

OPINION 8
LIBERAL AGENDA
IN AMERICA

MONEY 10
NIFTY RECLAIMS
10K-MARK

SPORT 14
3 WINDIES PLAYERS
REFUSE TO TOUR ENG

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

Late City Vol. 156 Issue 150
*Air Surcharge Extra if Applicable

LUCKNOW, THURSDAY JUNE 4, 2020; PAGES 14 ₹3



the pioneer

www.dailypioneer.com



**ANUSHKA
URGES STRICT
HYGIENE
12 VIVACITY**

Plasma therapy raises hopes

Emerging as promising, safe treatment option for Covid patients in US

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Convalescent plasma therapy is emerging as one of the most promising and safe treatment options for patients with severe Covid-19 symptoms, a new trial in the US has found. The therapy involves taking anti-bodies from the blood of a person who has recovered from Covid-19 and transfusing those anti-bodies into an active coronavirus patient to help kickstart the immune system to fight the infection.

Published in The American Journal of Pathology, the study conducted by the researchers from the Houston Methodist Hospital in the US said that the results of the trial showed that 19 out of 25 patients (76 per cent) improved with the treatment and 11 were discharged from the hospital.



There were no serious adverse side effects caused by the plasma transfusion.

The findings have generated hopes in the global community rattled by the virulent virus which has claimed over 3

lakh people with over 63 lakh infected cases across the world.

The clinical trials to transfuse plasma from recovered Covid-19 patients into critically ill patients started on March 28. "While physician-scientists

around the world scramble to test new drugs and treatments against the Covid-19 virus, convalescent serum therapy emerge as potentially one of the most promising strategies," said study researcher Eric Salazar from Houston Methodist Hospital.

Patients were treated under emergency use guidelines (eIND) from the US Food and Drug Administration and then received approval from the FDA to open up the trial to more patients as an investigational new drug (IND).

According to the researchers, the therapeutic approach dates back to at least as early as 1918 when it was used to fight the Spanish Flu. Recently, the convalescent plasma therapy was used with some success during the 2003 SARS pandemic, the 2009

influenza H1N1 pandemic, and the 2015 Ebola outbreak in Africa.

Continued on Page 6

HCO's trials to resume: WHO

Geneva: The World Health Organization on Wednesday said clinical trials of the drug hydroxychloroquine will resume, having been suspended pending a safety review in the search for coronavirus treatments. "On the basis of the available mortality data... the executive group will communicate with the principal investigators in the trial about resuming the hydroxychloroquine arm," WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said.

All HC stays appointment of 69,000 govt teachers

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The Allahabad High Court on Wednesday stayed the appointment of 69,000 assistant basic teachers in Uttar Pradesh.

A Lucknow bench of the High Court fixed the next date of hearing on July 12.

The order by Justice Alok Mathur comes days after the Supreme Court sought the UP government's reply on pleas challenging the High Court verdict, which had upheld the state's decision to keep higher cut-off marks for these appointments.

The apex court had on May 21 asked the state government to explain the process adopted for the appointment through a chart.

A bench of Justices UU Lalit, MM Shantanagoudar and Vineet Saran had initially declined to interfere with the

High Court verdict. But it later modified its order and issued notice to the state government, posting the matter for further hearing on July 6.

It asked the UP government to explain why it changed the earlier criteria of 45 per cent cut-off marks for the general category and 40 per cent for the reserved category. The apex court sought a detailed reply before July 6.

The apex court had said the matter required a detailed hearing as there were many parties and it would be better if the pleas were adjourned till open court hearings resume.

Several petitions, including those by individuals and Uttar Pradesh Prathamik Shiksha Mitra Association, had been filed challenging the May 6 decision of the Lucknow bench of Allahabad High Court.

In its May 6 verdict, the

High Court had directed the state government to complete within the next three months the process for appointment of 69,000 assistant basic teachers in UP.

The process was almost already complete on the strength of the interim directions of the division bench issued on May 29 last year and only the result was to be declared.

The division bench had earlier set aside the single bench order that had quashed the government order fixing 65 per cent qualifying marks for the general category candidates and 60 per cent for the reserved category candidates.

The single bench had said that the minimum cut-off would be 45 per cent for general and 40 per cent for reserved candidates.

Continued on Page 6

Sidhu's exit from Cong imminent, Prashant tries to woo him into AAP fold

DEEPAK KUMAR JHA ■ NEW DELHI

It's likely to be the end of road for cricketer-turned-politician Navjot Singh Sidhu in the Congress.

Sources said Sidhu has been approached by Aam Admi Party (AAP) and poll strategist Prashant Kishor is believed to be mediating between Sidhu and AAP.

AICC sources said that Sidhu has himself not been active in recent times within the party and has distanced himself from the cadre. Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh has never concealed his dislike for Sidhu's political posturing.

Sources confirmed that poll strategist Prashant Kishor has spoken to Sidhu about his future in the AAP. Sources said Sidhu wants to be named as the CM candidate of AAP in Punjab for the next elections as a precondition for joining the party.

AAP's Punjab unit chief Bhagwant Mann had on many



occasions tried to lure Sidhu saying he would be the first to welcome Sidhu in the AAP.

The AAP contested Assembly elections in Punjab in 2017 and was the second largest party securing 20 seats. The Congress came to power with 77 seats of 117 Assembly seats by defeating the alliance of the Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) and the BJP. The SAD got 15 seats and the BJP only three.

Sidhu, who was twice a BJP MP, joined the Congress ahead of the Punjab election in 2017. He contested the polls and went on to become a Cabinet Minister.

Continued on Page 6

For first time, over 9K cases in a day

9,564 +ve, 259 deaths take corona cases to 2,16,752, total deaths to 6,088

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India on Wednesday for the first time went past 9,000 new cases in a day amid a Chinese study indicating that the countries could see around 15,000 new cases from June 15 onward. The country recorded 9,564 new cases and 259 deaths on Wednesday, which took its overall tally of cases to 2,16,752 and total death count to 6,088.

National Capital Delhi saw a big spike with new cases rising to 1,513, the highest so far in a day, and as many as 59 people succumbing to the dreaded virus in day. So far, Delhi has 23,645 confirmed cases and 615 deaths.

A Chinese study which had rightly predicted the growth of coronavirus in many countries, including the US, has painted an alarming picture, saying that India will add around 15,000 new cases every day from June mid.

Maharashtra appeared to be peaking in terms of Covid 19-triggered fatalities and infections on Wednesday, as it notched the highest-ever day's

tally on 122 deaths and as many as 2,560 more people tested positive for the pandemic in various parts of the State.

With the fresh deaths and infections, the total number of deaths in Maharashtra jumped to 2,587 while the total number of infected cases went up to 74,860 in the State.

The worsening situation in the State can be evi-

dence from the fact that there have been a total of 816 deaths in Maharashtra during the previous nine 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 and 103 on June 3. Wednesday's toll was 122.

Continued on Page 6

STATES	TOTAL CASES	DEATHS	RECOVERED
Maharashtra	74,860	2,587	32,329
Tamil Nadu	25,872	208	14,316
Delhi	23,645	615	9,542
Gujarat	18,117	1,122	12,212
Rajasthan	9,652	209	6,744
Uttar Pradesh	8,870	230	5,257
Madhya Pradesh	8,588	371	5,445
West Bengal	6,508	345	2,580
Bihar	4,326	25	2,025
Karnataka	4,063	53	1,514
Andhra Pradesh	3,971	68	2,464
Telangana	3,020	99	1,556
Haryana	2,954	23	1,089
Jammu & Kashmir	2,857	34	1,007
Odisha	2,388	9	1,416

Covid-19 IN INDIA
TOTAL CASES: 2,16,752
DEATHS: 6,088
RECOVERED: 1,04,071
ACTIVE: 1,06,582



Declare stock within six months: Govt to exotic species owners

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

Government has asked animal breeders and owners of the exotic live species of animals such as fish and birds to voluntarily declare their stock/within next six months as also ensure health cards of their subjects.

The plan is to prepare an inventory and streamline the import of exotic animal/birds or fish species in the country, which is now being considered to be fraught with risk of zoonotic (animal to human) transmission. Exotic live species are animal or plant species moved from their original range (location) to a new one most often by people.

This is for the first time that the Government has taken such a move. The officials at the Union Environment Ministry have asserted that precaution is better than prevention before any coronavirus kind of pandemic spreads here. In India as in the world, much of the exotic live species is currently legal. There exists a large demand and market for animals like ball pythons, pocket monkeys, crocodile skinks, hissing cockroaches and a wide range of exotic birds.

However, till now, there has been no detail about the population status, numbers poached, illegal trade hubs and dynamics of these species. This makes it difficult to know the impacts of illegal trade on the population status of many of these captured animals, said the officials.

To plug the gaps, the Union Environment Ministry has issued an advisory enlisting dos and don'ts aiming to streamline

Inventory knowledge through voluntary disclosure to ensure CITES compliance



the trade. "Considering the significance of import and export of exotic live species, this Ministry is issuing an advisory to streamline the process for import and possession of exotic live species here. The aim is to develop an inventory of exotic live species through Voluntary Disclosure Scheme to streamline CITES compliance as well as streamline the import procedure," said the official about the guideline.

As per the advisory, it will be mandatory for the owners/animal breeders to register/declare progenies of the imported exotic live species.

The processes under this Advisory shall be dealt online through the Ministry's Parivesh portal.

Continued on Page 6

UP has proved experts wrong on Covid: Yogi

BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■ LUCKNOW

Claiming to have proved experts wrong UP Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said that because of the effective measures taken by the Government there are only over 8,000 corona positive cases in Uttar Pradesh against experts' grim projection of over 70,000 cases by the end of May.

"The experts had claimed that by the end of May total corona positive cases in UP would be over 70,000. But, where we stand on June 3? Today, we have over 8,000 positive cases of which around 5,000 have recovered and technically the State of 23 crore has just 3,000 positive cases. Similarly at the national level the total cases are over 2 lakh whereas the experts had claimed there would be 32 lakh cases at this juncture," Yogi told The Pioneer here on Wednesday.

"We are set to prove experts wrong again. Some are saying that as the corona pandemic is yet to touch peak in India it was wrong to unlock at this stage. They say the figures will skyrocket now. But because of awareness created among the masses, strengthening of the health system and the support the Government got from all section of the society, including the religious leaders, we will again prove these experts wrong."

To buttress his point he

'Only over 8K cases in UP against their grim projection of over 70,000 cases'



said that the virus struck both India and the United States at around the same time. The US has better healthcare facilities but the pandemic devastated it while India was able to control the spread (of disease) better. The number of positive cases in India is over 2 lakh while the USA has 17 lakh positive cases and the death toll in India is over 5,000 while in the US it is over 1 lakh.

"It is all about management. We took timely steps to keep the cases low," he said and added: "Alertness and awareness about the pandemic has kept the figure down," he said. He admitted that contain-



ing this disease was a financial strain and said in April there was shortage of funds to meet the Government expenses.

Continued on Page 6

Tahir-led rioters killed IB staffer: Chargesheet

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Police has filed the chargesheet in the brutal murder of Intelligence Bureau (IB) staffer Ankit Sharma. Police investigation has revealed that there was a deep-rooted conspiracy behind the riots and murder of Ankit Sharma during North-east Delhi violence in Chandbagh area as he was "specifically targeted" by a mob led by then AAP councillor Tahir Hussain.

After killing Sharma, the mob had thrown his body into a nearby drain which was fished out the next day, police said. The Crime Branch had filed the chargesheet before Metropolitan Magistrate Richa Parihar, who fixed the matter for consideration on June 16.

8 dead, 50 hurt as boiler blast causes fire in Gujarat factory

PTI ■ BHARUCH

Eight workers were killed and 50 others were injured on Wednesday in a massive fire triggered by a blast in the boiler of a chemical factory at Dahej in Gujarat's Bharuch district, police said. The death toll may rise further as some of the injured workers are in a serious condition, according to police.

As companies of methanol and xylene chemicals are located near the affected factory, authorities have shifted about 4,800 people from nearby Luvara and Lakhigam villages to safer places as a precautionary measure.

About 230 workers were present inside the factory, Yashaswi Rasayan, located in Dahej Special Economic Zone-1, 42 kms from Bharuch, at the time of the incident in the afternoon, they said.

Continued on Page 6

Nisarga blows itself out, Mumbai relieved

Landfall in Raigad, cyclone impact not severe in Mumbai

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Mumbaikars and the people in the neighbouring towns and cities heaved a huge sigh of relief on Wednesday evening, as cyclone Nisarga skipped the country's commercial Capital and surrounding areas after making a landfall at Murud-Janjira town in Raigad district, triggering strong winds, heavy rainfall and raging sea surge in the coastal Konkan region.

Reeling as they have been under a severe coronavirus crisis for the past ten weeks, anxious Mumbaikars were waiting with bated breath for the arrival of the severe



A tree fell on a house after rain and strong winds triggered by Cyclone Nisarga, in Sindhudurg district of Maharashtra on Wednesday

cyclonic storm, but Nisarga — when it finally arrived in Maharashtra — changed its direction after its landfall between 12.30 pm and 2.30 pm at the historic Murud-Janjira town in Raigad district, on Wednesday and headed towards Pune.

"It (cyclone) made the landfall at Latitude 18.5 N and Longitude 73.2 E, just north of the historic Murud-Janjira town. A slight change of direction towards North Eastwards meant, the impact of the cyclone on Mumbai was less severe than originally expected,"

an official release said.

One person was killed and seven others were injured in Raigad. Three persons sustained minor injuries when stones fell on the tin roof of their hutment at Santacruz in north-west Mumbai, while four others were injured parts of roof crashed on them at Walkeshwar in south Mumbai.

While the metropolis witnessed minor incidents like tree falls and wall crashes as cyclone Nisarga by-passed it, the coastal districts of Maharashtra bore the brunt of rough weather conditions like strong winds, heavy rainfall and raging sea surge.

Tidal waves measuring up to 6 to 8 feet lashed parts of coastal areas in Ratnagiri and Raigad districts, both of which bore the brunt of cyclone Nisarga.

Continued on Page 6

CAPSULE

GOOGLE REMOVES 'REMOVE CHINA APPS' FROM STORE

New Delhi: Google has removed from its app store an Indian mobile application, "Remove China Apps" that allowed users to delete Chinese games and other software from their Android smartphones, citing violation of its policies.

KOLKATA PORT NAMED AFTER SYAMA PRASAD

New Delhi: The Government on Wednesday gave the approval to rename Kolkata Port as Syama Prasad Mookerjee Port.

