alliance that is seeking to mobilise billions of dollars of funding for a Covid-19 vaccine.

The "people's vaccine" should protect the affluent, the poor, the old and young, said a statement by the UN and the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. That is a "moral imperative that brings us all together in our shared humanity," it said.

It said the pandemic is also raising risks of other diseases as it disrupts childhood immunisation programs, leaving at least 80 million children under the age of one at risk of diseases like measles, diphtheria and polio.

Around the Globe

□ Britain's Indian-origin Business Secretary, Alok Sharma, has been tested for the novel coronavirus after feeling unwell at the despatch box in the House of Commons. Sharma, 52, was seen feeling uneasy and sweating during a debate on the Corporate Insolvency and Governance Bill in Parliament on Wednesday.

□ After a three-month closure due to the Covid-19 pandemic, Iran and Turkey have reopened the key border crossing of Bazargan on Thursday for trade exchanges. The Bazargan border crossing reopened at 10.30 am on Thursday. *Xinhua* news agency quoted the spokesperson for the Iranian Customs Administration, Ruhollah Latifi.

□ Researchers in the US have urged a temporary prohibition on prescribing chloroquine or hydroxychloroquine (HCQ), with or without azithromycin, to treat or prevent Covid-19. Despite the fact that there are no therapeutic or preventive measures for the Covid-19 pandemic in the US, prescriptions of these drugs are nine times greater than in the last several years.

□ Face masks will remain mandatory in Moscow until a mass vaccination campaign against the coronavirus begins, which may happen in October, or even later, the Russian capital city's Mayor Sergei Sobyanin said. "How long we will have to wear masks... it will largely depend on the development of a mass vaccine," he told TASS News Agency in an interview.

□ Britain's Prince Charles opened up on Thursday about his Covid-19 diagnosis and said he felt "lucky" to have suffered only mild symptoms of the coronavirus as he launched a new "Great Reset" agenda for the environment.

□ Chinese regulators said more foreign airlines will be allowed to fly to China as anti-coronavirus controls ease but it was unclear whether the change will defuse a fresh conflict with the Trump administration over air travel.

Markets snap 6-day winning run

Bank, finance stocks tank

Benchmark equity indices closed in the red on Thursday as investors pocketed gains after a six-session rally amid lacklustre global cues. Banking and finance stocks led the decline, while a depreciating rupee also weighed on sentiment, traders said.

After swinging 599 points during the day, the 30-share BSE Sensex settled 128.84 points or 0.38 per cent lower at 33,980.70. Likewise, the NSE Nifty slipped 32.45 points or 0.32 per cent to close at 10,029.10.



TOP GAINERS	TOP LOSERS
Tech Mahi 5.34	Asian Paints -4.85
Sun Pharma 3.98	Bajaj Fin -4.13
Bharti Airtel 3.89	HDFC -3.95
Power Grid 2.89	Indusind -3.81
HCL Tech 2.79	Axis Bank -3.72

Mahindra, Sun Pharma, Bharti Airtel and PowerGrid, which climbed up to 5.34 per cent.

Banking stocks came under pressure after the Supreme Court sought the finance ministry's reply on a petition seeking waiver of interest on loans during the moratorium period. The RBI has told the apex court that it would not be prudent to go for a "forced waiver of interest" risking financial viability of the banks.

"The rapid rally in world markets fed by bets on a speedy global economic recovery finally halted on Thursday, as traders waited to hear how much more stimulus the European Central Bank plans to shovel out to address the coronavirus slump.

"After weeks of sharp gains for stocks, oil and currencies, investors were looking to lock in some profit," said Deepak Jasani, Head Retail Research, HDFC Securities. BSE bank, finance, capital goods, realty, consumer durables and industrials indices shed up to 2.70 per cent, while telecom, teck, IT, energy and healthcare closed with gains of up to 3.47 per cent. Broader BSE mid-cap and small-cap indices slipped up to 0.06 per cent.

International oil benchmark Brent crude futures fell 1.21 per cent to USD 39.31 per barrel. The rupee depreciated 10 paise to provisionally close at 75.57 against the US dollar.

G7: Debt relief initiative for poorest nations can be extended beyond 2020

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

The Finance Ministers of the wealthy G7 nations have said a debt relief initiative for the world's poorest countries could be extended beyond the end of the year to help deal with the fallout from the coronavirus pandemic.

Their joint statement came amid warnings that low-income and emerging market economies will need more than the International Monetary Fund's initial estimate of USD 2.5 trillion to deal with the crisis.

The Group of Seven (G7) includes Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the UK and the US.

"We continue to work together to advance the international economic response to the Covid-19 pandemic, with a focus on the poorest and most vulnerable countries," the

ministers of the world's most advanced economies said.

"Covid-19 has exacerbated existing debt vulnerabilities in many low-income countries, highlighting the importance of debt sustainability and transparency to long-term financing for development," they said. These nations welcomed efforts of the international financial institutions (IFIs) to amplify their support for the most vulnerable countries.

"In this context, we are committed to implementing the Debt Service Suspension Initiative (DSSI) agreed by the G20 and the Paris Club, by suspending official bilateral debt payments for the poorest countries to year-end 2020 and possibly longer, providing those countries fiscal space to fund social, health, and other measures to respond to the pandemic," they said.

"In line with the G20 and Paris Club DSSI agreements, we will implement the DSSI across our export credit agencies and other public lending agencies, and call on all official creditors to do so, too," they said.

The G-7 Finance Ministers said they strongly support the commitment by DSSI beneficiary countries to strengthen debt reporting, which facilitates better-informed investment decisions, enhances public accountability, and supports long-term sustainable development.

"We welcome that the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank Group will monitor creditor participation, public debt disclosure, and use of additional fiscal space, and we look forward to public reporting of these results.

Wall Street's rally stalls; stocks mixed in early trading

AP ■ NEW YORK

Stocks are mixed in early trading on Wall Street on Thursday as the market takes a pause following its longest winning streak in nearly four months. The S&P 500 was down 0.1%, putting its four-day winning streak under threat. A report showed that the number of US workers filing for unemployment benefits eased for a ninth straight week, but economists saw pockets of disappointment after the total number of people getting benefits rose slightly.

That number had dropped the prior week, which had raised hopes that some companies were rehiring workers. The Dow Jones Industrial Average was down 5 points at 26,264, as of 9:57 am Eastern time, and the Nasdaq composite was up 0.2%.

Many professional investors have been arguing that the stock market's rally, which reached nearly 40% between late March and Wednesday, was overdone and that a pullback was likely coming. Stocks began surging following massive aid for the economy from Washington. More recently, they've climbed on optimism that the recession created by the reaction to the coronavirus outbreak could end relatively quickly as states and countries lift lockdown restrictions.

Critics said stocks were rising much more quickly than expectations for corporate profits and other measures of financial health. They also pointed to risks in rising US-China tensions and the possibility of second waves of coronavirus infections.

Longer-term Treasury yields were rising on Thursday. That area of the market had been one of the first to warn of the coming economic devastation from the coronavirus outbreak, and it's been much more circumspect in recent weeks than the US stock market.

Govt mulling making large firms disclose MSME dues: Gadkari

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The Government is mulling to make it mandatory for large companies to disclose their dues to the micro, small and medium enterprises to ensure that timely payments get made, Union Minister Nitin Gadkari said on Thursday.

The MSME minister conceded that despite various interventions, including promising micro, small and medium firms that payments by the Central Government and its undertakings will be made within 45 days of delivery of goods or service, a satisfactory solution to the problem has been elusive.

MSMEs are considered the backbone of the Indian economy, contributing the bulk of Indian employment, manufacturing and exports. Many such firms have been hit hard by the

Covid-19 crisis.

"We are thinking of various ways on how micro, small and medium (enterprises) can get their money. One attempt is to make the bigger company declare whether they have paid MSME or not and make the same binding for them. This is thought going on," Gadkari said during an interaction with the small businesses focused industry lobby ILC.

Without elaborating on the details of the scheme being considered, Gadkari said the payment issue is "very serious" and added that non-payment leads to working capital becoming scarce for such businesses.

Gadkari also said the time is not correct to introduce any "strong legislation" on this front as everybody is suffering in the current crisis, but assured stakeholders of coming out with some solution.