TRUMP ADMIN MOVES TO BLOCK CHINESE AIRLINES

Washington: The Trump administration moved on Wednesday to block Chinese airlines from flying to the US in an escalation of trade and travel tensions between the two countries.

CM Yogi satisfied with new card holders getting ration

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Reiterating his government's resolve on not letting anyone sleep hungry in the state, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said that it has been satisfying that new ration card holders have started getting supplies immediately. Earlier, the wait period was about two months for a new card holder.

Chairing a review meeting of Unlock 1.0 in Lok Bhawan, Yogi asked officials to ensure smooth distribution of food-grains and fair weighing by preparing and implement an action plan in this regard in a week. He also directed that new ration cards be given to the needy and supplies be ensured to the new holders.

Asking to intensify police patrol on highways, expressways and parks, the Chief Minister said that it was necessary to ensure implementation of lockdown, social distancing and avoidance of gathering. He also stressed on running doorstep delivery efficiently in containment zones.

Yogi instructed officials to ensure cleanliness and security in quarantine centres and community kitchens. "Community kitchens should provide quality food to all. Special Secretaries deputed in districts to assist DMs, should inspect these centres and kitchens regularly and report to the government," he said.

The CM directed that Additional Directors and Joint Directors of Health department be deputed in districts as nodal officers and they should inspect Covid and Non-Covid hospitals without fail. "These



officers should also monitor and report emergency and surgical services in hospital and ensure services to the aggrieved people," he said.

Yogi said that proper coordination among stakeholders would always help in containing the infection and asked officials to pay special attention to clinical facilities in medical colleges of Agra, Meerut, Kanpur, Aligarh, Moradabad and Ferozabad.

Observing that screening and strengthening of surveillance committees had helped in containing the infection greatly, Yogi asked officials to keep these committees activated and make intensive screening. He said that all railway stations in the state should arrange for thermal screening and hand-bills to make public aware about prevention of Corona be distributed at railway stations.

The CM also stressed that all hospitals should have adequate stock of PPE kits, N-95

masks, three layer masks, gloves, sanitiser etc and said that availability of oxygen and arrangement for bio-waste disposal be ensured in the hospitals. He said that doctors and nurses should take rounds of the wards regularly.

Taking cognisance of availability of TruNAT machines for prompt result of Corona testing, Yogi said that these should be sent to all 75 districts immediately and ensure that they became operational in a week. He asked to raise testings from 10,000 per day to 15,000 per day with every district having covid testing lab.

The Chief Minister asked Industrial Investment Development Commissioner (IIDC) to keep in touch with potential investors to augment investment in the state. He also asked officials to run wheat purchase centres properly and ensure Minimum Support Price (MSP) of produce to the farmers.

Cong urges Gov's intervention for Lallu's release

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

In the absence of unified intra-outfit support, Congress leaders have been busy doing rounds of the powers that be for securing the release of UP Congress chief Ajay Kumar 'Lallu'.

After writing to Assembly Speaker and the chief secretary, a Congress delegation met Governor Anandiben Patel on Wednesday and sought her intervention to get Lallu released.

Arrested in connection with providing 'fake' list of 1,000 buses to the state government, Lallu has been left out in the cold after his bail plea was rejected by MP-MLA special court in Lucknow on Monday.

Congress Legislative Party leader Aradhana Mishra 'Mona', who led the delegation to Raj Bhawan on Wednesday, said that the Congress would launch a major protest against the "unlawful detention" of UPCC chief. "We have faith in the judiciary and also will also appeal in the High Court for bail," she said.

However, there was no word on whether any legal luminary that the Congress has in its ranks would take up Lallu's case. Party sources said that there was no palpable discomfort in the ranks over Lallu's jail sojourn, exposing the deep divide within the outfit.



Governor Anandiben Patel meeting Congress leaders in Lucknow on Wednesday

Pioneer

So far, the protests over the issue have been restricted to sporting black ribbons, holding a candle march and organising a 'havan' for the UPCC chief's release.

Besides, top party leaders like Priyanka Gandhi Vadra and Rahul Gandhi have confined themselves to token contribution by tweeting in support of Lallu, but no stir or protest has been planned on a large scale as yet. Meanwhile, on Wednesday,

Priyanka again sought to corner the Yogi Adityanath government over irregularities made in teachers recruitment.

Reacting to High Court staying the selection of teachers in UP, she tweeted, "The irregularities and callous approach of the UP government shattered the dream of 69,000 aspirants from becoming teachers."

Priyanka alleged that many of the qualified aspirants failed to find their names in the final list due to faulty reser-

vation policy, negligence, paper leak, wrong evaluation and rampant corruption in the Yogi government.

The Congress leader claimed that youths were the worst sufferers in UP where employment remained to be an election slogan for the Bharatiya Janata Party. She alleged that all recruitment made in the state had been stayed by the courts as no transparency and fairness were followed by the government during selection.

Youth kills woman, ends life

job which probably triggered his dispute with Heerakali leading to her death. The bodies were sent for autopsy.

In Etawah, Shashi killed her brother Deepak at her home in Sati locality of Kotwali police station area, while their parents were away late Tuesday night.

After the incident, Shashi reached Kotwali police station with a sharp-edged weapon and owned up her crime. Shashi told the police that her brother made advances after which she hacked him. The

cops rushed to her house and found Deepak's body there and later informed her father Vijay Singh.

Elsewhere in Sultanpur, a minor boy killed his stepfather in Kadiapur area. Suraj Bhan died two years back leaving behind his wife Suman and son Chhotu. Last year, Suman married Vineet Shukla of Bakspur.

Chhotu, who was still a minor, was upset with his mother's move. To get rid of Vineet, Chhotu conspired with two of his friends.

On Tuesday afternoon, the

trio intercepted Shukla while he was returning home and shot him dead before fleeing.

A case was registered and the body was sent for autopsy.

Meanwhile in Meerut, in what appeared to be a case of rape and murder, the body of a seven-year-old girl was recovered on Tuesday.

Shahzad of Fateullahpur hamlet of Lisadigate found his daughter missing on Tuesday morning. The family later launched a search and were shocked to find her body lying in the field of Saifu.

Circumstantial evidence pointed towards the victim being raped and then strangled by the killer(s). A case was registered and the body was sent for autopsy.

In Etah, a property-related dispute between two groups led to the killing of a youth in Vinora hamlet of Nayagaon on Wednesday morning.

The two groups fell out over the possession over a property and on Wednesday they came to a head. The matter turned murky when one of the groups opened fire killing Lav Kush (18) of the rival group. A case was registered but no one could be arrested so far.

Govt lauds role of Dial-112 personnel

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The state government said that Dial-112 personnel played good Samaritan to over 2.80 lakh people during lockdown, extending various helps like supplying medicines, food, essentials and even dropping them home.

Additional Chief Secretary (Home) Awanish Awasthi said on Wednesday that cops posted at Dial-112 extended help to people and manned law and order during lockdown.

He cited figures between March 24 and May 31 provided by ADG (Dial-112) Aseem Arun to buttress how cops not only did their job of ensuring law and order but also played good Samaritans to a large number of people.

"Police personnel delivered food to over two lakh people, life saving drugs to patients suffering from cancer, pregnant women, old age persons etc. to 45,000 persons and dropped over 26,000 people at their homes. Even other essentials like milk, gas cylinders, petrol/diesel etc. were also provided to over 8,000 persons," Awasthi disclosed.

The additional chief secretary said that home-stuck people in large number dialled 112 and freely sought help and the cops obliged with sincerity. He also hailed the efforts of ADG (Dial 112) Aseem Arun for leading the team of Dial-112 in extending help to the people during the 69-day lockdown.



NOTICE

It is to be certified that my name in my son (Prabhat Kumar) school document high-school marksheet and certificate issued from (ICSE, UID-6638455, index no. 1185221/039, passing year 2018, from Hoerner college Lucknow inadvertently mentioned as SUMAN DEVI, while my correct name is SUMMARI DEVI.

Nod to sanitiser export cheers up sugar mills

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

In a major boost to the cash-strapped sugar industry, the Union government allowed the export of alcohol-based hand sanitiser, a commodity in high demand globally.

The export will unlock an additional revenue stream for the beleaguered industry.

On May 6, the Centre had banned the export of alcohol-based sanitiser to maintain domestic market supply, although non-alcohol based sanitisers were exempted from the ban.

Official sources said in Lucknow that the Director General of Foreign Trade (DGFT), Ministry of

Commerce, ordered on June 1 for the export of alcohol-based hand sanitiser with immediate effect in any other form/packaging other than containers with dispensers.

Hit by the slump in demand due to lockdown and subdued realisations, the sugar mills have huge farmers' arrears in the current sugar season with arrears amounting to Rs 15,000 crore and growing.

Recently, a few major private sugar millers had petitioned the Centre for allowing the export of alcohol-based sanitiser, citing robust capacities and abundant production to serve the domestic market.

The hand sanitiser manufacturing capacity in UP is to

the tune of over five lakh litres per day, while current production is only about 2.8 lakh litres. Currently, 87 units in the state are producing hand sanitiser, of which 37 are standalone plants, 27 sugar mills, 12 distilleries and 11 independent units.

The mills, which set up sanitiser facilities, include all private sugar companies, including Balrampur Chini, Birla, Dalmia, Dhampur, Uttam etc.

UP Sugar Mills Association (UPSMA) Secretary Deepak Gupta welcomed the Centre's order, saying that it would certainly have a positive impact on the domestic sugar industry.

"The demand for hand

sanitiser in Indian subcontinent and neighbouring markets like Sri Lanka etc, is high. Besides, the product made by mills is 80 per cent pure neutral alcohol (WHO norms mandate for 65 per cent purity," he said.

Some mills are producing bulk quantities of sanitiser and supplying it to other firms for bottling and marketing, a few others have signed contracts to supply ethanol/ethyl alcohol/extra neutral alcohol (ENA) to external plants.

While, sanitisers are generally manufactured with isopropyl alcohol (IPA), they have been found equally effective with ethanol/ethyl alcohol/ENA, a sugar by-prod-

ucts. Since, sugar mills are focused on production of hand sanitiser rather than marketing it, they have been able to maintain high purity.

Mills have set up substantial production capacity and export is the way forward in addition to domestic supplies.

Earlier, Principal Secretary (Sugar Industry and Sugarcane Development) Sanjay Bhosreddy had said that sanitiser producers were getting trade enquiries from foreign buyers, but the state was focusing on ensuring adequate supply in domestic market before exports could be considered.

Health officials scurry for cover as four new-borns die in CHC

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Health officials were on tenterhooks when four new-born infants died at Islamnagar Community Health Centre in Budaun late Monday night.

Surprisingly, the medical staff tried to conceal the deaths but when the district magistrate was informed about it, he ordered a magisterial probe.

The family members of the deceased alleged that negligence of the staff led to the death of the infants.

Chief Medical Officer Dr Yashpal Singh said that Anita of Girdharpur was brought to the CHC where she delivered

a baby boy but the new-born died within some time on Monday night.

The same night, Ali Nagar resident Jitendra's wife Sunita gave birth to a baby boy but he too died some time later.

In another case, Balpur village resident Umesh's wife Kusum Devi delivered a baby boy late night but the new-born died shortly after birth. Similar was the case of Mala of Sakhamai village, who gave birth to a baby girl who died after some time. All deaths took place at CHC at Islamnagar.

The family members of the new-borns and their grieving mothers alleged that they were asked to give

₹1,000 to ₹1,500 for delivery but since they were unable to do so, the staff deliberately became negligent leading to the death of the new-borns.

They further charged that the medical officer in-charge posted at the CHC tried to conceal the deaths and called the families concerned for a compromise, but the latter demanded action and complained about the matter to the district magistrate after which the apathy of the CHC staff came to light.

District Magistrate Kumar Prashant said that a report was sought from the CMO and the SDM of Bilsil was directed to conduct a probe. He said if any

staff was found guilty, he/she would be handed out exemplary punishment.

Meanwhile in Mainpuri, a pregnant woman admitted to a private hospital for delivery died due to alleged negligence of the attending doctor.

Bhupendra Singh of Manpura charged that his nine-month pregnant wife, Chandni, was admitted to a private hospital on Monday after she went into labour. He alleged that the negligent doctors did not attend on his wife as a result of which she died in hospital along with the unborn child.

He complained to the police after which a probe was ordered.

Dispute among children leads to lynching of woman

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

A dispute among children turned bloody, leading to the lynching of a woman in Moradabad on Tuesday evening. Elsewhere, in Bijnor, a domestic hand battered a woman to death for failing to pay his wages due to lockdown-induced financial crunch, on Wednesday.

In Moradabad, Sakhawat lived with his wife Noorjehan and four children in Jayantipur area of Majhola.

On Tuesday evening, his children were playing outside when they had a dispute with the children of the neighbourhood. Noorjehan intervened and asked the children not to fight.

But soon, the parents of the

other three children came there and started abusing Noorjehan and accusing her kids of creating nuisance. When she opposed, they attacked her with sticks and rods as a result of which she died.

The assailants later fled after locking their houses. Surprisingly, no neighbour came to defuse the situation.

Later, the police reached there, registered a case against three persons, including three women. Efforts were being made to nab the assailants.

In Bijnor, Urmila Devi of Garupur area of Nahtore virtually brought up Rajkumar from a young age and engaged him as her domestic help. Besides raising him, she also sent him to school and helped his family from time to time.

The woman's son, Ankit, is settled at Dhampur and is doing business there. Due to the lockdown, Urmila and Ankit faced financial crisis and as a result she failed to pay Rajkumar his wages for last month.

On Wednesday, Rajkumar again asked the woman to pay him and was told to wait for some more time. This irked the domestic help, who battered Urmila with a stick and killed her.

While the servant escaped, some neighbours reached there after hearing her screams and were shocked to see her lying dead. They later informed her son Ankit, who lodged a report with the police.

Efforts were being made to arrest the servant.

SCHOOLSCAN ADMISSION OFFER



Salim Usman, a student of City Montessori School, Gomti Nagar Campus II, has been selected for admission by the six noted UK universities. His academic excellence, diligence and talents brought him the opportunity to get into these prestigious universities. He has given credit for his success to the robust academic atmosphere of CMS. Salim has been offered admission by Queen's University (Belfast), University of Reading, University of Kent, Kings College (London), University of Wolverhampton and Loughborough University.