Another scheme being considered is to partner with banks, wherein a bank pays the supplier in a specified time and starts collecting interest from the company which has received the goods or service, he said. Gadkari also said Government is looking at a specially created "MSME Stock Exchange", which will have such small businesses listed on it. Government will provide equity of 15 per cent to those businesses which list on the platform.

Minister: FDI in non-bank lenders needs to be explored for greater support to MSMEs

New Delhi: Union Minister Nitin Gadkari on Thursday said foreign direct investment (FDI) can be explored in the non-banking financial companies (NBFC) sector, which in return will prove to be a huge support to micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs).

The Minister opined that strengthening of non-banking lenders or NBFCs, state cooperative banks, district cooperative banks, credit societies, etc is required to extend support to

MSMEs during this challenging time. Further, FDI can be explored in NBFCs to strengthen them, which will lead towards greater support to MSMEs, an official statement said quoting the minister.

He said a credit rating mechanism can be devised for NBFCs also to support them adding that a possibility needs to be explored to get some foreign investment in the NBFC space.

He said in a situation where an NBFC has a good credit rating, it can be a good thing if such a company can also attract foreign investment but a criteria needs to be fixed for this purpose. Regarding request for extension of interest subvention scheme for MSMEs, which was in place until March 31, 2020, Gadkari said: "We have already recommended to the Finance Ministry for giving extension to this scheme. I am trying my level best to get it approved... If I get it, definitely we will continue this scheme." PTI

Centre releases ₹36,400-cr GST compensation to UTs, States for 3 months till Feb

New Delhi: The Centre has released ₹36,400 crore as GST compensation to the States and Union Territories for three months till February 2020.

For the April-November 2019 period, the Centre had already released ₹1,15,096 crore to compensate States and UTs on account of revenue loss due to implementation of the Goods and Services Tax (GST).

"Taking stock of the current situation due to Covid-19 where State Governments need to undertake expenditure while their resources are adversely hit, the Central Government has released the GST compensation of ₹36,400 crore to the states/UTs with legislature for

the period from December 2019 to February 2020," an official statement said.

The Centre had released ₹69,275 crore in 2018-19 and ₹41,146 crore in 2017-18 as compensation for GST which was rolled out on July 1, 2017.

The cess collection in 2019-20, 2018-19 and 2017-18 fiscal was ₹95,000 crore, ₹95,081 crore and ₹62,611 crore, respectively. As the compensation requirement of the states was less than collection in the first two years (2017-18 and 2018-19) of GST rollout, ₹47,271 crore GST compensation cess collected had remained unutilised in the compensation kitty. PTI

Crisil: Agri sector likely to remain resilient from Covid-19 impact; to grow 2.5% in FY21

Mumbai: Even as coronavirus pandemic has impacted many sectors, the agriculture could be the only bright spot as real agriculture is likely to witness a 2.5 per cent growth in 2020-21, according to a report.

The report by Crisil Research however listed risks such as any likely impact of locust attacks and impact of lockdown on horticulture produce. With the pandemic and the ensuing lockdown, demand for horticultural produce is likely to be impacted more than that of food grains.

Food grains have the Government's minimum support price (MSP) and procurement support, the report explained. PTI

Report: Bank NPAs may worsen to 11.6% by end of this fiscal due to coronavirus

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Gross non-performing assets (NPAs) of banks are likely to worsen to 11.3-11.6 per cent by the end of this financial year from 8.6 per cent as of March 2020, due to disruptions caused by the coronavirus pandemic, according to a report.

Fresh gross slippages are estimated to be at 5-5.5 per cent of standard advances during 2020-21, which will increase the banks' credit provision and impact their earnings, rating agency ICRA said in a report.

With an increase in stress on asset quality and profitability, state-owned banks may need ₹45,000-82,500 crore of capital in this financial year under a weak credit growth scenario, it said. "The RBI moratorium on borrowers was extended by another three months till August 31, 2020, and we expect the asset quality stress is likely to reflect only in third and fourth quarters

of 2020-21 results," the rating agency's sector head (financial sector ratings) Anil Gupta said.

It said that while the lockdown has surely impacted the debt-servicing ability of borrowers, the extent of revival in economic activities as the restrictions are eased will drive the final impact on asset quality of banks.

The credit provisions will continue to exceed the operating profits for the public sector banks during 2020-21, translating in a sixth consecutive year of loss, it said.

The profitability of private sector banks will also moderate with return on equity declining to 3.5-5.1 per cent during 2020-21 as against earlier expectations of improvement to 10-12 per cent. The incremental credit growth of banks during this financial year is expected to be ₹6-7 lakh crore, which will translate into a year-on-year credit growth of around 6-7 per cent. PTI

CII cautions against increasing fiscal deficit to spur coronavirus-hit economy

New Delhi: Amid the call for higher public spending to spur growth, the CII on Thursday sounded a note of caution saying that the Government should guard against increasing fiscal deficit that may prompt rating downgrade resulting in other consequences for the economy.

Earlier this week, Moody's Investors Service downgraded India's sovereign rating to 'Baa3' from 'Baa2', saying there will be challenges in implementation of policies to mitigate risks of a sustained period of low growth and deteriorating fiscal position.

In its agenda document 2020-21, the CII also refrained from making an estimate on economic growth this fiscal year given the uncertainty of the situation against the backdrop of Covid-19 pandemic. There is currently a consensus amongst economists that the Indian economy will witness a contraction in 2020-21, the question is how deeply negative the growth is likely to be, the chamber said. The RBI also expects GDP growth to remain negative in the current financial year. PTI

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BITES subsidiary mandated for management of 3 GW solar plants installation on railway land

Gurugram: BITES Limited's subsidiary Railway Energy Management Company Ltd. (REMCL) has secured its largest mandate from Indian Railways for handling tendering, installation supervision and managing power supply from 3 GW solar power plants to be set up on vacant Indian Railways Land.

The project will be divided into 3 phases of 1 GW each. First and third phase of 1 GW each will be on PPP basis under Design, Build, Finance, Operate and Transfer model. Second

phase of the project (1 GW) will be on ownership model of REMCL, which will be eligible for capital subsidy under CPSE investment scheme.

The Railways has already identified suitable land to be leased to REMCL on nominal lease rent.

Commenting on this mandate, Rajeev Mehrotra, Chairman & Managing Director, RITES Ltd and Chairman REMCL, said, "This is the largest mandate received by REMCL for tendering, installation and power management of solar energy. This will strengthen REMCL's position as the green energy solution provider and energy manager to Indian Railways and firmly establish REMCL in green energy sector in India."

Besides Bid management fee in the beginning, REMCL would earn long term revenue through supply management from these installations which may amount to approximately ₹20 crore per year to REMCL during life of the project. Entire installation is expected to be completed by 2022-23.

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NOTICE

General Public is hereby informed through this notice that **Dr. Attam's Nursing Home** situated at 19 Bhera Enclave, New Delhi-110087 is going to destroy its Medical admission records upto March 2016, as per record destruction rule. If any body is interested in obtaining the records of March 2016 and before may contact the Nursing Home within 7 day of appearance of this notice. After that administration will not be responsible for the records.

Thanks
Hospital Manager

GOVERNMENT OF TELANGANA Fisheries Department

TENDER NOTICE

Department of Fisheries Invites Bids on e-procurement platform (www.tender.telangana.gov.in) for supply of Fish Seed District Wise for the year 2020-21. Advt No. 909/C/2020, Date: 01-06-2020. Time schedule of various tender related events: Bid Calling Date: 05-06-2020. Downloading of Bid Documents: 05-06-2020 from 11:00AM to 22:00:00 (upto 12:00 Noon). Pre-bid: Queries regarding the bid will be accepted through online to the mail id tenders.fishseed@gmail.com upto 10 AM on 06-06-2020. Last date for clarification: 09-06-2020 5:00PM. Bid Submission starting date: 10-06-2020, 11:00 AM onwards. Bid Closing date: 23-06-2020, 3:00 PM. Bid opening date: 23-06-2020, 3:30PM. Bid document Fee: Rs.10,000/- Contact Person Name and phone number: Dy. Director of Fisheries, Inland Ph. 9515733379. If you are interested in participation, please visit website at www.tender.telangana.gov.in and www.fisheries.telangana.gov.in and District wise bid documents can be downloaded free of cost from the above website.

DIPR No. : 103-DP/CL/Agency/Advt/1/2020-21 Sd/-Deputy Director, Fisheries

PLL welcomes decision for establishment of LNG dispensing station in country

New Delhi: Petroleum Natural Gas Regulatory Board (PNGRB) in its public notice on 2nd June 2020 announced that any entity can set up an LNG station in any Geographical Area (GA) or anywhere else, even if it is not the authorised entity for that GA.

This clarification by the PNGRB has been wholeheartedly welcomed by PLL management. PLL being the pioneer and the largest LNG infrastructure company of India would like to facilitate LNG dispensing infrastructure across the country on major national highways and invites OMCs, CGD entities or any interested parties to partner up for this project.

Petronet's MD&CEO Shri. Prabhat Singh said "PLL in its endeavour to contribute towards vision of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and relentless efforts of Cabinet Minister of Petroleum and Natural Gas and Minister of Steel Dharmendra Pradhan of making India a gas based economy is putting in all efforts to promote LNG as a cleaner, greener and economic automotive fuel for Medium and Heavy Commercial Vehicles (M&HCVs) in India."

In these efforts, PLL has already launched its first commercially registered LNG buses and LNG dispensing stations at its Dahej and Kochi Terminals.

बिहार सरकार

बिहार राज्य भवन निर्माण निगम लि., पटना
(बिहार सरकार का उपक्रम)

अति अल्पकालीन कोटेशन आमंत्रण सूचना सं-02(Cons.)/2020-21

- OFFICER INVITING BID : CHIEF GENERAL MANAGER, Bihar State Building Construction Corporation Ltd. Patna.
- DATE OF BID : 08/06/2020
- TIME, DATE AND PLACE OF PRE-BID MEETING : 12/06/2020 TIME 3.30 P.M. PLACE: BIH R STATE BUILDING CONSTRUCTION CORPORATION LTD.,PATNA.
- LAST DATE FOR SUBMITTING THE COMPLETE BID : 18/06/2020 up to 3.30 P.M To Chief General Manager, Bihar State Building Construction Corporation Ltd., Hospital Road, Shastri Nagar, Patna-800023. (Bids in one large sealed envelope marked as "Quotation- supply for renewal the license of AutoCAD Software")
- TIME AND DATE OF OPENING BID : 19/06/2020 TIME 3.30 P.M. DOCUMENTS (In the presence of bidders or their authorized representative.)
- Following work :

Sl. No.	Description	Qty.	Amount (Per Unit Inclusive All Tax)	Total Amount (Rs.)
1	Supply & Installation of latest version Architecture Engineering & Construction Collection IC Commercial New Single-user ELD 3-Year Subscription with Basic Support.	03		
2	Supply & Installation of latest version Auto CAD Software - including specialized toolsets AD Commercial New Single-user ELD 3-Year Subscription with Basic Support.	01		
Total				

Terms & condition:

- Bidder must be an authorized partner of Autodesk and submit authorization certificate.
- Bidder must have annual turnover (fy. yr. 2017-18, 2018-19, 2019-20) of min. One Crore, must be attached copy.
- Bidders must have submit Quality Standard Certificate for desing engineering which active till date.
- Bidder should be GST registered.
- Rate inclusive of all taxes.
- Delivery & installation must be completed within 2 weeks of award of the order.
- Any correction in the regard will be published on the website www.bsbccl.bih.nic.in.
- BSBCCCL reserves the right to cancel the NIT without any information.
- For any additional information bidder may contact to Sr. Architect (MOBILE NO-9534600010),BSBCCCL.
- Bidders Documents must be self attested.

बिस्तृत जानकारी के लिए www.prdbihar.gov.in पर देखा जा सकता है।

Chief General Manager
Bihar State Building Construction Corporation Ltd. Patn

PR-01918 (Ni Ni) 2020-21

बिस्तृत जानकारी के संबंध में बिस्तृत जानकारी एवं सहयोग हेतु Toll Free No.: 104 पर संपर्क कर सकते हैं।
Toll Free No.: 104 पर संपर्क कर सकते हैं।

नोबल कोरोना के संबंध में बिस्तृत जानकारी एवं सहयोग हेतु दूरभाष संख्या 0612-2217636 पर सम्पर्क किया जा सकता है।
Toll Free No.: 104 पर संपर्क कर सकते हैं।

नोबल कोरोना के संबंध में बिस्तृत जानकारी एवं सहयोग हेतु दूरभाष संख्या 0612-2217636 पर सम्पर्क किया जा सकता है।
Toll Free No.: 18003456138

PUBLIC NOTICE

Information is given to general public at large that my client Mrs. Satnam Kaur owner of Freehold Residential entire 1st Floor, without roof rights (said flat) built up on Property bearing No. WZ-84-A in Plot no. 252, area measuring 377 Sq. yds., out of total area measuring 150 Sq. Yds., out of Kheda no. 1618 situated in the area of Village Keshpur in the area of Gurgaon, Haryana. Said flat and some property sold to be Mr. Gurmeet Singh and same property is going to be financed by Awas Financiers Limited (Formerly known as AU Housing Finance Ltd.) Branch NSP New Delhi. If any person is having objection right claim against the said property, contact to the undersigned along with supporting documents within 7 days from the date of publication of this notice and or the same to the undersigned if found by any one.

Naveen Kumar Verma, Advocate
F-211, Sector-3, Vaishali, Ghazalabad, Uttar Pradesh-201010, Mobile: 09959871432

PSPCL Punjab State Power Corporation Limited

(Regd. Office: PSEB Head Office, The Mall, Patiala)
(Corporate Identity Number: U4010PB2010SGC033813)
(www.pspcl.in)

NOTICE INVITING TENDER
(Press Note)

Enquiry No. 91/SE/Th.O/253/O&M/GHTP/2020 Dated: 03-06-2020

Short Description : To assist in the work under thermal operation in the execution of operational jobs of all four units of GHTP Stage-I&II round the clock in three shifts and during general duty hours at GHTP, Lehra Mohabbat as per detailed scope of work on lump sum basis.

EMD: The tenders shall be required to submit fixed earnest money of Rupees three lakhs for thousands only (i.e. Rs. 3.04 Lakhs) online on the website <https://eproc.punjab.gov.in>

Date & Time upto which tender shall be submission: 03-07-2020 upto to 11:30 Hrs. Date & Time of opening of tender: 06-07-2020 at 12:00 Hrs.

Tender specification can only be downloaded from website <http://eproc.punjab.gov.in>

Note:

- The prospective bidders can obtain clarification regarding tender specifications from this office. For registration of digital signature and uploading of tender, information may be sought from M/s E-procure Technologies Ltd., in case the tender process is not completed due to any reason no corrigendum will be published in newspapers. Detail regarding corrigendum may be seen on website i.e. <https://eproc.punjab.gov.in>.

Superintending Engineer,
Thermal Operation Circle,
GHTP, PSPCL, Lehra Mohabbat,
Distt. Bathinda- 151111 (Punjab)
Email ID: se-th-op-lehra@pspcl.in
Mobile No.: 96461-17603

GHTP-30/2020
RO 31306/2020

BIHAR STATE KHADI AND VILLAGE INDUSTRIES BOARD

Govt. of Bihar

Corrigendum - 1

Due to the pandemic Covid 19 and nationwide lockdown, the date for the submission and opening of tender is extended as follows:

Previous Tender Notice 113 dated 17.03.2020 and PR No.-017496, dated 17.03.2020 for Selection of Manpower Agency for Providing Security Guards & Ancillary Services Personnel at Khadi Mall, East Gandhi Maidan, Patna, Bihar

Wherever appear in the bid Document or NIT

Last date of Receiving Bid Document: 24th June 2020 2 PM
Last date of Receiving Bid Document :15th April 2020 2 PM
Last date of Opening Bid Document:15th April 2020 4 PM

Will Appear As

Last date of Receiving Bid Document: 24th June 2020 5 PM
Last date of Opening Bid Document: 24th June 2020 5 PM

Further information can be obtained from the address mentioned below during office hours (10.30 AM to 5.00PM):

Chief Executive Officer, Bihar State Khadi and Village Industries Board, East Gandhi Maidan, Patna- 800001, Contact: 9771427746, 7004503382
Mail id: kvbipatna@gmail.com Website: www.kvbiibihar.com

PR No. 002002(Industries)2020-21

नोबल कोरोना के संबंध में बिस्तृत जानकारी एवं सहयोग हेतु Toll Free No.: 104 पर संपर्क कर सकते हैं।
Toll Free No.: 104 पर संपर्क कर सकते हैं।

नोबल कोरोना के संबंध में बिस्तृत जानकारी एवं सहयोग हेतु दूरभाष संख्या 0612-2217636 पर सम्पर्क किया जा सकता है।
Toll Free No.: 104 पर संपर्क कर सकते हैं।

नोबल कोरोना के संबंध में बिस्तृत जानकारी एवं सहयोग हेतु दूरभाष संख्या 0612-2217636 पर सम्पर्क किया जा सकता है।
Toll Free No.: 18003456138

Trend Blazer

Dad put singing in my veins: Parineeti

Actor **PARINEETI CHOPRA** credits her father Pawan Chopra for being the person who gifted her the craft of singing.