CENTRAL ORGANISATION FOR RAILWAY ELECTRIFICATION

1, Nawab Yusuf Road, Civil Lines, Prayagraj -211001

E-Tender Notice No. ELCORE-T-SRC-Gr-344-ASN Date: 02.06.2020

E-TENDER NOTICE

On behalf of the President of India, Chief Electrical Engineer/PS, Central Organization Railway Electrification, Nawab Yusuf Road, Civil Lines, Prayagraj - 211001 invites following E-TENDER.

Name of Work: Design, supply, erection, testing and commissioning of Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA) system along with Annual Maintenance Contract (AMC) for a period of four years (excluding warranty period of three years) for 25kV Single phase 50Hz ac Traction Power Supply in Jashidih (Excl.) - Deoghar - Dumka (Excl.) - Deoghar (Excl.) - Banka (Excl.) - Madhupur (Excl.) - Giridih (Incl.) section (Gr. 344) (i) of Asansol Divisions of Eastern Railway under Railway Electrification Project, Danapur as per RDSO Specification No. T/SIPC/RCC/SCADA/0130 (Rev.2) with A&C slip No. 1, 2 & 3 and latest amendments.

Bidding Type	Normal Tender	Bidding System	Single Packet System
Tender Type	Open	Date Time of Uploading Tender	02.06.2020 13.09
Tender Closing Date Time	01.07.2020 15.00	Pre-Bid Query Date Time	Not Applicable
Pre-Bid Required	No	Tendering Section	PSI
Advertised Value (₹)	34420260.42	Bidding Unit	
Bidding Style	Single Rate for Each Schedule Item	Validity of Offer (Days)	45
Earnest Money (₹)	322200.00	Period of Completion	3 Months
Tender Doc. Cost (₹)	10000.00	Contract Category	Expenditure
Contract Type	Works	Are Joint Venture (JV) firms allowed to bid	No
Bidding Start Date	17.06.2020	Expenditure Type	Capital (Works)
Ranking Order For Bids	Lowest to Highest		

Note: - 1. The complete information of above E-Tender and Tender document are available on IREPS website i.e. www.ireps.gov.in. 2. Only E-Bids shall be accepted against above Tender. The e-bids may be uploaded before 15.00 hrs. on tender closing date.

Chief Electrical Engineer/PS/CORE/Prayagraj For & on behalf of President of India. PR/387/20 (FA)

"Serving Customers with a Smile"

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

4 nurses among 14 test positive for coronavirus



A GRP line in Charbagh sealed after personnel were found to be suffering from Covid-19

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Fourteen people tested positive for coronavirus in Lucknow on Wednesday while a patient from Balrampur died at KGMU. Among those who tested positive included four nurses of Fatima Hospital in Nishatganj, a data entry operator at SGPGI and a Ram Manohar Lohia Hospital worker. CMO Narendra Agarwal said the hospitals would have to carry out sanitisation.

Others who tested positive included two persons who were in quarantine in BKT, one in quarantine at Maal, husband of a woman who had tested positive in Nishatganj recently, an RPF personnel, a migrant

from Mumbai in Rajendranagar, a person from Basmandi and another from Jankipuram. The patients included five women and nine men. Under contact surveillance, 296 samples were collected by the CMO teams and sent to KGMU.

A 30-year-old migrant who came from Mumbai, died at KGMU. He belonged to Balrampur and used to repair ACs. KGMU media spokesperson Dr Sudhir Singh said that the patient was admitted on May 27. "He had breathing problems along with cough and fever and he had tested positive in the triage area of the hospital. He had several health problems and despite the best

possible efforts by doctors, he died due to multiple organ failure," he said. He added that relatives of the patient were handed over the body with detailed explanations about guidelines regarding the last rites. "The kin have been advised to stay in home quarantine for 14 days and approach doctors in case of any symptoms," he added.

Meanwhile, 141 people tested positive in the state, taking the toll to 8,870. The patients included 19 from Bulandshahr and 16 from HarDOI. There was one death in Mau, taking the toll in the state to 230. As many as 81 patients recovered in the state, taking the figure to 5,257.

City forest scheme to be launched tomorrow

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

City forest scheme of the Ministry of Forest and Environment will be launched on World Environment Day (June 5). Principal chief conservator of forest (PCCF) Rajiv Garg said. The scheme will be launched by the Central government through video-conferencing. Garg said the idea is to create a city forest within municipal limits.

"The objective is to create forests within municipal limits so that if we can earmark certain areas which may be 2-5 hectares and develop them in a natural manner by providing certain walking paths in the region, it will serve as the city forest. For example, though beautiful, Ram Manohar Park may not work as a city forest

while Kukrail, though a city forest, is not aesthetic to look at," he pointed out.

Incidentally, in Uttar Pradesh, the work on city forest has been taking place for last many years. "We have Kukrail forest in Lucknow, Allen forest in Kanpur and Van Devi area in Mau. Once the city forest scheme is launched and we have details of the parameters, we will choose areas in the city which can be developed as forest areas," he said. Another advantage is that it will help in greenery enhancement.

"However, plantation is something which can be also done in rural areas, therefore, the objective is to increase greenery in urban area because issues of environmental degradation are the maxi-

mum in cities," he added.

Meanwhile, Indian Institute of Toxicology Research (IITR) will be launching its pre-monsoon report on the ambient air quality of Lucknow on the eve of the World Environment Day on Thursday. IITR director Alok Dhawan said the report would give the ambient air quality in the four phases of lockdown.

"We have taken the impact of each lockdown on the ambient air quality of the city and also that on the water quality of Gomti river," he said.

He pointed out that the lockdown has had a major impact on the environment conditions of the city which has recovered to a large extent. "Nature has recovered significantly due to lockdown. In the

coming days if a person can impose a one-day lockdown on himself, it will make a difference to the environment. If offices allow work from home for a day, it will lessen the movement of vehicles. Environment is just like a human body and if you give it rest for a day, it recuperates," he said.

The pre-monsoon report of IITR for the year 2019 showed that the RSPM (PM10) level at all the monitoring locations of residential, commercial and industrial areas were higher than the NAAQS. The results revealed the 24 hours concentration of PM10 to be in the range of 102.3 to 290.5 µg/m3 with an average of 178.5 µg/m3. The 24 hours concentration of PM2.5 was found to be in the range

of 51.5 to 130.7 µg/m3 with an average of 84.3 µg/m3. Noise levels during day and night time were found to be in the range of 65.3 to 86.6 dB (A) and 56.0 to 67.9 dB (A) respectively, which was above the permissible limits.

In the PM10 levels, Indira Nagar recorded 170.7 µg/m3 with Vikas Nagar recording 185.7 µg/m3, Gomti Nagar 182.4 µg/m3 and Aliganj 181.4 µg/m3.

In commercial areas (Charbagh, Alambagh, Aminabad and Chowk) the average concentration of PM10 was in the range of 151.1 to 190.9 µg/m3 with an average of 174.3 µg/m3, respectively. In industrial area (Amausi), the average concentration of PM10 was 189.2 µg/m3.

Plantation will help provide employment to migrants: DM

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

District Magistrate Abhishek Prakash said the focus would be on plantation activities this year to help provide employment to migrant labourers. He said the maximum use of information technology would be made in plantation, which includes the use of drones, mobile apps, application monitoring systems, nursery management systems and e-green watch portal.

The DM called for a meeting of officials for plantation activities on Thursday. He said that a total of 27 lakh saplings would be planted in the district. He directed the officials to prepare their work plan by June 8 and complete the digging work by June 15.

The DM said efforts should be to ensure maximum plantation in the district. "For a better plantation exercise, it is important to bring it to the ground level and do it properly," he said. He added that residents of the city who plant hundred trees would be felicitated and made environment ambassadors. The DM said they would be specially using the My Tree App for the plantation this year. Plants will be tagged and photos uploaded. "With this, we will not only ensure maximum participation but also restrict global warming," he said. A control room has been established at Collectorate and people can dial 0522-2716723 for help. The DM said that for plantation, they were using forest land, private land, agricultural land, Gauwansh shelters and catchment areas near rivers and canals.

Meanwhile, Divisional Commissioner Mukesh Meshram called a meeting on

Wednesday to spread awareness for World Environment Day. The meeting was attended by DFO Ravi Singh and Municipal Commissioner Indramani Tripathi. He said that on the occasion of World Environment Day, the Japanese technique of Miyawaki for plantation would be started at Sarojinagar Gaushala.

The Divisional Commissioner told the officials to prepare a work plan to ensure maximum plantation in the city. He said it was the right time for plantation because air quality was very good and devoid of pollution. He said forests could be developed with the Japanese technique of Miyawaki in the city.

"Along with big trees, small trees and medicinal plants should also be planted so that people who need these plants can collect them from these parks," he said. He added that on the side of the roads and in Gaushalas, mini-forests should be developed in a 200 square metre area with the help of this technique. He said that a campaign should be run to ensure participation of people and efforts should be made to help people adopt plants.

The Divisional Commissioner said that departments should search unused land. "It will not only make it encroachment-free but will also make it greener," he said. He added that under Smart City, they have started a helpline under which people can obtain the saplings of their choice for plantation. He said that an audit should be carried out at schools and students who have done well in looking after the saplings which they have planted should be given five extra marks.



People seem to be making a mockery of social distancing at a vegetable market in Alambagh on Wednesday

Pioneer

MediTech CoE to come up on SGPGIMS campus

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The Software Technology Parks of India, an autonomous body under the Union Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology and Sanjay Gandhi Post-Graduate Institute of Medical Sciences along with department of IT and Electronics (UP), signed an MoU for setting up of a Medical Electronics and Health Informatics Centre of Excellence (MediTech CoE) in Lucknow.

SGPGIMS director Dr RK Dhiman said the centre would stimulate the establishment and growth of technology-based start-ups in medical electronics and health informatics by providing state-of-the-art infrastructure, including world-class laboratories. "In addition, the centre will offer mentoring, marketing and funding, thus

creating an ecosystem essential for the success of the start-ups. According to the core objective of CoE, the objective is to strengthen domestic capability for manufacturing reliable and affordable medical electronics products and providing services, thereby reducing dependence on imports. It will also contribute to the vision of flagship government programmes such as Make in India, Digital India and Start-up India," he said. He said the participating parties have a keen interest and have come together through this MoU to create an ecosystem at SGPGI to give impetus to research, technology development, product development, technology incubation and entrepreneurship in medical electronics health informatics and other healthcare areas.

"The Ministry of Electronics and Information

Technology had approved the project in September last year at an estimated outlay of Rs 22 crore, including the contribution (Rs 10 crore) of UP government. The UP government had also granted permission for setting up the centre at SGPGIMS through STPI," the director said.

"This centre will leverage the deep research capabilities of SGPGIMS in different areas of medical along with biostatistics and health informatics. There will also be seamless access to clinical trials of medical innovations. SGPGIMS and STPI will play a crucial role in providing robust infrastructure, industry connect as well as funding. The field experts of SGPGIMS will act as mentors for these start-ups and innovators. This MediTech CoE at Lucknow is expected to be ready in 5-6 months," he added.

Thundershowers likely today

Lucknow (PNS): The Met department has forecast rains and thundershowers on Thursday. Heavy rains accompanied by squalls are likely at isolated parts in the state. On Wednesday, the weather remained pleasant with skies turning cloudy intermittently. Met director JP Gupta said that change in the weather was because of a western disturbance prevailing over Pakistan and cyclonic circulation over Rajasthan. Districts across the state recorded low maximum temperature. However, Agra remained the hottest at 39 degree Celsius. Gupta said that the cyclone Nisarg would have no impact on Uttar Pradesh. The state capital recorded the maximum temperature at 35.3 degree Celsius.

Bike-borne chain-snatchers target school teacher

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Two bike-borne unidentified miscreants looted the gold chain of a school founder and teacher when the latter was on a morning stroll in Thakurganj on Wednesday. The victim, who is a heart patient, tried to overpower the chain-snatchers, but in vain. The victim, identified as Ganga Prasad Sahu of Saadatganj, was targeted when he was behind Chikanwali Gali in the area.

"I am a heart patient and go for morning walk on the advice of my doctor. Around 4:30 am, I left my home for morning walk towards Clock Tower. On the way, the miscre-

ants came from behind and snatched my gold chain. I tried to catch hold of them but one of them twisted my arm. They escaped and I could not chase them due to my illness," he said.

Meanwhile, thieves made off with cash and ornaments from a house in Nagram on Tuesday night. Amresh of Hasanpur Kaneri village said he and his family were sleeping on the terrace while his elder brother Raj Karan in the verandah. "We wake up early morning and found household articles lying strewn across the floor. We then found a big hole in the rear wall of the house. The thieves decamped with all the cash and ornaments we had," he said.

80-yr-old woman found dead under mysterious conditions

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

An 80-year-old woman, Veermati, was found dead under mysterious circumstances at her house in Yahiaganj locality under Chowk police station area on Wednesday night. Her son claimed that Veermati had a natural death while her son-in-law claimed that her grandson killed her. Police sent the body for autopsy and detained some of the suspects for interrogation. ACP Durga Prasad Tiwari said police reached the scene on the information.

"The woman was found dead in the courtyard of her house. Her son claimed that she had a natural death while her son-in-law suspected that her grandson strangled her to

death. We are sending the body for autopsy and some members of family have been summoned for interrogation. We are waiting for the autopsy report and action will be taken if foul play is established," he said. Meanwhile, two vendors had a clash and later several people from both the sides flocked to the scene in Vikas Nagar, giving the police a tough task.

Meanwhile, a 42-year-old cancer patient, identified as Changa aka Vijay of Ramnagar locality in Bazaarkhala, ended his life at his house some time on Tuesday. He was found hanging from the ceiling with a scarf tied around his neck. The police said Changa was depressed owing to his illness and he ended his life under a bout of depression. The police

said that they did not recover any suicide note from the room. "Further investigation is underway while the body has been sent for autopsy," a police spokesman said. He said a case of loot had been registered and the police were scanning CCTV footage.

SUICIDE BID

A woman constable attempted to commit suicide by consuming some poisonous substance on Monday while the incident came to light on Wednesday. She is presently working with the corona cell set up at Reserve Police Lines. A police spokesman said the woman was admitted to Balrampur Hospital. She was discharged after her condition improved.



A girl locked in an argument with a traffic cop after being stopped during a vehicle checking drive at Hazratganj crossing on Wednesday

Pioneer

2 groups clash over land dispute

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Two groups of men, one being led by a Bharatiya Janata Yuva Morcha (backward class) leader, clashed with one another over a land owned by the state government in Gudamba on Wednesday. Several persons sustained injuries in the clash and a cross-FIR was registered in this connection.