On her father's birthday on Thursday, she took to Instagram and shared a throw-back family photograph.

"My dad. The guy who put singing in my veins. He sings before he talks. Makes fun of everything. Is car obsessed. Buys scooters and redesigns them. Feeds everyone else before eating himself. Does not understand the concept of ordering 'less' from a menu. Army businessman," she wrote.



'I miss my friends but that's really not even an issue if you put things in perspective. I

am okay with the lockdown if it means that we can stop the spread of the virus. It made everyone realise not to take things for granted. I am fortunate to be at home with my loved ones. All I want to do is to help the ones who are in need.'

—Sonakshi Sinha

Actor **SARA ALI KHAN** took a witty jibe at her *Coolie No 1* co-star Varun Dhawan's latest post on social media.



Varun, who keeps his fans and followers entertained with his regular posts on Instagram, shared a black and white selfie from the beach. He seems to have used an effect to show a rainbow in the backdrop.

He captioned the image, "The stories are true."

Sara commented, "Oh! You actually went to the beach. I thought you were joking."

Sara and Varun will be seen in the remake of the 1995 hit film *Coolie No 1*.

Bell talks about anti-racist kids

Actress **KRISTEN BELL** says she is raising her two daughters to be "anti-racists," adding that she doesn't care about their sexual choices.

In an interview, the actor took a vow to continue her two daughters —

Lincoln, seven, and Delta, five — as anti-racists. "When

we send them into the world, they are going to be formidable, opinionated, kind, morally-com-passioned women, and I'm so grateful for that," said the 39-year-old star.

Bell asserted that she wants to love them as they are and doesn't care about their career or sexual orientation.



LESSONS FROM CORONA

A NEW LEASE OF LIFE?

On this World Environment Day, let's pledge to use this crisis to do things differently and build back a better world that is more sustainable, resilient and inclusive, says **SAKSHI SHARMA**

Child: "Tell me the one about the virus again. Then, I'll go to bed. That one's my favourite."

Adult male: "Okay! Snuggle down my boy, though I know that you know full well..."

"It was a world of waste and wonder, poverty and plenty. Back before we understood why hindsight's 2020. You see, the people came up with companies to trade across all lands but they swelled and got much bigger than we ever could have planned. We'd always had our wants but now, it got so quick, you could have anything you dreamed of in a day and with a click. We noticed families had stopped talking. That's not to say they never spoke but the meaning must have melted and the work-life balance broke. The children's eyes grew squarer and every toddler had a phone. They filtered out the imperfections but amid the noise, they felt alone. Every day the skies grew thicker till you couldn't see the stars. So we flew in planes to find them, while down below, we filled our cars. We'd drive around all day in circles. We'd forgotten how to run. We swapped the grass for tarmac, shrunk the parks till there was none. We filled the sea with plastic because our waste was never capped. Until, each day, when you went fishing you'd pull them out already wrapped. While we drank, smoked and gambled, our leaders taught us why it's best to not upset the lobbies, more convenient to die.

"But then, in 2020, a new virus came our way. The governments reacted and told us all to hide away. But while we all were hidden, amidst the fear, people dusted off their instincts. They remembered how to smile, started clapping to say thank you and calling up their mums. And while the car keys gathered dust, they would look forward to their runs. With the skies less full of

voyagers, the earth began to breathe. The beaches bore new wildlife that scuttled off into the seas. Some people started dancing, some were singing and some were baking. We'd grown so used to bad news but some good news was in the making. So when we found the cure, and were allowed to go outside, we all preferred the world we found to the one we'd left behind. Old habits became extinct and they made way for the new. Every simple act of kindness was now given its due."

Child: "But why did it take a virus to bring people back together?"

Adult male: "Well, sometimes you've got to get sick, my boy, before you start feeling better."

Tom Roberts' poem, *The Great Realisation*, is a bedtime tale about pre-pandemic life that falls apart when a virus hits, and yet, the — a world where people are kinder and understand the reality of life.

Years ago, when 2012 was predicted to be the doomed year, nobody believed it. Neither the eponymous film, nor the predictions. They seemed too bizarre for so many calamities to take place together, all of a sudden. Well, 2020, has been acting much like 2012, only a more exaggerated version of it. It started with Amazon and Australia bushfires, followed by the Coronavirus pandemic, cyclones, locusts attack, blood-sucking ticks attack, tsunami (near Russia), landslides (in Assam), earthquakes and what not, have taken a toll on the world.

The year of keeping in touch with our loved ones on video calls, virtual meetings on account of a lockdown has definitely many drawbacks. But it has been a blessing in disguise for our ecosystem as it has considerably slowed down the vicious cycle of unnecessary human consump-



tion and nature has been flourishing. Manu Singh, Chief Mentor, and Environmentalist, Varenym says, "The result of the lockdown has been clearer skies, purer rivers, thriving flora and fauna and an astronomical decrease in pollution."

We saw a lot of examples that made it evident that nature was balancing itself as humans were locked indoors — clear water in the Venice canals, pigeon flocked the streets of Connaught Place in Delhi, flamingoes were sighted by hundreds in Mumbai. Gangetic Dolphins were spotted near Kolkata ghats after almost 30 years while resident of Jalandhar, Punjab and its surrounding areas were thrilled with the clear views of Himalayan peaks which weren't visible for decades.

All these incidents have made us reflect on our actions and earth's sustainability. Now that the lockdown is relaxed and later when life gets back on track, will pollution and other man-made disasters resume or is there a sense of realisation among the people? Manu says: "Let's not imagine that this will, in anyway, remain the case, once the lockdown is lifted. We have turned ourselves into reactive zombies, who will again resume

the rat race and individualism without giving any conscious thought to these learnings. People who have come to this realisation and will act upon it are a minuscule minority, whereas the ones itching to get back to the nefarious normal are in huge numbers."

Delhi-based environmental activist and entrepreneur, Jai Dhar Gupta agrees and says, "Human memory is very short. They won't remember after a while what disaster they have caused to the environment. The basic human nature is to be selfish. We will only be concerned about our economic survival which is at stake now. We will use the fossil fuels at the same rate and will bounce back to the old ways because people don't change that easily." He adds that the subset of people, who are environmentalists, is very small. Their hopes or aspirations don't even matter.

Now that earth has become cleaner, albeit temporarily, how can we make sure people don't repeat the mistakes that they have been making since decades? Well, Manu believes that the worst kind of pollution is not air, water, soil or noise but pollution of consciousness. We abuse ourselves, our fellow sentient beings, and nature because we have polluted our consciousness by investing in ego and greed instead of love, compassion and care. "The entire creation is a web of interconnectedness and the moment we start acting as if we're separate from it, we start behaving like carcinogens who grow only for the sake of growth, destroying the ecosystem that nourish us — and eventually destroying ourselves. We need to slow down and feel the treasures of nature within and without, re-establishing our connection with life. We need to realise

what we are losing as this alone can stop us from wreaking havoc on our planet," says he.