According to Garhi outpost incharge sub-inspector

Arjun Dwivedi, two groups led by Arjun Yadav and Hanuman Yadav had differences over a land located in Bibiyapur village of the area. As the issue was brought to the notice of the district administration, the officials restrained both the parties from carrying out any work on the land and also initiated a probe into the matter.

On Wednesday, both the groups came face to face. Villagers said both the groups

hurled bricks on one another and wielded sticks, leaving several injured. Though police said they were finding out the names of the injured, villagers said Ajay Yadav, his gunner Anand, Seema Yadav, Sonu & Ram Singh (all of Ajay's group) and Balu, Ramu, Rampal Yadav and Prema Yadav (from Hanuman's side) suffered injuries. Ajay is the leader of BSYM (backward class) and has been allotted a gunner.

Akhilesh greets people on World Bicycle Day

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav has greeted the citizens on the occasion of World Bicycle Day. Yadav took to micro blogging platform Twitter to elaborate on the importance of bicycles in the world. Interestingly, cycle is the symbol of Samajwadi Party. "Happy World Cycle Day! Bicycle is such a means of transportation in the whole world that it reaches out to the last person of society. It is also a symbol of human progress and development, to keep moving forward in harmony with the environment," he tweeted.

The Samajwadi Party chief has been frequently targeting the Uttar Pradesh government, claiming that despite having over 70,000 buses in its fleet; migrant labourers had to walk home amid the COVID-19 lockdown resulting in many deaths. He also questioned the government over the increase in COVID-19 cases despite the imposition of lockdown, and also raised the argument of economic fallout of COVID-19.

In a statement issued here on Wednesday, Akhilesh Yadav said, "Despite lockdown, there has been no decrease in the spread of the disease. The infection has increased and the economy destroyed. The economy of the country was already in a bad



shape. But following the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic, the economy deteriorated. In this scenario, from where will the people get jobs?" he said. "The Bharatiya Janata Party works to entangle the vulnerable people of the state and the country in emotional issues. The dream of the poor, farmers and labourers have shattered. The trust of the country's citizens has broken," Yadav said. "Has the dreams of 'achhe din' (good days), promised by the BJP been fulfilled?" the SP chief asked.

Meanwhile, Akhilesh Yadav on Wednesday contacted the party leaders across the state on WhatsApp and asked them to work for providing relief to the migrant labourers and other people who suffered from the long spell of lockdown. He said the video calling programme would continue and the party would contact all the booth level workers.

13 new COVID-19 cases found

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

A doctor of Homi Bhabha Cancer Institute, Lahartara, is among the 13 new COVID-19 patients who have been detected in the district here on Wednesday. Besides, four of a family has been found positive who came into the contact of an earlier found corona patient and health worker from hotspot Tarna (Shivpur) and eight migrants. With this, the total number of positive patients in the district has increased to 203 and out of them, 123 have been discharged and four have died. There are 76 active patients. According to District Magistrate (DM), 71 reports have been received from Microbiology Lab of BHU and 58 of them were negative while 13 positive.

Among the positive found patients, four are of a family of landlords from hotspot Tarna area where earlier found corona positive health worker lives. They are wife (55), daughter of landlords (30), son (27) and granddaughter (5). One of the positive patient is a fellowship doctor (33) working at Homi Bhabha Cancer Hospital and



Security at new hotspot Hanuman Phatak (Adampura) in Varanasi on Wednesday

lives in Balaji Colony, Samnaghat (Lanka).

Besides, among the eight migrants, one (44) is from Saket Nagar (Lanka) who works in a news channel in Delhi and returned here by a flight from Delhi on May 27. His sample was collected at ESIC Hospital. The second patient (43) is from Lokapur (Badagaon) who came here in a car from Mumbai where he works as receptionist at a hospital. The third one is a woman (46) from Bhatauli Kazi Sarai village (Badagaon) who returned here by a train. The

fourth one (30) is from the same village who also came here by a train from Mumbai where he works in a private company. The fifth one (41) is from Devrai (Phulpur) who came here in a truck from Mumbai where he runs a tea stall. The sixth one (35) is from Basao Vikrampur (Cholapur) who returned by a train. The seventh (40) is from Haribhanpur (Kapsatti) who returned in a truck from Mumbai where he drives an auto and eighth one (21) is also from Haribhanpur (Kapsatti) who also returned in a truck

from Mumbai where he works as an accountant.

With the finding of these new patients, the number of hotspots has increased to 104 in the district with six new ones including Saket Nagar (Lanka), Lokapur (Badagaon), Bhatauli (Badagaon), Devrai (Phulpur), Basao Vikrampur (Cholapur) and Balaji Colony Samnaghat (Lanka). Meanwhile, Rohania police station incharge informed that earlier found positive patient of Shooltankeshwar lives in Popular Apartment, Janaki Nagar (Bhelupur).

Later, it has also been confirmed by Bhelupur police so Popular Apartment has become the hotspot in place of Shooltankeshwar. Out of total 104 hotspots, 32 have become green zones with two new ones including Nariya and Garkhada, while among 72 active hotspots, 31 are in orange zones while 41 are in red zones. In the district, as many as new 142 samples were collected during the day. Out of total 6,190 samples, the reports of 5,635 have received while of 555 are awaited. Out of received reports, 5,432 were negative and 203 positive.

29 new coronavirus +ve cases in Kanpur

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Kanpur City reported 29 new coronavirus positive cases on Wednesday, taking the tally to 417.

Chief Medical Officer Dr AK Shukla said most of the new cases were from Meharban Singh Ka Purwa, Swarup Nagar, Shivnagar Vidyut Colony, Govind Nagar, Barra-3, Sujatganj, Golaghat and Mannipurwa.

The CMO said that with the discharge of five COVID-19 patients from hospitals on Wednesday, 310 infected persons had been cured and 94 active cases remained in the district, which has so far witnessed 13 deaths.

Dr Shukla said 78 teams of health workers scanned 5,048 houses and collected 460 swab samples for testing, including 193 of migratory labourers and 70 of front line workers.

Meanwhile, Kanpur Municipal Commissioner Akshay Tripathi warned nursing homes and hospitals to refrain from throwing bio-medical waste with garbage on the streets. He said Kanpur Nagar

Covid test mandatory for all deaths in hospitals: DM

KANPUR (PNS): District Magistrate BR Tiwari told health officials on Wednesday that coronavirus test was mandatory for all deaths in hospitals and the body of the deceased was to be handed over to the kin only after getting the test report so that the Covid protocol was strictly followed in case the report turned out to be positive. It may be mentioned here that after the death of an 80-year-old retired UHM Hospital employee living on the campus, his body was handed over to the relatives, but on Tuesday when the Covid test report came, it turned out to be positive.

The district magistrate said since the movement of migrant workers who had returned home from other states, the coronavirus positive cases had suddenly increased. He asked the health officials to deploy more teams for collecting swab samples. Tiwari imposed a blanket ban on fishing up to August 31, 2020. He said those found fishing in the river would face legal action and fine as well. He directed officials to strictly enforce the ban on fishing. The district magistrate said that people found selling fish would be punished under Uttar Pradesh Matasya Adhiniyam, 1948. He said

this season was in fact the breeding season of fish and thus fishing had been banned with immediate effect. Tiwari said all liquor shops would now remain open up to 9 pm. He said, however, said the liquor shops in hotspots and orange zones would not open at all. Later, while addressing the district advisory committee meeting at the collectorate, he said all banks need to dispose of loan related applications on priority and provide loans to the applicants. He warned banks that no case should be kept pending on flimsy grounds. Tiwari said under the Atmanirbhar Bharat campaign, a special package had been declared by the government and thus farmers be provided with Kisan Credit Cards so that they could be provided economic farm related loans.

DC DISTRIBUTES RATION TO POOR: Meanwhile, Kanpur Divisional Commissioner Sudhir M Bobde, while distributing ration kits to the poor of Wending Well Guest House, Kidwainagar along with Bharatiya Janata Party MLA Mahesh Trivedi, said the ration kits were being distributed in view of the global pandemic which had taken its toll in India as well.

Nigam had specifically directed the nursing homes and clinics to keep bio-medical waste separate so that it could be dis-

posed of as per the bio-medical waste protocol. He said the regional officials of the Pollution Control

Board had been directed to take legal action against nursing homes throwing bio-medical waste on the streets.

Varanasi, Jaunpur cross 200-mark

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Varanasi and Jaunpur have become the two districts in this belt of Purvanchal (eastern UP) comprising 10 districts of three divisions of Varanasi, Azamgarh and Vindhyachal where the number of COVID-19 patients has crossed 200-mark as the finding of corona infected patients among the migrants continued to shock the region. As many as 13 new cases have been found in Varanasi including eight migrants on Wednesday and with this, the number of cases in the district has increased to 203. Besides, as many as 25 corona positive cases have been detected during the single day in Jaunpur, indicating the worsening and alarm-

ing situation. With this, the total number of COVID-19 cases in the district has increased to 207. However, like other districts of the region, the recovery rate is also good in Jaunpur division of Varanasi division as 110 have been discharged so far, while three have died, leaving 94 active patients.

So far, there are four districts out of 10 in this region where the cases are more than 100. Right from the finding of first patient in this region, Varanasi was always on the top until recently, sharp increases in cases among migrants was seen in Jaunpur. Apart from Varanasi, the total number of COVID-19 patients in Ghazipur has increased to 132 with the finding of seven new cases. Out of

COVID-19

them, 68 have been recovered, while 64 are still active. In yet another district of Varanasi division, Chandauli as many as 24 patients have been found so far and out of them 14 have been discharged from the hospital, while one has died leaving nine active patients.

Out of three districts out of four of Varanasi division, the only other district of this region where the cases were more than three figure mark is Azamgarh where with the finding of three new patients, the total number of patients has increased to 123. Out of them, 13 have been recovered while three have died, leaving 107 active patients. As

majority of patients are new and migrants, it is the only district in this region where still there are more than 100 active patients. In Azamgarh district, there are 107 active patients. In Mau of Azamgarh division, four new patients have been detected increasing the total number to 44.

Out of them, 10 have been recovered while one has died, leaving 33 active patients. In Ballia, the total number of patients is 52 with 26 active while 26 have been recovered. In comparison to divisions of Varanasi and Azamgarh, the cases in Vindhyachal division are comparatively less as there 44 cases have been found in Bhadohi, 34 in Mirzapur and nine of Sonbhadra.

Man strangles, hangs wife

KANPUR (PNS): A woman was strangled and hanged by her husband in Bharatpur village under Vidhnu police station on Wednesday morning.

The woman's 9-year-old son, who witnessed the incident by peeping through a hole in the doors, told the police about involvement of his father, Vivek Kumar, in the killing of his mother, Savitri (35).

While Vivek Kumar was absconding, police took Savitri's father-in-law, mother-in-law and sister-in-law into custody. Vivek Kumar of Bharatpur (Vidhnu) is employed in a factory in Surat (Gujarat). During the lockdown, he had come to his native village about a month back.

On Wednesday morning, Savitri was found hanging from the ceiling of her room. Police found Vivek missing from the house. While the police were making investigation, 9-year-old Priyanshu narrated the whole incident to the cops. Priyanshu told the police that his father had returned home heavily drunk on Tuesday night and when his mother protested, he began thrashing her. When Priyanshu tried to rescue his mother, his father threw him out of the room and bolted the door from inside. On peeping through a hole in the door, he saw his father strangulating his mother to death. Later, Vivek hanged Savitri from the ceiling and escaped. Priyanshu immediately informed his grandmother about the incident.

Savitri's brother Ajay Singh of Kandhara, Bhitargaon (Ghatampur) lodged a complaint against Vivek Kumar for killing and hanging the body of his sister.

Station Officer Pushpraj Singh said on the basis of postmortem report, action would be initiated.

Progress of KDA projects reviewed

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Kanpur Development Authority Vice Chairman and District Magistrate Brahma Deo Ram Tiwari reviewed the progress of the implementation of projects approved in the 129th KDA Board meeting and the proposals to be put up in the development authority board's meeting on June 12.

KDA Secretary SP Singh informed Tiwari that most of the issues discussed in the last KDA Board meeting had been attended to while the rest of them could not be taken up because of the nation-wide lockdown imposed to contain the spread of coronavirus and they would be expedited soon.

KDA Additional Secretary Gudakesh Sharma, Finance Controller VK Lal, Joint Secretary KK Singh, Superintendent Engineer SK Nagar, Basant Lal, OSD Alok Verma, Bhairpal Singh, Renu Pathak, all the executive engineers, city Planner and other officers were present in the meeting.

DONATION: Sanatan Mandir Chetna Society handed over a

cheque of ₹ 2 Lakh to Ram Jannabhoomi temple trust and wished early completion of the temple in Ayodhya.

The cheque was handed over to Sri Ram Jannabhoomi Teerth Kshetra trust General Secretary Champat Rai in presence of trustee Anil Misra and Mahant of Sugreev Kila, Vishwesh Prapannacharya Maharaj here on the occasion of Nirjala Ekadashi.

They praised the efforts of Sanatan Mandir Chetna Society in renovating the dilapidated temples and the promotion of Sanatan dharma in the country.

On this occasion, Champat Rai also released a souvenir of the Sanatan Mandir Chetna Society, which also donated him an infrared thermometer and a fogging machine for the devotees of Lord Rama visiting Ayodhya.

Prominent among those present included Ajay Misra, SP Chaturvedi, Vinay Misra, Anil Pandey, Mahesh Tewari, Pramod Shukla, KR Tewari, Rakesh Yadav, Vasudeo Tripathi, Puneet Nishad and Dr KK Dokania.

IIT-BHU develops face mask

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

When the activities in the country have highly been limited due to lockdown and restrictions on the campus as studies remained suspended, many educational institutions continued their efforts to work on innovative and constructive projects. The global pandemic COVID-19 has become a challenge for the world. In such a situation, social distance and face mask have become an important part of people's lifestyle. In this sequence, Indian Institute of Technology, Banaras Hindu University (IIT-BHU) has developed a 5M anti-microbial multi-layer face mask.

Dr Marshal and his team at School of Biomedical Engineering, IIT-BHU has developed anti-microbial multi-layer face mask.

The face mask is developed in a way to annihilate patho-

genic microorganisms that stick to the outer surface of the mask to limit further spread of secondary infections.

'The currently available mask in the market acts as a filter to stop the entry of microbes to oral and nasal airways but does not have any effect on the microbe stick to the mask surface. This shortcoming of masks could be very dangerous for medical and paramedical staff due to the presence of higher viral or bacterial load on their outer surface,' said Dr Marshal, adding that his team addresses this problem by stacking different layers of nano-metal conjugated with protonated amine matrix.

IIT-BHU Director Prof Pramod Kumar Jain said that the Institute is fully prepared to fight with this dangerous virus while fulfilling its social obligations and is fully ready to cooperate with the govern-

ment and administration for all such needs.

Meanwhile, University Science Instrumentation Centre (USIC) of BHU has developed a remote-controlled trolley for carrying food to patients admitted in hospital of Institute of Medical Sciences (IMS).

Prof incharge of the centre Anchal Srivastava said that by this remote-controlled trolley, meals can easily be served to the patients, minimising the possibilities of spread of coronavirus infection. It may be mentioned that recently the same centre has developed cheap sanitiser dispensers.

Besides, the Applied Art department of Faculty of Visual Art, BHU has brought a laurel for the Banaras Hindu University when Bihar Governor Fagu Chauhan gave sanction to Logo and Seal of Munger University prepared

by it.

It may be mentioned that for Logo, the Bihar government had invited entries at an all India level contest in which out of receiving hundreds of entries, the jury members have accepted the logo made by research scholar of BHU Pradeep Kumar Vishwakarma and won an award of ₹ 50,000. Not only this, Seal and Monogram of Rahul Kumar Sav of the same department has also been accepted and he also received an award of ₹ 50,000.

Assistant professor Dr Manish Arora said that after acceptance of both the logo and seal by the Academic Council and senate of Munger University, the same was sent to the Governor, who is also Chancellor of the state university, and later on, the Governor sanctioned the same logo and seal of the university.

Devotees to be thermal scanned before entering Kashi Vishwanath temple

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Devotees could have only jhanki darshan of Baba Vishwanath and would be allowed to carry only water and there would be restriction on carrying flowers, garlands and other worship materials. The temple administration will sanitise the temple premises on every 4 hours and the devotees would be allowed to enter the temple only after being thermal scanned and sanitised by personnel on entrance gate.

If the temperature of any devotee is found more than standard in thermal scanning, he or she would not be allowed to enter the temple. The devotees need to put mask on their faces while entering the temple. The automatic sanitising machines would be installed at entrance gate to sanitise the devotees.

any devotee is found COVID-19, the necessary precautions could be taken to prevent others from infection. The sanitiser would also be available in temple premises for the sanitisation of devotees and personnel on duty.

There would be circles in the distance of 2-2 metre for the devotees to stand while having darshan and performing puja to ensure social distancing. The temple administration is considering allowing only 10 devotees to enter temple premises at a time to maintain social distancing.

The devotees would be allowed to enter the temple premises through two gates in northern side while they could exit from the gate of southern side of the temple.

Despite, the temple administration has so far not received any directive from district administration regarding opening of the temple from June 8. The devotees could have only jhanki darshan of Baba Vishwanath and would be allowed to carry only water and there would be restriction on carrying flowers, garlands and other worship materials.

any devotee is found COVID-19, the necessary precautions could be taken to prevent others from infection. The sanitiser would also be available in temple premises for the sanitisation of devotees and personnel on duty.

There would be circles in the distance of 2-2 metre for the devotees to stand while having darshan and performing puja to ensure social distancing. The temple administration is considering allowing only 10 devotees to enter temple premises at a time to maintain social distancing.

The devotees would be allowed to enter the temple premises through two gates in northern side while they could exit from the gate of southern side of the temple.

Despite, the temple administration has so far not received any directive from district administration regarding opening of the temple from June 8 it has started its

preparations about this, informed the spokesman of temple administration Piyush.

It may be noted here that the government has mentioned for opening the temples and religious places for the devotees from June 8 in the guideline issued for unlock-1 began from June 1.

The temple was closed for the devotees to have darshan and perform puja from March 20 because of COVID-19. It is said that similar system would also be made in other famous temples of city to maintain social distancing and as precautionary measure to prevent infection from coronavirus.

Though, the construction work under the project of the Kashi Vishwanath Dham had already been started during lockdown-4 with some restrictions after the government had issued guideline regarding this.

Nisarg to reach Prayagraj on Friday

ABHILASH NARAIN ■ ALLAHABAD

After casting its devastating Aaffect in coastal North Maharashtra and South Gujarat with high tides, heavy rains and wind blowing at 120 kmph, the super cyclone Nisarg is moving towards north-east direction and is expected reach Prayagraj on Friday, but with a lesser intensity.

Nisarg, developed in the Arabian Sea, hit Alibagh and Mumbai on Wednesday afternoon and uprooted a good number of trees besides blowing away tin roofs and bringing down several kuchcha houses. Its intensity was very high, but warnings and alerts

issued well in advance, minimised losses to a great extent.

According to weather forecast the cyclone is moving in north-east direction and after playing havoc on its way Nisarg will enter Madhya Pradesh on Thursday, and will reach Prayagraj on Friday with a lower intensity causing stormy winds and rains.

Mumbai has witnessed such a cyclone after about 130 years, and this air pressure game of the nature will cast an adverse effect on the movement of monsoon which arrives here from the Bay of Bengal via Bengal, Bihar, and Madhya Pradesh, speculated the weath-

er experts.

CORONAVIRUS: With eight new patients of coronavirus in the Prayagraj district, the number of people infected with the COVID-19 has crossed 100 here on Wednesday. Eight new corona-infected patients were found in different parts of the district.

All the patients have come from Delhi, Mumbai and Noida in the past. Over the 100 patients, three have lost their lives, while 62 people have recovered and gone to their homes. The new corona infected included a 23-year-old youth from Pratappur, a 46-year-old man from Sarayumunjre, a 42-year-old

man from Manda and a 22-year-old youth from Meja. All the four have returned from Mumbai recently.

Their test report came to corona positive on Tuesday evening. All these were home quarantined before the report came out. Now they had admitted to SRN Hospital.

In the same context, a 19-year-old resident of Koundhiyara was also infected with COVID-19. The youth returned from Ghaziabad on May 27. Another 26-year-old young man from Koundhiyara was also found to be corona positive. The young man returned from Mumbai on May 26.

NCR operated 132 Shramik Special trains to ferry 1.77 lakh migrants

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ ALLAHABAD

North Central Railway has operated 132 originating Shramik Specials catering to 1,77,371 migrants and other stranded persons. Since running of first Shramik special train on May 8 from Aligarh to Purnea, June 2 was the first day when there was no demand for originating Shramik special train from state government at any station served by North Central Railway.

Over last 25 days NCR has averaged daily 5.3 originating Shramik specials clearing about 7,095 persons per day with peak of 16 originating trains on May 21 catering to maximum 20,727 persons on any single day.

This demand of originating Shramik train had reduced to average of 2 trains since last 5 days and no originating train

was demanded at any station of NCR on June 2 and up till 16 hrs on June 3. Though demand for these trains have reduced substantially however North Central Railway is committed to run these special train on top priority whenever any demand from respective state government comes and will continue to run till last demand is fulfilled.

Similarly number of incoming Shramik special have also reduced substantially and only one train terminated each on 1st and 2nd of June, 2020. Since handling of first incoming train from Sabarmati on May 3, NCR has handled average 6 incoming Shramik special trains on daily basis bringing back around 9,210 persons daily with peak touching 18 trains on May 15 bringing back 30,092 migrants & other stranded persons on a single

day. As on June 2 total 182 terminating and 46 passing trains with stoppage at stations over NCR have safely brought back 2,76,238 persons at different stations of North Central Railway. Distribution wise these 182 trains were terminated at various stations of North Central Railway like Sonbhadra (2 train), Prayagraj Jn. (63 trains), Fatehpur (10 trains), Etah (1 train), Etawah (2 train), Aligarh (6 train), Kanpur (21 trains), Agra Cantt. (7 trains), Gwalior (10 trains), Jhansi (4 trains), Orai (3 trains), Banda (16 train), Chattarpur (16 trains), Manikpur (1 train), Mirzapur (11 trains), Tikamgarh (4 trains), Chitrakoot (2 train), Subedarganj (1 train), Mahoba (1 train) and Morena (1 train). These trains have ferried migrants from stations like

Sabarmati, Surat, Ahemdabad, Palanpur, Godhra, Viramgam, Mehsana, Morabi, Anjar, Navsari, Dahod, Vadodara, Surendranagar, Kanhangad, Junagarh, Kurnool, Ankleshwar, Bengaluru, Pune, New Delhi, Rewadi, Roshak, Gurgaon, Firozpur, Ludhiana, Thivim, Kopergaon, Jodhpur, Borivili, Bharuch, Katra, Sambalpur, Ghatkesar, Udaipur, Lingampalli, Madgaon, Vapi, Lokmanya Tilak Terminus, Ernakulam, Nizamuddin etc.

Besides serving water bottles, Railway staff and volunteers of Scouts & Guides also ensured that drinking water from station taps is served in the container available with passengers with help of extenders. Coach watering was also attended in all Shramik trains at all watering stations of North Central Railway.

Three murder accused held

CORRESPONDENT ■ GORAKHPUR

The police arrested three accused in connection with the murder which was committed in Dehradula village under the Harpur Budhat police station on Sunday night. After committing the murder, the accused were absconding. (SP) South Vipul Kumar Srivastava said that the police team constituted for arresting the accused on the direction of the SSP was tipped off by an informer reached the Sahjanwa railway station from where the accused were trying to run away. At the behest of the informer, the police team arrested the three accused sit-



SP (South) Vipul Kumar Srivastava giving details about the case in Gorakhpur on Wednesday

ting together on a bench at the station. The accused arrested were identified as Ajay Pratap Singh and Vishal Singh alias Golu, sons of Ram Adhir Singh, and Vijay Pratap Singh alias Santosh Singh, son of Phool Dev Singh, residents of Gan Dehradula under the Harpur Budhat police station.

On clues provided by the accused during interrogation the police team recovered a piece of stick and a brick used for committing the murder from a drain near Sher Singh's garden.

The culprits said that after committing the murder of the deceased, Dayanand, and thrashing his family members they had thrown these things while running away. The police team which made the arrest comprised the Harpur Budhat police station incharge, Devendra Lal, sub-inspector Fulinder Yadav and constables Sunil Verma, Brijesh Yadav, Janardan Yadav and Meena Mishra.

Special Delhi-bound train departs from Ghazipur City

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Under the ongoing plan to run 200 trains apart from 15 pairs of Special and Shramik Special trains, 02233 Ghazipur City-Anand Vihar Terminus (ANVT) Special Superfast Express departed from platform No 1 of Ghazipur City railway station on Tuesday with 990 passengers, instead of its capacity of 1,490, in order to follow the Covid-19 guidelines.

As per the instructions given by the Railways, all the Delhi-bound reserved passengers reached the station 90 minutes before the scheduled departure of train so that after checking of reservation tickets and thermal scanning by the personnel of Commercial and health departments as well as RPF, they could be given entry into train. The passengers were lined up in three rows by maintaining social distancing. Before the arrival of passengers, deep cleaning and sanitisation of platform and train rakes were done as per the guidelines of Covid-19. To look after all the arrangements, senior officers, including station superintendent, chief commercial



A passenger being thermal scanned prior to boarding Ghazipur-ANVT Special train at Ghazipur City railway station on Tuesday.

inspector, chief health inspector, incharge RPF, GRP personnel and others were present there. During the health check-up and thermal scanning, none of the passengers were found sick or infected. For emergency, the Railway had made an arrangement for ambulance there. Earlier 02234 Anand Vihar Terminus-Ghazipur City Special Superfast Express train arrived at Ghazipur station with 492 passengers. All the passengers wearing masks and maintaining social distancing

were allowed to exit from the station premises as per the guidelines.

Meanwhile, in wake of cyclone Nisarga Indian Railways has rescheduled departure of some special trains from Mumbai. Many trains scheduled to pass through this region were rescheduled from different stations in Mumbai including Chatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus (CSMT) and Lokmanya Tilak Terminus (LTT) so that they can depart from Mumbai when the

impacts of Nisarga was minimised. According to public relations officer (PRO) of Varanasi Division of NER Ashok Kumar, as per the release received from Central Railway (CR) 02542 LTT-Gorakhpur; 01061 LTT-Darbhanga; and 01071 LTT-Varanasi have been rescheduled to start from their originating stations in Mumbai on Wednesday apart from terminating 01094 Varanasi-CSMT before the scheduled time by regulating its run.

Dubey assumes charge as director (Finance) NCL

CORRESPONDENT ■ SONBHADRA

Ram Narayan Dubey assumed charge as director (Finance) of Northern Coalfields Limited (NCL) on Monday. With a rich experience of more than 32 years, Dubey was working as General Manager (Finance) at the headquarters of Coal India Limited before assuming the charge. Dubey succeeds Nag Nath Thakur who superannuated

last month. Dubey started his career in Coal India from South Eastern Coalfields Limited (SECL) in 1987 after that he got transferred to Bharat Coking Coal Limited (BCCL) in 1988. Dubey worked in BCCL up to 2013 after which he had been posted at Coal India headquarters, Kolkata. During his

tenure at Coal India he was promoted as General Manager (Finance) in 2019. He is a Chartered Accountant (CA) by profession and has an MBA in marketing. During his stint in different subsidiaries of Coal India Limited, he acquired vast experience of financial aspects in purchase and procurement. He has

looked after import of heavy equipment and at the materials management division of CIL, he was actively involved in the finalisation of global tenders of heavy equipment. He joined the Corporate Accounts and Taxation department of CIL (HQ) in 2018 where his role included finalisation of CIL Standalone and CIL Consolidated Accounts and dealing with the matters related to GST.



NTPC accelerates L&D opportunities for employees

CORRESPONDENT ■ SONBHADRA

National Thermal Power Corporation (NTPC), India's largest power producer and the Central PSU under Ministry of Power, has offered learning opportunities to its 19,000-plus employees and their family members. To meet the requirements of the lockdown imposed due to Covid-19 pandemic, NTPC Learning and Development (L&D) strategy has been customised for enriching employees through intensive digitisation and online training, enabling them to avail these services from anywhere. Moreover, company has collaborated with the World Bank to offer its staff an opportunity to be part of a rigorous

online technical course, attending virtual classes, giving assessments and eventually, obtaining certifications. Power Management Institute - NTPC's apex L&D centre - has conducted 250-plus training sessions in diverse disciplines ranging from technical, functional, health and safety. Besides, NTPC's Regional Learning and Development Centres located in power plant projects have created almost 100-plus online learning opportunities.