The question of meeting our current needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs is sustainable development. But this is something that we do not pause and think about. Jai Dhar says that of course the right approach is to find a more sustainable way. He adds: "But before looking for solutions let us see what those mistakes are? One of the big problem is that 60 per cent people light their *chulha* using bio fuel — wood or dried cow dung, which is the largest source of air pollution. How is that going to go away? The people using them are either too poor or live in remote areas and neither the people at large, nor the government seem to try hard to change that. I don't think even our Environment Minister knows what the word 'sustainable' actually means, it is blind leading the blind. Our forest minister has done everything possible to destroy the environment to promote growth. We are compromising on health and government. We have been doing it for years."

Talking about sustainability in the current times, he further asks, "What is it that people are buying in large numbers numbers?" and then answers, "it is the masks and PPE kits. Does anyone of us know how to use and throw plastic masks and PPE kits? How will they decomposed? Is their any authority that will regulate the waste that will be produced? Well, these are the questions we need to ask the government so that our safety doesn't act as a burden for the environment."

We can

make sustainability possible now through a paradigm shift in our concept of development from a greed-based model to a need-based one. We need to revisit what Gandhiji had exhorted — the planet has enough for every man's need but not enough for every man's greed. Manu says, "This concept of development must migrate away from its current anthropocentric viewpoint and encapsulate all life forms and forces that support them. Our model of economics shouldn't be an impediment in the path of ecology, but should protect it. Nations must join forces to promote cleaner forms of energies, reduce the population, destruction of rainforests and dumping of contaminants into our ecosystem."

We can use this crisis to do things differently and understand the power and change that one person can bring about. While Jai Dhar's only ray of hope is today's youth, Manu says that this predicament is born out of our current lifestyles and we must radically and consciously alter it. He adds, "During this crisis, we have witnessed first hand how vehicular and industrial emissions affect our natural systems and what horrors are unleashed by the diabolic animal flesh trade. Thus, we can pledge and join forces to make the necessary lifestyle changes to mitigate the disastrous effects of these industries at least. Finally, I'll quote Gandhiji again, 'Be the change you want to see in the world.'"

Post self-realisation, we need to actively engage other people and transform this into a continuous movement, ensuring that our elections are fought over it so that we build back a better world that is more sustainable, resilient and inclusive.



THE COMMON TOUCH

Bollywood has lost another legend, **BASU CHATTERJEE**. However, his works continue to have a lasting impression and find relevance even today. By **TEAM VIVA**

It's been five months into 2020 and the film industry has already lost a few of its legends. Filmmaker and screenplay writer Basu Chatterjee joined the list yesterday. His passing away at 92 due to age-related ailments has made film connoisseurs reminisce about his films and the reality he brought out through them. His works are still remembered as something that had made the 1970s the most fascinating and interesting times for the Indian cinema.

Here are his five must-watch films, which find relevance even today due to themes that resonate.

SARA AKASH (1969)

The film, Chatterjee's directorial debut, has time and again proved to be a must-watch for married couples. It traces the journey of a couple who, because of the man's obstinacy, doesn't interact with each other for a long time after their marriage. The film is a commentary on incompatible marriages and how Indian joint families force decisions.

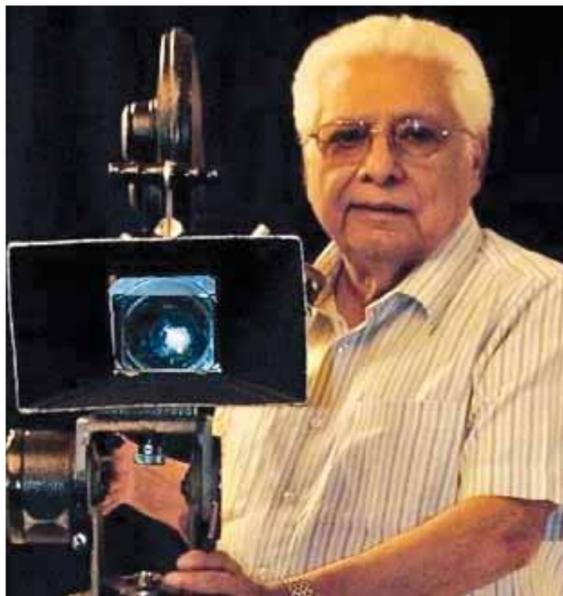
The protagonist Samar, played by Rakesh Pandey, even recalls in a scene how he once discussed the urge to "break-free" from society's expectations with his friends, when he says, "Inhi baadhaon ko kuchal kar hume aage badhna hai."

The film is also said to have showcased the early distorted view of what came to be known as the Middle cinema — a waystation between glamorous commercial films and self-consciously inward-looking art-house cinema. And representing man-woman relationships through the prism of reality was Chatterjee's forte.

PIYA KA GHAR (1972)

While *Sara Akash* portrayed the disputes of a newly-married couple, this film focussed on privacy in a marriage by showcasing a struggling couple in a joint family of seven in Mumbai, somewhat explaining the 'big city woes.'

Through satire, the film commented on how two people in love could long for privacy in their own home. However, with "Jagah toh dil



mein honi chahiye, aur kahin nahi," it summed up its underlying message.

RAJNIGANDHA (1974)

The sea, the romance, the maximum city — these are just three things which explain one of the most celebrated films by Chatterjee, *Rajnigandha*.

It traces the journey of Deepa, who is deeply in love with Sanjay in Delhi and unexpectedly meets Navin in Mumbai, her former lover. She is later left confused between the two.

The reason why the film found a place in people's hearts is because Chatterjee, while showing a woman confused in love, neither made it scandalous nor apologetic. The protagonist, first travelled to another city all by herself to find independence and later, goes through



turmoil to eventually find clarity.

Art collector and archivist Supratik Roy had once said, "*Rajnigandha's* poster is one such that if you remove the title credits, it's an amazing artwork by itself, not a typical film poster."

KHATTA MEETHA (1978)

The film portrays a middle-aged Parsi widow and widower, who decide to get married despite the objections of their grown-up children.

It still finds relevance because even today, adults might find it hard to adjust with the fact that their single parents could also fall in love with anyone else. "Thoda hai, thode ki zarurat hai..." explains it all.

CHITCHOR (1976)

A misunderstanding about his professional position brings Vinod (played by Amol Palekar) close to Geeta (played by Zarina Wahab) and her family. However, later, when Vinod's boss Sunil (played by Vijayendra Ghatge) enters their lives, her family chooses Sunil as Geeta's suitor, considering him as her lover.

The film was described as a typical Basu Chatterjee presentation, as it was "so infectious, so appealing. Simple, realistic and aesthetic to the core, you want to revisit and experience the joy of quality and meaningful cinema," by a national daily. It simply brings two people close to each other without dramatising anything, or a guy trying to woo a girl. Rather, it makes for a very compelling and natural narration.

The film was also nominated for Filmfare Best Screenplay Award.

I like to lead: Freida

Actor **Freida Pinto**-voiced animated show *Mira, Royal Detective*, revolves around Mira, a brave and resourceful girl who is appointed for the role of royal detective by the queen.

She says, "There will be many things you recognise if you are from India. Right from the care, attention and detail taken to focus on costume, food, conversation about food and words that are being used. At the end of the day, this is an international show, but the creators of the show have been so mindful as to not isolate those watching it in India who are growing up in this culture. So, it feels like there is a convergence of international appeal and the Indian story."

She further added, "I think Queen Shanti and I have this one thing in common. We both like to lead, and I think while I was voicing the character of Queen Shanti, I did embody those leadership qualities. So, I feel the thing that I learned from her is to lead with grace and to come from a place of kindness."

(The show is available on Disney+ Hotstar Premium.)





KEEP YOUR GIN UP



EVONNE EADIE, Reserve Brand Ambassador of Diageo, explores the evolution of gin, its growth as a popular spirit and gives a lowdown on the best ways to enjoy this liquid

From war to mass addiction and palaces to naval ships, gin has been through it all. Since the late 1600s, the drink has been both a trailblazer and a traditionalist. The world's first substance epidemic of the masses and savoured by royalty — gin has seen it all. Over the course of this article, we will explore the evolution of gin, how it has developed into the popular spirit we drink today and, most importantly, how best to enjoy this glorious liquid. So, let's first define what exactly a gin is. It's a spirit that has been flavoured with botanicals through distillation or compounding, with the most important botanical called juniper. Though there are a few examples to the contrary, as a whole, gin is not aged.