The Maharashtra is determined to keep nurturing their staff via continuous learning sessions while simultaneously revamping and customising methodologies for specialised scenarios. The company realises

the need for upskilling even during crisis. Therefore another unique collaboration - the '45-Day Learning Challenge' - offers its staff thorough learning for 45 days in varied disciplines such as technical, finance and HR, earning them certifications once completed from home.

There are other collaborations too with external agencies providing state-of-the-art sessions. A holistic wellness programme is being continuously run in association with the 'Art of Living'. Employees and family members of all ages can participate, helping them stay strong and focused during these turbulent times. Similarly, a special six-month initiative, 'Snehal 2.0', based on coun-

selling services via EAP (Employee Assistance Programmes) has been extended to employees' family members. Available round-the-clock, the EAP service is confidential and offered to select users only. Likewise, classes are being held on power plant essentials such as turbine, boiler, water chemistry, renewable energy and other significant O&M (Operations & Maintenance) areas through in-house as well as guest faculties. The new learning methodologies include connecting via online forums, webinars, an internally-developed mobile application 'Samvaad' as well as leveraging the Internet and its internal learning portal.

Fake cement factory unearthed

CORRESPONDENT ■ MIRZAPUR

The Chunar police unearthed a fake cement factory. The police raided the fake cement factory in Samsapur village and recovered 436 empty bags of branded companies and about 500 bags containing fake cement. Its owner confessed that he used to purchase cheap cement and sold at a higher price. The police arrested its owner, Ambareesh Upadhyay alias Vikas, a resident of Rohaniya under same police station in Varanasi. After the arrest the police seized the material, recovered a car and registered a case against him under Copyright and Trademark Acts.



DM Susheel Kumar Patel performing the rituals while kicking off the ambitious desilting project in Mirzapur

project the DM said that the watercourse which was proving as the reason behind the flood during rainy season was going to become an asset for the area due to its deepening. He further said that 11.35 km-long watercourse now would be used as a source of irrigation for 16 villages.

The cost of project was ₹71 lakh and would create 29,000 mandays under MGNREGA scheme.

ALLEGATIONS LEVELLED

Former MLC Bhagwati Prasad Chaudhary quipped here on Tuesday that instead of fighting Covid-19 the government was using more of its capacity to fight with Congress leaders.

District president of Congress Shiv Kumar Patel alleged that the government was creating obstacles in the bail of party's state chief.

GIRL DROWNS

A girl drowned in a rock well on Tuesday in Tendia village under the Chunar police station. As per the received reports, Anchal (12), daughter of Munna Lal Gaud, a resident of Tendia Rampur village had gone to bathe there on Tuesday when she slipped and died. With the help of the locals her body was brought out. On getting information the incharge Shaktेशgarh police outpost reached the spot and took the body into custody for completing the legal formalities.

Meanwhile one person was killed when a motorcycle was hit by a truck in Dhaniasria village under Mirzapur-Shaktinagar Road under Madhan police station. Paramhans was going along with Suresh, a resident of Javovar Pahadi under Dehat Kotwali when their motorcycle was hit by the truck near Rajgarh police outpost. As a result, the pillion rider, Suresh, died on the spot.

Memorandum submitted

CORRESPONDENT ■ BANDA

The office-bearers of Youth UP Udyog Vyapar Mandal handed over a memorandum to City Magistrate Surendra Singh, addressed to District Magistrate, Banda. They urged the DM to issue instructions to the bank authorities to waive interest on loans taken by traders. In the memorandum they said that schools should not increase their fees, all shops should be sanitised before opening and regular water supply should be ensured. The office-bearers requested the DM to allow the sweet shops to open from 7 am. Among those present were youth state organising secretary, Uttar Pradesh Udyog Vyapar



A memorandum, addressed to DM, being handed over to City Magistrate in Banda

Mandal, Banda Swadesh Gaurav Shivhare, president Satya Prakash Sarraf, city president, Santosh Gupta Anshankari, Dilip Gupta, Shivpoojan Gupta and Kamlesh Kumar Gupta.

6 hurt as car overturns

CORRESPONDENT ■ LAKHIMPUR KHERI

While trying to save a cyclist a car went out of control and overturned into a ditch on the Gola-Kasta road under the Neemgaon police station. As a result, six persons, including two children, were injured. The injured were rushed to the community health centre (CHC) situated in Mitauli from where the doctor referred a woman to the district hospital in view of her critical condition. Inspector in-charge of Neemgaon police station Rajkumar said that the driver, Farid (35), a resident of Hargoaon area of Sitapur. Badrunisha (30), Phool Jahan (55), Saiful (7), Hussain (2) and Sanno (2) were also going in the car. In an attempt to save the cyclist near Mughalpur village on Gola-Kasta road, the car went out of control and overturned into the ditch. As a result all its occupants were injured. On getting information the police rushed to the spot and got the injured admitted to CHC Mitauli from where the doctor on duty referred Badrunisha to the district hospital in view of her critical condition.

DESILTING PROJECT

District Magistrate Sushil Kumar Patel kicked off the work of Bhoka nullah desilting project amidst the rituals. Underlining the features of the

Teenaged boy crushed to death

CORRESPONDENT ■ BANDA

A 17-year-old boy was crushed to death by a tractor near Bilganv police outpost here recently. According to a report received here, Rohit, son of Munna, was crushed to death by the speeding tractor coming from the opposite direction near Bilganv police outpost recently. SHO Bisanda PS Akhilesh Kumar Mishra said that the police had

impounded the tractor and arrested the driver. Mishra said that the body of the victim had been sent for the post-mortem examination. Meanwhile a 65-year-old woman died when her 12-year-old grandson started the Bolero which was parked outside the house in Chahitara village under Dehat Kotwali area recently. The police said that this mishap occurred due to mischief of her grandson. Reports received

here said that Mediya (65), wife of Kedar Pal, was sitting outside her house when the accident took place as a result of which she was seriously injured and taken to the District Hospital in Banda. In view of her serious condition the doctors referred her to Kanpur but she died on the way. Police said that the body of the deceased had been sent for the post-mortem examination. In yet another incident a youth tried

to outrage the modesty of a 28-year-old woman in Baberu town recently. He also attacked her with a knife. Her family took her to CHC Baberu from where she was referred to district hospital. SHO Baberu Kotwali Jaishyam Shukla said that the woman had gone to the field where the youth residing in her neighbourhood caught her. SHO said that raids were being conducted to arrest the absconding culprit.

Committed corona warriors doing significant works

CORRESPONDENT ■ GORAKHPUR

Keeping in mind the Covid-19 infection by the North Eastern Railway (NER) administration was making several effective efforts to prevent it and ensure protection from it in which its employees too are engaged wholeheartedly. During the lockdown along with goods and parcel trains, Shramik Special trains are also being operated for the past few days to take the migrant workers to their native place. Railway workers who have done commendable work in such a difficult situation are being awarded by being declared 'Corona warriors of the day' everyday by the NER administration for boosting their morale. In the same sequence on June 1 such railwaymen were being honoured on the NER, CPRO Pankaj Kumar Singh said.

RC Singh, who was working as senior section engineer (SSE)/PM shop at mechanical workshop, Gorakhpur, continued to maintain power supply at there during the lockdown period. Apart from it he went to the workshop during the lockdown period every day and completed the works related to power maintenance and ensured the replacement of the defective pump set with the



RC Singh, senior section engineer/PM Shop, mechanical workshop Gorakhpur.

help of employees. RC Singh was honoured by being declared as 'Corona warrior of the day' for these commendable works.

Likewise Santosh Kumar Shah who works as train lighting helper in Chhapra under section Electrical/train lighting, made his significant contribution in getting works related to electricity-related changes in quarantine coaches which were converted from 12 general and sleeper coaches. Apart from it following the social distancing guidelines he also contributed significantly in the



Santosh Kumar Shah, helper, train lighting, Chhapra, Varanasi division

maintenance work of rakes on the washing pit. Shah was honoured by being declared as 'Corona warrior of the day' of Varanasi division for these commendable works.

On the other hand, Saudan Singh, working as Assistant Sub-Inspector in Railway Protection Force, Izzatnagar, Divisional Reserve, while working at Railway Protection Force post, Mathura Cantonment, since May 5 in Sharmik special trains from Mathura Junction to Bareilly, Kasganj, Kanpur Central, Lalkuan, Kathgodam and till Prayagraj escorted around 12 of them successfully and made the passengers aware about main-



Saudan Singh, Assistant Sub-Inspector, Mathura Cantt, Izzatnagar division

taining social distancing. For the commendable work of Saudan Singh he was honoured by being declared as 'Corona Warrior of the Day' of Izzatnagar division. The railway administration was indeed proud of its such railway personnel.

148 RAKES LOADED

During the lockdown announced to prevent the spread of Covid-19 pandemic for ensuring adequate supply of food and other essential commodities to every corner of the country continuous movement of special goods trains was being ensured by the

Indian Railways. During the lockdown period on North Eastern Railway unloading of goods carried by more than 865 rakes was done at different stations of the three divisions, Chief Public Relations Officer (CPRO) Pankaj Kumar Singh said.

The unloaded materials comprised, foodgrains, sugar, salt, edible oil, cement, fertilizer, coal, jute bags etc. During the lockdown period as many as 148 rakes were loaded at various stations of the three divisions of North Eastern Railway. Among the items loaded are foodgrains, wheat, sugar and ballast etc.

In Lucknow division 319 rakes were unloaded at different stations. The unloaded goods include 64 rakes of foodgrains, more than 66 rakes of cement, 86 rakes of fertilizer, 36 rakes of coal, 38 rakes of petroleum products, four rakes of edible oil, six rakes of salt and 17 rakes of iron etc. A total of 31 rakes were loaded from various stations of Lucknow division. The items loaded include 23 rakes of sugar, three rakes of molasses and more than four rakes of wheat.

The unloading of more than 180 rakes was carried out at various stations of Izzatnagar division, including goods in 79 rake containers, 23

rakes of cement, 29 rakes of fertilizers, 16 rakes of food items, 15 rakes of maize etc. The loading of 117 rakes was done by this division, which includes 25 rakes of foodgrains, six rakes each of sugar and ballasts and 79 containers. In Varanasi division over 366 rakes were unloaded during the lockdown period. The unloaded goods include 77 rakes of foodgrains, 44 rakes of fertilizer, 33 rakes of coal, four rakes of salt, 120 rakes of cement, 42 rakes of ballast and 41 rakes of mixed oil.

It may be pointed out here that during the loading and unloading of rakes all the rules are being followed for protection from Covid-19. Masks, sanitisers and soaps etc. are being provided to the employees concerned, including the workers. Besides maintaining social distancing thermal scanning was being done regularly.

MOVEMENT OF TRAINS START

For the convenience of the passenger public, the Railway administration has started movement of about 200 trains on the entire Indian Railways from June 1, 2020. In this sequence six express special trains were run from Gorakhpur Junction and via

Gorakhpur on June 1 from which about 1,609 passengers started their journey from Gorakhpur. Seven trains were run from Gorakhpur Junction on June 2 in which about 2,120 passengers started their journey, CPRO said. As many as 131 passengers started their journey from Gorakhpur Junction on June 1 in 05273 Raxaul-Anand Vihar Terminus Satyagraha Special Express train. From Gorakhpur Junction on June 1, as many as 250 passengers started their journey in the 02565 Darbhanga-New Delhi Bihar Sampark Kranti Special Express train. From Gorakhpur Junction on June 1 as many as 25 passengers started their journey in 02553 Saharsa-New Delhi Vaishali Special Express train.

As many as 750 passengers started their journey from Gorakhpur Junction station on June 1 in the 02555 Gorakhpur-Hisar Special Express train. Besides 83 passengers started their journey in 02557 Muzaffarpur-Anand Vihar Terminus Special Express train from Gorakhpur Junction on June 1. From Gorakhpur Junction on June 1 as many as 370 passengers started their journey in 02541 Gorakhpur-Lokmanya Tilak Terminus Special Express train.

On the other hand, on June 2 as many as 70 passengers started their journey in 09040 Muzaffarpur-Bandra Terminus Awadh Special Express train from Gorakhpur Junction. As many as 98 passengers started their journey from Gorakhpur Junction on June 2 in the 02565 Darbhanga-New Delhi Bihar Sampark Kranti Special Express train. Besides 115 passengers started their journey from Gorakhpur Junction on June 2 in the 02565 Darbhanga-New Delhi Bihar Sampark Kranti Special Express train.

As many as 804 passengers started their journey from Gorakhpur Junction on June 2 in the 02555 Gorakhpur-Hisar Special Express train. On June 2 as many as 47 passengers started their journey in the 02553 Saharsa-New Delhi Vaishali Special Express train from Gorakhpur Junction. As many as 82 passengers started their journey from Gorakhpur Junction on June 2 in the 02557 Muzaffarpur-Anand Vihar Terminus Special Express train. On June 2 as many as 904 passengers started their journey in the 02541 Gorakhpur-Lokmanya Tilak Terminus Special Express train from Gorakhpur Junction.

For first time, over 9K cases in a day

From Page 1
Of the deaths reported on Wednesday, Mumbai accounted for 49, while there were 19 deaths in Solapur, four in Dhule, three each in Ulhasnagar, Navi Mumbai, two deaths in Thane, Jalgaon, Akola and Kolhapur and one death each in Bhayandar, Vasai-Virar, Ahmednagar, Bhiwand, Nandurbar, Jalna and Osmanabad. In addition, one resident each of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and West Bengal died in Mumbai.

With 32,329 patients having

so far been discharged after full recovery from various hospitals, the health authorities pegged the total number of "active cases" in the State at 39,935. Maharashtra was followed by Tamil Nadu, which saw 1,286 persons testing positive for the pandemic on Wednesday, the highest number to be tested on a single day. The 11 persons who died on Wednesday were victims of co-morbidity (they had other medical issues along with coronavirus when they were admitted to the hospitals).

Till date, 25,872 coronavirus cases have been identified in the State, said the bulletin. Taking into account the number of persons who have been discharged from hospitals, there are 11,345 Covid-19 patients in the State as on Wednesday evening. But the speed with which the pandemic is spreading is definitely a matter of concern, according to Dr CV Krishnaswamy, the octogenarian physician-cum-diabetologist.

The fatalities in Tamil Nadu reached 208 with 11 persons succumbing to the pandemic on Wednesday.

Gujarat reported 485 new cases and 30 deaths on Wednesday, taking the total death tally to 1,122 and number of cases to 18,117.

West Bengal declared 340 new cases and Rajasthan recorded 279 new cases while Madhya Pradesh declared 168 new cases. Karnataka recorded 267 new cases and Bihar 177. Both these States were nowhere in the picture in corona spread for better part of April. Only in May, they have seen a surge in cases.