EVOLUTION
During the war with William of Orange the British soldiers witnessed the Dutch soldiers scull a healthy measure of this Dutch Genever before charging madly into a battle and thus was born the phrase, 'Dutch Courage'. Like with many things, the British adopted this foreign substance and made it their own. Refining it to suit their palates and rebranding it as quintessentially English.

This new spirit quickly grew in popularity with both the upper and middle class in Britain. The upper class praised it for its refined flavours and exclusive nature, while the lower class praised it for its significantly higher abv (alcohol by vol-

ume) to their staple, beer. This popularity among the masses grew into addiction and London in particular was faced with a widespread epidemic. To curb the consumption, the government introduced a number of laws. One of those being the Tippling Act 1751, which regulated both sale and production of poor quality 'bath-tub gin' — a poorly made, unregulated and dangerous liquor. Thus, paving the way for commercial brands like Gordon's and later, Tanqueray to grow in popularity bringing to market the gins we love today.

In more recent history, gin fell out of favour during the late 20th century with the

increase in popularity of vodka, which had been growing since the late 1950s. Vodka being more neutral in flavour could provide a boozy element to drinks without influencing the flavour of other ingredients. From a brand point of view, this was a marketer's dream, it could be promoted due to the fact you could have several drinks at lunch and no one would smell it on your breath when you returned to work.

Over time gin became synonymous with older folk, less trendy and was seen as a depressant. Gaining names like 'Mother's Ruin' as it was considered something you would find gathering dust in your



grandmother's closet rather than being ordered at a bar. Fast forward 20 years and gin is now in a true renaissance as discerning drinkers become more educated on what they are putting in their glass and transitioning from less flavourous spirits like vodka into the versatile world of gin.

GIN IN INDIA
There are wonderful ties between India and gin. Not only is the country close-

GIN & TONIC
You cannot go past a G&T on a warm summer's day. The ice-cold burst of effervescence on my palate quenches my thirst in no time.
INGREDIENTS
Tanqueray London Dry Gin: 50 ml
Indian tonic water: 150 ml
METHOD
Fill a large wineglass with ice.
Pour in Tanqueray and tonic water.
Stir well.
Garnish with a twist (or slice) of fresh citrus.

WET MARTINI
For those moments between work and dinner, I like to treat myself to a martini. The sophisticated feeling brought by savouring a martini in a gorgeous bar allows me to leave the day behind and transition into the evening seamlessly.
INGREDIENTS
Tanqueray No. 10: 50 ml
Dry Vermouth: 10 ml
Dash orange bitters
METHOD
Fill a mixing glass with ice.
Pour in all ingredients.
Stir for 15 seconds to dilute.
Strain into a chilled coupe glass.
Garnish with a twist of lemon.
SOUTHSIDE
Bright and zesty, the Southside is my go-to on a number of occasions, be it Sunday brunch, Friday night drinks, sundowners. A pop of citrus and fresh mint compliments Tanqueray perfectly. It can be served in a coupe glass, over ice in rocks glass or topped with soda in a highball.
INGREDIENTS
Tanqueray London Dry Gin: 60 ml
Fresh lime juice: 30 ml
Sugar syrup: 15 ml
Mint leaves: 8
METHOD
Add all ingredients to a shaker.
Fill shaker with ice.
Shake for 10 seconds.
Double strain into a chilled glass.
Garnish with a sprig of fresh mint.



This is exciting because the growth of consumption leads to the growth in variety, so expect to see more gins behind the bar.

A contributing factor to the increase in number of brands is the endless botanical combinations which means an endless range of gins on offer. In comparison to the whisky, which primarily relies on aging to influence flavour and requires to stay in barrels for several years, thus, tying up significant resources. In short, this means you can have a differentiated, saleable product in market within a short span of time, making gin a more economical product to produce.

While there is significant innovation with production methods, many of the world's most successful and popular brands still use tried and true methods like Tanqueray, who has followed the same recipe and production since 1830. However, they often innovate for new releases. For example, Tanqueray No. 10 was the first gin to use whole citrus fruit when it launched in 2000. An experiment that took two years to perfect, and aren't we glad they persevered.

CONSUMPTION OCCASIONS
Gin is possibly the best base spirit for mixing as it has a pre-existing base richness without an overwhelming flavour profile. This makes it perfect for cocktails as the botanicals give hint to flavours that can be amplified through additional ingredients. When creating cocktails with Tanqueray No. 10, which uses whole citrus and chamomile, I am instantly inspired to use fresh herbs like mint or basil, or more relaxing flavours like honey to compliment the chamomile.

The versatility of gin makes it equally suited to long, refreshing drinks for summer as well as stiff, fortifying concoctions for the colder nights. I'm delighted to share some of my favourite gin cocktails and when I consume them.

R E C I P E S



LUSCIOUS MOUSSE
WHAT YOU NEED
● Fabelle chocolate bar: 120-130 gm
● Fresh cream: 100 gm
● Fresh unsalted milk butter: 15 gm
METHOD
● Cut the fabelle chocolate bar into 15 mm pieces and place in a round bottom bowl.
● Take 30 gm cream and put it in the fridge for 30 minutes to cool.
● Bring remaining 70 gm fresh cream to boil and add milk butter.
● Pour over chocolate pieces and allow it to cool for five to seven minutes.
● Mix and fold with a spatula to melt the chocolate completely, followed by a hand blender for two to three minutes. Add the cold cream.
● Beat for 20 minutes by placing ice pack below the bowl to get enough frothing.
● Once you see a fluffy mass, stop beating and place in the fridge.
● While serving, sprinkle some cocoa powder or coffee powder. Garnish with almond slivers and a slice of strawberry. Serve cold.

Courtesy: Fabelle.

CRAB MANGO AND RAW PAPAYA SALAD

WHAT YOU NEED
● Ripe mango: 60 gm
● Raw papaya: 30 gm
● Red and yellow bellpeppers: 20 gm each
● Lettuce (Romaine)
● Crab meat
● Coriander
For dressing:
● Ginger: 8 gm
● Garlic: 5 gm
● Red chilli: 1
● Sweet chilli sauce: 10 ml
● Fish sauce: 1 tsp
● Lime juice
● Salt to taste
METHOD
● Cut cubes of ripe mangoes.
● Make julienne of bellpeppers and raw papaya.
● Cut coriander in sprigs.



● Steam crab for 10 minutes and remove meat.
● Wash lettuce and refresh bellpeppers julienne and papaya in cold water.
For dressing:
● Chop ginger, garlic, red chilli, coriander leaves.
● Add sweet chilli sauce, fish sauce and some lemon juice.
● Season with salt.
● In a bowl, add lettuce, bellpeppers, crab meat, and toss.
● Add coriander sprigs and mango cubes, mix lightly.
● Garnish with coriander on top and serve.

Courtesy: Executive chef Ranjan Rajani at Hotel Sahara Star.



MANGO WRAP
WHAT YOU NEED
● Fresh cream: 400 gm
● Fresh alphonso puree:
60 gm
● Powder sugar: 10 gm
● Mango: 100 gm
● Mint: 4 sprigs
METHOD
● Peel the mango and cut them in to small pieces.
Take about 160-180 gm of mangoes and pass through a sieve to make a puree.
● Put the cream on a

double boiler and cook for three to four minutes on slow flame, stirring continuously.
● Add powder sugar, mango and cook further for three to four minutes. Then remove from the double boiler.
● Add the chopped mangoes and pour in ramekins and chill them in a refrigerator for an hour.
● Top with chopped ripe mangoes and drizzle some mango puree.
● Garnish with mint and serve chilled.
Courtesy: Souvik Gupta, Culinary Head at Loft.