Both Andhra Pradesh and Telangana are also now recording high number of cases every day.

1,286 more test +ve in TN, total reach 25,872

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

Number of people in Tamil Nadu tested positive for Covid-19 is increasing on an hourly basis, if the bulletin released by the Government of Tamil Nadu on Wednesday is any indication. The State saw 1,286 persons testing positive for the pandemic on Wednesday, the highest number to be tested on a single day. The bulletin further stated that coronavirus is not that dangerous as the 11 persons who died on Wednesday were victims of co-morbidity (they had other medical issues along with coronavirus when they were admitted to the hospitals).

Till date, 25,872 coronavirus cases have been identified in the State, said the bulletin. Taking into account the number of persons who have been discharged from hospitals, there are 11,345 covid-19 patients in the State as on



Wednesday evening. But the speed with which the pandemic is spreading is definitely a matter of concern, according to Dr C V Krishnaswamy, the octogenarian physician cum diabetologist.

ing to Dr C V Krishnaswamy, the octogenarian physician cum diabetologist.

The fatalities in Tamil Nadu reached 208 with 11 persons succumbing to the pandemic on Wednesday. Out of the 11 who breathed their last on Wednesday, four were in the 60-68 age group, two were 47 and 48 years of age, two of 50 and 58 years, two of 70 and 75 years, and an 80 year old person. Except for a 66 year old person, the rest were having co-morbid problems like Type 2 diabetes mellitus, chronic kidney diseases, hypertension, TB, and CAD.

The details of the persons who died on Wednesday prove that covid-19 was not the lone factor which hastened their death. The bulletin further stated that till Wednesday, Tamil Nadu Government has tested 5,28,534 persons for the pandemic and there are 73 laboratories operating in the State.

Academic calendar for Classes 11, 12 released

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Centre on Wednesday released the alternative academic calendar for Classes 11 and 12, prepared by the NCERT to ensure unhindered studies of the youngsters amid the coronavirus crisis.

HRD Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal Nishank, besides announcing the academic session of senior secondary education, also shared the proposed internship plans for lakhs of students devised in partnership between HRD and Housing and Urban Affairs Ministries. The academic calendar will be issued on a weekly basis, announced Nishank. New technology and social media have been given priority while drafting the academic calendar, so as to ensure seamless imparting of education.

by students would also be resolved through audiobooks and radio programmes. English, Hindi, Sanskrit and Urdu languages have at present been included in the academic calendar. The academic calendar prepared by the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) will be broadcast through DTH channels and videoconference with the help of SCERT, state education boards, Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan and Navodaya Vidyalaya Samiti.

The alternative calendar for classes till 10th was released early last month to facilitate an

unhindered academic session. Nishank also announced that along with Housing and Urban Affairs Minister Hardeep S. Puri they will jointly launch 'The Urban Learning Internship Programme' on Thursday.

HRD Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal Nishank, besides announcing the academic session of senior secondary education, also shared the proposed internship plans for lakhs of students devised in partnership between HRD and Housing and Urban Affairs Ministries

The programme aims to provide "experiential learning" opportunities to the engineering students. "This new internship programme has been developed jointly by the All India Council for Technical Education, or AICTE, and the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, or MoHUA. The programme will be supported under Smart City initiative of the Government of India," said a senior HRD Ministry official.

At the State level, TULIP will be supported by the Urban Development departments in providing a clear roadmap for the Urban Local Bodies (ULB) or smart cities to adopt TULIP

in their respective organisations. The programme is designed to provide engineering students "exposure to the functioning of cities." The developers believe that new solutions for the city ecosystem will evolve through the programme and "a pool of talent" will get "created for absorption in the market."

The programme, which is now known as TULIP, was announced by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in Union Budget 2020. The one-year internship programme was introduced with an aim to improve 'employability' of engineering students.

विद्युत माध्यमिक कार्य मण्डल दक्षिणांचल विद्युत वितरण निगम लि. बांदा ई-अल्यकालीन निविदा सूचना

कार्यालय अधीक्षण अभियन्ता विद्युत वितरण मण्डल बांदा ई-टेंडरिंग निविदा सूचना अनुमती फार्म/

PLASMA THERAPY RAISES HOPES

Following a study early on in the Covid-19 pandemic, where a handful of critically ill patients in China showed an improvement, an interdisciplinary team of Houston Methodist physician-scientists and healthcare workers rapidly targeted the Covid-19 virus with convalescent serum therapy.

The research team also concluded that any observed complications were consistent with findings reported for Covid-19 disease progression and did not result from the plasma transfusions.

The overall findings were consistent with several other small case studies of convalescent plasma use for severe Covid-19 that has been recently reported. Although the convalescent plasma therapy administered on the frontlines at Houston Methodist was implemented for emergency treatment, they said there is an immediate need for controlled clinical trials to determine its efficacy. Researchers are considering a randomised controlled trial to look more closely at variables such as the timing of the transfusion after the onset of symptoms.

In India, where virus has already infected 2 lakh people and killed over 5,000, the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) has approved 21 institutions for participating in a randomised controlled study to assess the safety and efficacy of convalescent plasma to limit complications associated with the virus.

The sample size of the study is 452. Once 400 patients are enrolled, no more sites will be added. The clinical trial liability insurance has been bought centrally by the ICMR, officials said.

ALLD HC STAYS APPOINTMENT...

On July 25, 2017, the top court had asked the state government to cancel the recruitment of 1,37,517 appointments through teacher eligibility test (TET) but give them the benefit of experience in the recruitment process. Six months later, the government issued the order for a written examination for assistant teachers' posts for the first time to hire 69,000 teachers. The counselling for the appointment of 69,000 assistant teachers exams was stopped on the very first day on Wednesday when it started. Basic Shiksha Adhikari Dinesh Kumar said that they stopped the counselling on the orders of the Secretary (Basic Parishad). He said that 129 applicants had come for the counselling at the Shiksha Bhawan. on the first day.

DECLARE STOCK...

"The animals named under the Appendices I, II and III of the Convention of International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) of Wild Fauna and Flora" will be part of the advisory and does not include species from the Schedules of the Wild Life (Protection) Act 1972," said the officials. They said any declaration made after six months of the date of issue of this advisory, the declarer shall be required to comply with the documentation requirement under the extant laws and regulations.

The Chief Wildlife Warden of the respective State shall, after physical verification, register the stock and maintain a record in their office and issue an online certificate of possession within six months of the date of the voluntary disclosure. The owners will have to inform the CWLW about any acquisition/death/trade/change of possession, taken place after the declaration within 30 days of such acquisition/death/trade as also provide address where the exotic live species have been kept, said the advisory.

Those violating the norms will be liable for the appropriate action, though the advisory does not specify the nature of penalty. However, the increasing popularity of these animals and the raging demands of this market have spawned an enormous illegal trade. The global illegal wildlife trade is huge with exotic animals being the centre of a multi-billion dollar business.

UP HAS PROVED EXPERTS WRONG: YOGI

"But in May the revenue collection started and we were able to earn Rs 6,000 crore against Rs 15,000 crore required to meet the monthly expense of the Government," he said. "Despite the financial strain UP was able to pay salaries to its employees in April and in May. By June, with economic activities gaining grounds we will be able to generate more resources as all arms of economy are working now," he said. Yogi Adityanath made it clear that his Government was committed to serve the people and would provide

NISARGA FIZZLES OUT, MUMBAI RELIEVED

India Meteorological Department (IMD) said cyclone Nisarga was set to move North Eastwards and weaken into a cyclonic storm later on Wednesday night. Ahead of the arrival of the severe cyclone storm, various agencies had shifted nearly 40,000 people living in coastal areas of Konkan region to safer places.

Mumbai received a rainfall of 46.7 mm, while the city suburbs registered 22.8 mm which was hardly of any significance for Mumbai which is used to heavy rains during the monsoons. Not wanting to take any chances, the Maharashtra Government had made elaborate preparations to take on the cyclonic storm. While the police had clamped section 144 of CrPC to ensure against the presence of people on roads, the BrihanMumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) had suspended the traffic on the Bandra-Worli Sea Link.

The Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport shut operations for nearly three hours. The flight operations resumed at around 7 pm. The Central Railway, Western Railway and Konkan Railway either rescheduled or cancelled several special trains that they are running during lockdown. Four long distance

8 DEAD AS BOILER BLAST...

"Eight workers died in the boiler blast at the chemical factory located in Dahej Special Economic Zone-1, while around 50 others sustained injuries," said Dahej Marine police station inspector Vipul Gagiya. While six charred bodies were recovered from the factory after the fire was doused, two more workers died at separate hospitals in Bharuch, he said. "32 injured workers are admitted in various hospitals in Bharuch and nearby areas," he said, adding that the death toll may go up as some of the workers are in a serious condition.

About 18-20 workers were given a primary aid, local officials said. It took about six hours for eleven fire tenders to bring the

FROM PAGE 1

trains on the Konkan Railway route connecting Kerala with Mumbai and New Delhi were re-routed via Madgaon - Belgavi - Miraj of the South Western Railway. The lockdown norms-regulated movement of vehicles returned to normal in Mumbai and suburbs at around 5.30 pm. Meanwhile, at some places in Raigad and Palghar districts, tin roofs erected on the terraces of residential apartments flew away, while Raigad's district headquarters, Alibagh, witnessed wind speeds of 120-130 kmph. Power utilities had shut down electricity supply in some parts of Ratnagiri district as a preventive measure. Mobile services were affected in parts of Raigad district. Alibagh recorded a rainfall of 45 mm till 4 pm, while the neighbouring Ratnagiri district registered 38 mm rainfall till 4 pm. "There have been tree falling incidents on the Mumbai-Pune Expressway too, but the traffic flow was not affected," National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) Commander Anupam Srivastava said.

Meanwhile, in Mumbai, there were nine incidents - three in Island city and six in the suburbs, in which walls and roofs of houses crashed. However, no one injured in these incidents. The BMC control room received 196 complaints from the residents about the fall of trees and branches in various parts of the city and suburbs. No one was injured. Similarly, there were 39 incidents of electric short-circuits in which no one was injured. "Mumbai, we have survived several storms together. This cyclone shall pass too. As always, just take all necessary precautions, follow the guidelines and don't believe in any rumours. Trust only official sources. Take care," Mumbai Police Commissioner Param Bir Singh had tweeted earlier in the day.

Ahead of the arrival of the cyclone Nisarga, Central and State authorities had taken necessary precautions to restrict the damage by Cyclone. NDRF had pressed in 43 teams in the states of Maharashtra and Gujarat. Cyclone preparedness was reviewed at the highest level in New Delhi by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who had assured of all help from the Centre during his telephonic talks with the Chief Ministers of Maharashtra and Gujarat.

SIDHU'S EXIT...

But due to his differences with the "captain" he resigned from the Cabinet team. Kishor's had been roped in by the Punjab Congress in the 2017 Assembly polls. AICC sources said that Amarinder Singh has approached him again to strategise the party's campaign for the 2022 Assembly elections, but Kishor has reportedly declined as he already has an agreement with AAP after catapulting Kejriwal to power once again in national Capital.

NORTHERN RAILWAY e-TENDER NOTICE

Table with 11 columns: S.No., e-tender N.I.T No., Name of work, Approximate Cost, Earnest Money, Completion period, Last Date & Time of Submission & opening of e-tender, Validity of offer, Northern Railway Website, Tender Cost, Eligibility Criteria, Technical Eligibility Criteria, Financial Eligibility Criteria, Note, Definition of similar nature.

Govt OK's change in Essential Commodities Act

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In a move to ensure barrier-free trade by farmers and help raise their income, the Union Cabinet on Wednesday approved an amendment to the six-and-a-half-decade-old Essential Commodities Act 1955 to deregulate food items, including cereals, pulses, onion and potatoes. It also nodded the promulgation of an Ordinance to allow farmers to engage with processors, aggregators, large retailers, exporters, to pave the way for creating "One India, One Agriculture Market".

The EC Act, which empowers Government to impose curbs on stocking of farm produce, will be amended to make it in tune with the times and to attract investments into the farm sector. Besides, the "Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement on Price Assurance and Farm Services Ordinance, 2020" will empower farmers for engaging with processors, aggregators, large retailers, exporters on a level playing field without any fear of exploitation.

However, the Act will be invoked during inflation, war, or any other unforeseen circumstances.

Addressing a media briefing later, Union Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar said the Cabinet had approved the Ordinance to



ensure barrier-free trade in agriculture produce. It will not bind farmers to sell their crop only to licensed traders in the APMC (Agricultural Produce Market Committee) mandis of their respective talukas or districts.

"The proposed amendment will allay fears of private investors of excessive regulatory interference," he said adding it will also allow clamping of stock limits on agricultural commodities only under "very exceptional circumstances" like natural calamities and famines.

Besides enabling better price realisation for the country's farmers, the amendment ensures no such stock limit shall apply to processors or value chain participant, subject to their installed capacity or to any exporter subject to the export demand. The amendment announced will help both farmers and consumers while bringing in price stability. It will also prevent wastage of agri-

produce that happens due to lack of storage facilities.

The Ordinance, for its part, basically aims at creating additional trading opportunities outside the APMC market yards to help farmers get remunerative prices due to additional competition.

On May 17, the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution had circulated a draft of the Ordinance to amend the EC Act. The ECA draws from the days of the Bengal famine and the Defence of India Rules of 1943. Describing the EC Act as "anachronistic", the Economic Survey 2019-20, too, recommended the "jettisoning" of this law.

The Ordinance will empower farmers for engaging with processors, aggregators, large retailers, exporters etc., on a level playing field without any fear of exploitation. It will transfer the risk of market unpredictability from the farmer to the sponsor and also

Eye to WB polls: Centre renames Kolkata Port Trust after Syama Prasad Mookerjee

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Keeping the West Bengal Assembly polls next year in mind, the Centre on Wednesday renamed the Kolkata Port Trust after Bharatiya Jana Sangh founder leader Syama Prasad Mookerjee, who hailed from the State. The Cabinet also approved the formation of new Pharmacopoeia Commission and Empowered Group of Secretaries to enhance investments in India.

On a high since it bagged 18 seats in the Lok Sabha elections last year, Union Home Minister Amit Shah had just on Tuesday asserted that the BJP will form the next Government in the State.

"The Board of Trustees of Kolkata Port Trust in its Meeting held on 25th February, 2020 has also passed a Resolution to re-name Kolkata Port as Syama Prasad Mookerjee Port, Kolkata considering his multifaceted

genius as an eminent jurist, academician, thinker and leader of the masses.