BIRYANI
WHAT YOU NEED
● Carrot, beans, green peas/ chicken curry cut/ mutton curry cut: 600 gm
● Red chilli powder: 30 gm
● Green cardamom: 2 gm
● Salt to taste
● Ginger garlic paste: 100 gm
● Mint: 50 gm
● Coriander: 100 gm
● Garam masala: 10 gm
● Green chilli: 20 gm
● Clove: 5 gm
● Cinnamon stick: 2 gm
● Desi ghee: 200 gm
● Rose water: 20 ml
● Fried onion: 300 gm
● Curd: 500 gm
● Saffron water: 30 ml
● Rice: 500 gm
● Turmeric powder: 2 gm
METHOD
● Marinate the boiled vegetables/ chicken curry cut/ mutton curry cut in a vessel with ginger garlic paste, Kashmiri red chilli powder and green cardamom powder.
● Rest for one hour, mix garam masala, chopped mint, chopped coriander, green chilli, whole spices, fried onion and curd.
● Then boil water and add half of whole spices in it, boil rice up to 40 per cent.
● Place rice over marinated vegetables/ chicken curry cut/ mutton curry cut and spread properly. Sprinkle saffron on top and ghee.
● Cook on dum for 20 to 25 minutes for veg biryani, 25 to 30 minutes for chicken biryani, 40 to 45 minutes for mutton biryani. Then give rest for 15 minutes.
● Biryani is ready to serve.
Courtesy: Executive chef Sajesh Nair at Taj Falaknuma Palace, Hyderabad.

No tennis 'until it's completely safe': Rafa

AFP ■ NEW YORK

Rafael Nadal insisted on Thursday tennis "cannot resume until the situation is completely safe" and if the US Open was being played this week, he wouldn't take part.

World number two Nadal, who captured a fourth US Open and 19th major in New York last year, said the coronavirus pandemic still casts huge doubts over the tennis calendar which has been suspended since mid-March.

"We cannot resume until the situation is completely safe and fair in terms of health in that all players, wherever they come from, can travel and play tournaments in safe conditions," Nadal told reporters in a video conference call.

"If you told me to play the US Open (scheduled for main draw start on August 31) today, I would say 'No'.

"In a few months, I don't know. I hope so. We have to wait for people to return to normal life. And when it does, wait to see how the virus evolves.

"It's very difficult for me to separate what the world is experiencing from my point of view on tennis, that's why I was very pessimistic a few weeks ago."

The ATP and WTA schedules have been on ice since March with action not set to resume until the end of July at the earliest.

In normal times, the Roland Garros event would have been deep into its second week by now with Nadal expected to win the Paris trophy for the 13th time.

However, for Nadal, there are



Rafael Nadal grimaces after scoring against Roger Federer during their Roland Garros semifinal match in June 2019 AP/File Picture

far more complex and significant matters to consider even if he could have been within touching distance of Roger Federer's all-time record of 20 Slams.

"In my mind, if the whole world is suffering, if a lot of people are dying because of this pandemic, we cannot imagine organising a huge sporting event with lots of people from around the world," said Nadal, who turned 34 on Wednesday.

"It would not be realistic. In my opinion, this was the wrong

message to send a few weeks ago. It is true that the situation is a little less negative now.

"Is there a possibility (that the season will resume)? Yes. Am I very optimistic? No, because I cannot predict what will happen in the coming months.

"But my position has not changed: we must show responsibility, we must first be sure that the situation is sufficiently safe, and after of course, try to restart the circuit, when we can see clearly."

The US Open remains on the schedule but there are still doubts over whether or not it will take place with New York being the epicentre of the Covid-19 crisis in the United States.

The tournament at Flushing Meadows, as well as the rearranged Roland Garros, could be staged behind closed doors in an effort to reduce the risk of virus infection.

In 2019, the US Open attracted a record crowd of almost 740,000 to its sprawling Billie Jean King Tennis Centre in New York. The French Open last year

Players like Serena, Federer itching to return, feels Evert

PARIS: Multiple Grand Slam champion Chris Evert feels players who have been around the sport for a long time like Serena Williams, Roger Federer and Rafael Nadal will 'dive right into it' when tennis resumes post the Covid-19 pandemic as they know time is not on their side.

"I have a sneaky suspicion that the players that have been around for a long time, especially Serena (Williams), Roger, Rafa, I think they're going to dive right into it," Evert said on French Open's official website on Episode 11 of *Chatting with Daniela*.

"They're appreciating that they can be with their family. They're appreciating that they can rest their bodies. But they also know that time is not on their side," said the 18-time Grand Slam champion.

Evert also opined that it will be interesting to see if current

world No1 Novak Djokovic could regain his momentum.

"I feel bad for Novak. He had the momentum," she said.

"Everyone was saying, 'Is he going to win a Grand Slam? Is he going to win four in a row?' He was playing awesome tennis and then all of a sudden (season stopped). He'll be an interesting story to see if he can get that momentum back."



Chris Evert playing tennis on a court.



Playing Test cricket a big goal: Billings

PTI ■ LONDON

England wicketkeeper-batsman Sam Billings says he doesn't want to be "pigeon-holed as a white-ball cricketer" and has a renewed desire to come good in the Test format, an ambition that took a backseat when he decided to play IPL early in his career.

The 28-year-old has never played a Test for England but featured in 15 ODIs and 26 T20Is before a shoulder injury robbed him of chance to be a part of his team's historic victory in the 50-over World Cup last year.

"There's no one else to blame apart from me really for that (white-ball typecasting)," Billings told *ESPNcricinfo*.

"I think there are opportunities in the Test team as well, especially as a batter and also in the wicket-keeping position. I find that really exciting. I don't want to just be pigeon-holed as a white-ball player. I'm better than that," he asserted.

Billings spoke about a change in mindset after competing in the IPL.

"I played four IPLs and you're not going to turn down an opportunity like that as a young player in terms of a chance to develop."

"Obviously four-day cricket had to take a back seat at that point in time and I just didn't play anywhere near enough cricket. That's where my mindset has changed a little bit."

After returning to action, Billings managed just 34 runs in five T20 innings against New Zealand and was dropped from white-ball squads for South Africa tour early this year.

He could play a few matches for Kent and he made it count by scoring three hundreds in consecutive Championship innings, including two in a match against Yorkshire at Headingley.

Following the omission from South Africa tour, Billings decided not to put his name forward for any T20 franchise and was looking forward to the 2020 season with Kent before the Covid-19 pandemic delayed it.

"The back end of last year proved to myself more than anyone that I can be more than just an average first-class cricketer or quite a good first-class cricketer. That can be as strong a format as any. But it was only when I really proved it to myself last year that that came back to the forefront of my mind," Billings said.

He said his performance in the championship last year brought "a big turning point" and ignited his ambition to play the traditional format.

"I want to play Test cricket. That is a big goal of mine," he said.

Malinga is world's best yorker bowler: Bumrah

NEW DELHI: India's premier pacer Jasprit Bumrah has described Lasith Malinga as the "best yorker bowler in the world" and said the veteran Sri Lankan has used his mastery over the delivery for a very long period of time in international cricket.

"Malinga is the best yorker bowler in the world and he used it for such a long period. Of time to the best of his advantage," Bumrah was quoted as saying in a tweet by his IPL franchise Mumbai Indians. PTI

Lanning expects Women's WC to go ahead as planned

MELBOURNE: Australia's world-cup winning captain Meg Lanning is hopeful that the women's ODI World Cup will go ahead as planned next year and remains confident that their preparation for the big-ticket event will not be affected due to the coronavirus-forced break.

The 50-over World Cup is scheduled to be held in New Zealand in February-March next year but with the Covid-19 pandemic taking a toll on international tournaments such as the T20 men's World Cup, there are speculations that it could have a domino effect on the women's event.

"At this stage, we anticipate the World Cup to go ahead as scheduled (early next year) but have to wait and see how that plays out. We've got a plan in place for what it looks like but also fully understanding things can change pretty quick," Lanning told



cricket.Com.Au.

"The group we've got, we've played a lot of cricket together over a long period of time and if it (the coronavirus) means we've only got a short time to prepare and get ready (for the World Cup), I've got no doubt we'll be able to do that. We'll be ready to go." PTI

Not safe to train yet: BCB tells players

PTI ■ DHAKA

The Bangladesh Cricket Board has turned down former captain Mushfiqur Rahim and other senior players' request to train at the Sher-e-Bangla Stadium in Mirpur, citing health safety concerns amid the Covid-19 pandemic.

The BCB said the disinfecting process is yet to be completed at the Mirpur facility.

"Mushfiq communicated with us, he wanted to begin personal training. But we told him that this is not yet a safe time to do so, he should train at home. Training is important, but players' safety is more important to us," BCB chief executive Nizamuddin Chowdhury was quoted as saying by *Cricbuzz*.

"A few other players wanted to know if they could do individual



training. But our message was the same for all. We are working on disinfecting our facilities. But the job is yet to be completed."

In Bangladesh 746 people have died and over 55,000 have tested positive for coronavirus.

"We need to consider the overall situation. We can't rush into anything. Many countries are starting their activities; we will definitely do the same. However, we can't give an exact date right now," Nizamuddin said. "We have been working to disinfect the things we need for training after Eid, and it is in the process. After it is completed we can say that we are ready to start cricket training again."

"Then we will see the overall situation of the country. After assessing the overall situation we will call the players because, you have to understand, we can't risk the health of the players in any way because the players are a very valuable asset to the BCB."

Premier League clubs agree to 5 subs rule change

AFP ■ LONDON

Managers will be able to make up to five substitutions for the remainder of the 2019/20 Premier League season after clubs agreed to the temporary rule change at a meeting on Thursday. Premier League clubs also agreed to increase the number of substitutes available for selection from seven to nine for the remainder of the season.

"For the remainder of the 2019/20 season, the number of substitutes that can be used during a match will increase from three to five players," the Premier League said in a statement.

"Shareholders also approved for clubs to increase the maximum number of substitute players on the bench from seven to nine for the rest of the 2019/20 season."



To avoid too many stoppages, each team will still only have three opportunities to make changes as well as at half-time.

The Premier League will resume with two matches on June 17 as Manchester City host Arsenal and Sheffield United travel to Aston Villa. The remaining nine full rounds of fixtures are then expected to be completed in just five weeks.

Playing without fans will feel 'peculiar': Suarez

AFP ■ BARCELONA

Barcelona forward Luis Suarez is in line to return from a long injury lay-off when La Liga resumes next week behind closed doors in the heat of the Spanish summer.

The 33-year-old was sidelined for four months in January after undergoing surgery on his right knee but could make his comeback on June 13 when leaders Barcelona travel to Mallorca, for their first game since early March.

"I feel very good, adapting to training with my team-mates. Returning after an injury is always difficult, because you are a little scared but I'm enjoying being back," Suarez told the club's website.

La Liga is set to restart with the Seville derby on June 11 and to be completed on July 19, yet the expectation is players will be subjected to safety protocol for several months and stadiums will not be full again until next year.

"We are not used to playing in so much heat in the middle of summer. We are adapting to playing without a crowd which will be peculiar," he said.

"We will continue to focus on winning games to win the league title, which is what we all want."

Defending champions Barca hold a two-point lead over Real Madrid at the top with 11 rounds of matches still to be played.

Hyderabad Open badminton cancelled

NEW DELHI: The Hyderabad Open badminton tournament, scheduled to be held in August, was on Thursday cancelled by the sport's world governing body in view of the Covid-19 pandemic, days after the unveiling of a revised calendar.

The tournament, set from August 11 to 16, was one of the three to be held in India in the calendar announced by the BWF on May 22 to restart the sport after the pandemic-forced cancellations since March.

"BWF and Badminton Association of India have agreed to cancel the Hyderabad Open 2020 (11-16 August) — a Super 100 on the BWF Tour," the BWF said in a statement.

The YONEX-SUNRISE India Junior International Grand Prix 2020, which was to be held in Pune from August 4-9, has also been cancelled.

BWF Secretary General Thomas Lund said circum-



stances have and will continue to change in certain countries and therefore further updates on the status of tournaments will be given as and when necessary.

The BWF also cancelled two other tournaments — Australia Open and Korea Masters — in view of the global health crisis.

Three tournaments still

Ashwini, Lakshya return to training

NEW DELHI: Top shuttlers Ashwini Ponnappa and Lakshya Sen are among 20-odd Indian players who have started training at the Prakash Padukone Badminton Academy (PPBA) in Bengaluru as the sport took its first step towards resumption after the Covid-19 hiatus.

"Some top national players have been training for last two weeks here. We have 16 courts spread out and about 20 India players are currently practising here. We have separate timings and sessions," Vimal Kumar, head coach and director, PPBA said. "Most of the trainees out

of the total 65 are currently not in the city but they are very keen to come and start training," he added.

Vimal said training is optional at this stage. The players who are currently training include doubles exponent Ashwini, a three-time Commonwealth Games medallist, former world No 13 Ajay Jayaram, and Lakshya, who had a stellar season with five titles last year.

Besides, India regulars Mithun Manjunath, BM Rahul Bharadwaj & Maisnam Meiraba are also training there. PTI

remain suspended and an announcement on these will be made in due course.

The suspended tournaments are: YONEX German

Open 2020 (March 3-8), YONEX Swiss Open 2020 (March 17-22) and 2020 European Championships (April 21-26). PTI



Porto suffer surprise defeat

AFP ■ LISBON

The Portuguese Primeira Liga became the second top European football league to return on Wednesday following the coronavirus lockdown as leaders Porto fell to a surprising 2-1 loss at Famalicao.

Fabio Martins broke the deadlock for the hosts in the 48th minute, before Porto equalised 16 minutes from time through Jesus Manuel Corona.

But young midfielder Pote had the final say for Famalicao four minutes later as they added another famous victory to their league double over Sporting this season.

Bale unlikely to make PL return

MADRID: Gareth Bale's agent says the Real Madrid forward is unlikely to return to the Premier League because he wants to finish his career at the Bernabeu.

Bale is believed to have a difficult relationship with Real manager Zinedine Zidane and the former Tottenham star has been linked with a move back to the Premier League on several occasions, with Newcastle the latest club to be mentioned as suitors for the Wales international. But Bale's agent Jonathan Barnett said the 30-year-old would happily remain in Spain.

"He has a very nice lifestyle. I don't see why he doesn't see his career out at Madrid, probably," Barnett told the *BBC* on Thursday.

"As I've always said, he's quite happy in Madrid. It's his life that he wants to lead.



Financially, he will want for nothing the rest of his life."

Bale has won a host of medals, including four Champions League titles, since

joining Real for a then world record £85 million in 2013.

But he has rarely been a regular under Zidane and has been criticised by fans and media in Spain for putting more passion into his golf hobby than his Real career. Despite that discord, Bale has no plans to demand a move, according to Barnett.

"I have no idea what his value is," he said. "His salary is quite high and also where he wants to go is very important in his life. I can't put a figure on it."

"He's won nearly everything in the world, except the World Cup. So he's won everything else, to come back and play (in the Premier League) would be unbelievable, a big thing. I don't think he wants to do that at the moment. He's quite happy to play at Real Madrid." AFP

Germany, Portugal in race to host CL final

MUNICH: Germany and Portugal are contenders to host the delayed Champions League final which is due to be moved from Istanbul, a person with knowledge of the situation told *The Associated Press*.

A June 17 meeting of UEFA's executive committee will decide the new location for the August final — with that country also set to stage the quarterfinals and semifinals, the person said.

The priority for the remaining Champions League matches is choosing a location accessible to players and officials as fans are unlikely to be allowed in due to Covid-19 restrictions.

Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa, the president of Portugal, this week referenced potential "good news" for football in the Iberian nation in August. Two stadiums in Lisbon have been floated — with Benfica hosting the final and Sporting Lisbon's venue also used.

German newspaper *Bild* reported on Wednesday night that Frankfurt is a potential location for the final if Germany is chosen. AP

Mercedes 'monitoring' Vettel situation

LONDON (IANS): Mercedes team principal and CEO Toto Wolff stated they are monitoring Sebastian Vettel's situation who had earlier announced that he will be leaving Ferrari at the end of 2020 F1 season.

Wolff stated they are happy with the racers on their roster presently but in case the situation changes, they could look at Vettel.

"Sebastian is a four-time world champion and him suddenly becoming available was unexpected. And, therefore, it is a situation that needs to be monitored," Wolff said during *Sky F1 Podcast* as per *Fox Sports*.

"Where could he potentially go, where are we with our drivers, and what I said (before) is I wouldn't discount Sebastian for any seat."

"We have looked at the situation. Our priority and concentration is on our Mercedes drivers — that's Lewis (Hamilton), Valtteri (Bottas) and the juniors."

"And only if we can't find a solution within that group of drivers we will look elsewhere and then obviously Sebastian is in a very good position," he added.

Vettel has won 14 races for Ferrari but failed to add to the four titles he won with Red Bull between 2010 and 2013.