"On the occasion of the inaugural ceremony of Sesquicentenary Celebrations of Kolkata Port on 12th January, 2020, keeping in view the sentiments of the people of West Bengal, it was announced that Kolkata Port will be re-named after Dr. Syama Prasad Mookerjee, one of the most deserving sons of West Bengal and a front-runner in national integration, dreamer of Bengal's development, inspiration for industrialisation and ardent votary of one law for one nation," the Government said in a statement.

Further, the Cabinet approved the setting up an "Empowered Group of Secretaries (EGoS) and Project Development Cells (PDCs)" in Ministries/Departments for attracting investments in India. This high-level body, headed by Cabinet Secretary, will look into the proposals to enhance

investments in India. The other members in the EGoS are CEO of Niti Ayog, Secretaries in charge of Industry, Commerce, Revenue, Economic Affairs. The concerned Department's Secretary will be co-opted.

The Cabinet also approved Pharmacopoeia Commission for Indian Medicine & Homoeopathy (PCIM&H) as Subordinate Office under Ministry of AYUSH by merging into it Pharmacopoeia Laboratory for Indian Medicine (PLIM) and Homoeopathic Laboratory (HPL).

The merger is aimed at optimising the use of infrastructural facilities, technical manpower and financial resources of the three organisations for enhancing the standardisation outcomes of Ayurveda, Siddha, Unani and Homoeopathy drugs towards their effective regulation and quality control.

enable the farmer to access modern technology and better inputs. It will reduce cost of marketing and improve income of farmers, the Government

said. This Ordinance will act as a catalyst to attract private sector investment for building supply chains for supply of

Indian farm produce to global markets. Farmers will get access to technology and advice for high value agriculture and get ready market for such produce.

Lt Gen Singh to hold talks with his Chinese counterpart to defuse LAC tension on June 6

PNS ■ NEW DELHI



Leh-based 14 Corps chief Lt General Harinder Singh will hold parleys with his Chinese counterpart on June 6 to pave the way for the likely backing off of troops from four flashpoints on the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in Eastern Ladakh. The two Lieutenant General-rank officers will meet at a designated meeting point on the LAC.

Ahead of the meeting, Northern Command chief, Lt General Y K Joshi, visited Leh on Wednesday and reviewed the situation with Lt General Singh, sources said here on Wednesday.

Incidentally, Army Chief General M Naravane had visited Leh about a fortnight back to take stock of the situation in the backdrop of four stand-offs now between the Indian and Chinese armies in a frontage of 25 to 30 km in Ladakh. The Chinese have intruded three kms into the Hot Springs area of the Galwan valley and pitched tents besides building bunkers and enhancing force levels.

Admitting that the Chinese had raised its troop strength in sizable numbers, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, in an interview to a private television channel on Tuesday, had said diplomatic and military level talks were on to defuse tension on the LAC.

He also said the Army chief had told him that the next round of senior level talks will be held on June 6 and he was hopeful of a peaceful resolution following the upcoming parleys.

The groundwork for the June 6 meeting was laid at the third meeting at the level of Major Generals held on Tuesday, sources said. Almost daily discussions are on between the military on the ground at various levels including at the Brigadier level and twice by Major Generals earlier but no breakthrough was achieved.

As of now, there is no let

up on the four confrontation sites with soldiers from both sides on high alert. As China increased its troops and vehicle strength, India too responded in the same manner by ramping up its troops. Moreover, all the advanced landing grounds in Ladakh are now ready to share increased load of take offs and landing of transport aircraft ferrying more troops and logistical back up.

India is also holding strict vigil on the 250 km-long road in Eastern Ladakh near the Galwan valley as the Chinese are objecting to the construction of a bridge. The strategic road runs parallel to the LAC and India says it does not breach the LAC as claimed by the other side. The Galwan valley saw pitched battles between India and China during the 1962 war.

As infrastructure all along the LAC has vastly improved in both the countries, troops increase patrolling especially during the summer months. The Indian security establishment is now wary of a growing Chinese aggressiveness during the ongoing face-offs and is prepared for any challenge, sources said.

In order to address such face-offs, India and China had agreed some years back to have a hotline between the director generals of military operations (DGMO) on the lines of an existing mechanism between India and Pakistan.

However, the proposed hotline is held up due to procedural differences. In January this year, the Army Chief had said all issues have been resolved and the procedural aspects have been ironed out. He said the hotline would be between the DGMO from India and China's Western Theatre Command.

Anti-India Bill in Nepalese Parl: R&AW's 2nd failure in 6 mths

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The introduction of the anti-India Bill in Nepalese Parliament is the second such instance in the last six months when the external Intelligence agency Research and Analysis Wing (R&AW) was caught off guard.

In January, six anti-CAA resolutions were introduced in EU Parliament but the discussions were deferred only after reactive diplomacy set in motion by New Delhi to wriggle out of the embarrassment when the mandate and role of RAW was

to work in a preemptive manner and gather inputs on such developments in timely manner for course correction.

While the move to bring in a Constitution amendment Bill to include Indian territories Kalapani, Limpiyadhura and Lipulekh was afoot in Kathmandu, the Indian agencies could not get to know about the developments there and the undercurrents that are set to impact the ties between the two countries.

The slip was more so conspicuous when a foreign government and its agencies were

on overdrive to push the amendments in the Nepalese map through their links with the political parties and the leaders in Kathmandu.

Sources said a slew of top officials had to rush to Kathmandu to delay the introduction of the Bill in Nepal Parliament but no political party there could afford to distance from the nationalistic move. The Bill was tabled in Nepal Parliament on Sunday to endorse the amended map.

Apart from the changes in the map, Nepal has also decided to man the border with

India by its army which will open the door for training to the armed forces there for border guarding by third country which can exploit the situation to monitor the frontier with India.

India should propose deployment of Indian training team in border guarding to avoid landing of such teams from a third country. India is already training Bhutanese border guarding forces.

The EU move against the amendments in the citizenship law that went unnoticed by RAW is more serious as about

600 lawmakers out of 751 members in the European Parliament had moved six resolutions against CAA. Not only this, even the diplomatic corps was seen wanting in the absence of any advance assessment of such an impending move.

Every Indian embassy or high commission abroad has a political desk that is mandated to assess political situations and report to the ministries of home as well as external affairs. Those manning the political desks are supposed to cultivate relations with the politicians of the host countries.

Maoist funding: NIA searches construction firm's premises in Ranchi

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The NIA has conducted searches at the premises of a construction firm in Ranchi in connection with a case relating to Maoist funding.

The searches yielded cash book and several bank account details used for channelizing the "levy" for the banned CPI (Maoist).

The NIA conducted the searches on Tuesday at the office premises of Ram Kripal Singh Construction Private Limited Company at Panchwati Plaza, Kutchary Road, Ranchi in connection with NIA case relating to terror funding of CPI (Maoist), Giridih registered on July 9, 2018.

The case was originally registered at Dumri Police station in Giridih district of Jharkhand on January 22, 2018 after the arrest of accused Manoj Kumar with cash amounting to ₹6 lakh and other incriminating documents.

Kumar was alleged to have collected 'levy' from contractors on the instructions of absconding accused Krishna Da alias Krishna Hansda of Mandladih Lethwa village under Pirtand police station in Giridih, Hansda was a J h a r k h a n d Regional Committee member of CPI(Maoist).

"During investigation, it was revealed that the arrested accused Manoj Kumar was an employee of RKS Construction Private Limited Company and was acting as conduit between the construction firm and the Maoists in Giridih area, the NIA said in a statement.

The probe also revealed that accused Hansda was going to make levy payment of ₹6 lakhs to the operatives of CPI (Maoist) when he was apprehended.

Exporters demand more liberalised loan from banks, financial institutions

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI/TIRUPPUR

Twenty-four hours after the Union Government decided to tweak the definition of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) units in the country, the cotton knitwear exporting units in Tamil Nadu's Tiruppur has come out with a demand for more liberalised loan from banks and financial institutions.

Raja M Shanmugham, president, Tiruppur Exporters' Association (TEA), the powerful body of the knitwear exporters based in Tiruppur, while congratulating the Centre for restructuring the MSME units, has demanded more liberal loan facilities for the units in the region. The TEA units earn ₹200 billion per year on an average through exports and employs 6,00,000 workers.

"With the upward revision of MSME definition on June 1, 2020, more number of knitwear garment exporting units will fit into the definition of MSMEs and now the concern is that due to stipulated conditions some of the MSME units whose credit exposure is more than ₹25 crore are deprived of receiving the Emergency Credit Line Fund,

Raja M Shanmugham, president, Tiruppur Exporters' Association (TEA), the powerful body of the knitwear exporters based in Tiruppur, while congratulating the Centre for restructuring the MSME units, has demanded more liberal loan facilities for the units in the region. The TEA units earn ₹200 billion per year on an average through exports and employs 6,00,000 workers.

as their outstanding exceeds ₹25 crores," said Shanmugham.

As per a directive issued by the Centre on February 29, 2020, MSME units were eligible for Emergency Credit Line of up to 20 per cent of their entire outstanding credit from Banks and Non-Banking Financial Companies. This was applicable to borrowers with a turnover of ₹100 crore and had unpaid loan amounting to ₹25 crore.

As per the new norms announced by the Centre, units with investment of ₹one crore and turn over of ₹5 crore have

been categorised as Micro, while units with an investment of ₹10 crore and annual turn over of ₹50 crore are small units.

Companies which were having an investment of ₹20 crore and turn over worth ₹100 crore were hitherto classified as medium units. But the government announced on Monday that units with ₹50 crore investment and which have annual turnover of ₹250 crore would be considered as medium units.

"Now that the Government has redefined micro, small and medium enterprises by hiking the investment and turnover limits, many companies have become eligible to be included in these categories. They have outstanding loans exceeding ₹25 crore and hence should be made eligible for the concession," said Sakthivel secretary, TEA.

According to Shanmugham, it has become increasingly necessary to extend liquidity support to the non-included MSMEs also, having credit exposure of more than ₹25 crore mainly to bring them back to operationalize their units to the normalcy level, do exports and continue provide employment.

MHA allows entry of certain sets of foreign nationals like bizmen, healthcare professionals, techies

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Union Home Ministry on Wednesday allowed the entry of certain categories of foreign nationals including businessmen, healthcare, technical and managerial experts to India. These people are allowed to enter India through commercial or chartered flights and have to apply for fresh business or employment visa. "Government of India has considered the matter regarding relaxation of the visa & travel restrictions for certain categories of foreign nationals who need to come to India.

Foreign businessmen coming to India on a Business visa (other than on B-3 visa for sports) in non-scheduled commercial/chartered flights. Foreign Healthcare professionals, health researchers, engineers and technicians for technical work at Indian health sector facilities, including laboratories and factories. This is subject to a letter of invitation from a recognized and registered healthcare facility, registered pharmaceutical company or accredited University in India, said MHA.

"Foreign Engineering, Managerial, Design or other Specialists travelling to India on

behalf of foreign business entities located in India. This includes all manufacturing units, design units, software and IT units as well as financial sector companies (banking and non-banking financial sector firms).

Foreign Technical specialists and engineers travelling for installation, repair and maintenance of foreign-origin machinery and equipment facilities in India, on the invitation of a registered Indian business entity. These could be for equipment installation, or is under warranty, or for after sales servicing or repair on commercial terms," said MHA.

"The above categories of foreign nationals would have to obtain a fresh Business visa or Employment visa, as applicable, from the Indian Missions/ Posts abroad. Foreign nationals holding a valid long term multiple entry Business visa [other than B-3 visa for sports] issued by the Indian Missions/ Posts abroad would have to get the Business visa re-validated from the Indian Mission/ Post concerned. Such foreign nationals would not be permitted to travel to India on the strength of any electronic visa obtained earlier," said the MHA's circular.

Want to resolve it, spoke to Mamata on pro-VC selection: Guv

PNS ■ KOLKATA

A day after an unprecedented situation arose in the wake of the Bengal Government and the State Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar appointing separate nominees to the post of Pro Vice Chancellor of Burdwan University the latter on Wednesday seemed to relent saying he had put a lid on the issue and that he was "leaving it all on the good conscience of Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee to handle the situation."

In a high voltage drama the State Government had on

Tuesday overruled the Raj Bhavan's decision and appointed Professor Ashis Panigrahi as the Pro-VC of the prestigious institution hours after Dhankhar had issued an appointment letter to Professor Gautam Chandra.

Even as things threatened to take an uglier turn the Governor on Wednesday beat a hasty retreat and told the media that he was "putting a lid on the issue" as he had a conversation with the Chief Minister during which he found that "both of us are on the same page." He did not want to precipitate the issue further as and hence he "put a

lid on the issue" because "the State is going through a crisis."

He said "I had a telephonic conversation with Mamata Banerjee today in the morning. The State is going through a crisis and I want this (pro-VC appointment issue) to be resolved. I want to put a lid on the controversy as of now," adding that he had requested the Chief Minister to see that such avoidable situations did not recur." He said "things have been taken to a level where the Chief Minister will take a call," relying heavily on "her good conscience."

The Governor and the State Government had been at

loggerheads ever since Dhankhar joined his last year with the ruling Trinamool Congress repeatedly accusing him for "taking BJP's side." Even the Chief Minister alleged on more than one occasion that he was acting like a BJP agent and not a Governor questioning the existence of the post itself.

The battle between Nabanna (the State secretariat) and the Raj Bhavan reached an unprecedented scale early this year when the two constitutional heads engaged in a letter war slapping letters filled with allegations on more than one occasion early this year.

JeM ultras killed in Pulwama encounter

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

An IED expert of Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) terror outfit and an Afghan war veteran was eliminated along with two other terrorists by the joint teams of security forces in South Kashmir's Pulwama district on Wednesday.

The dreaded terrorist has been identified as Abdul Rehman alias Fauji Bhai, a resident of Multan in Pakistan.

He is believed to have played a key role in fabricating vehicle borne IED, detonated by the security forces last week in Pulwama. Addressing a press conference after the successful operation culminated, Inspector General of Police, Kashmir range, Vijay Kumar told reporters, "The killing of Abdul Rehman alias Fauji Bhai, a Pakistani national, is a big success for security forces. Fauji Bhai was working in Kashmir valley as an IED expert of JeM, IGP added."

According to police records, Fauji Bhai was active in south Kashmir since 2017 and was involved in series of strikes on security forces.

According to police, Fauji Bhai had managed to give a slip to the security forces when the IED laden car was intercepted by the security forces in Pulwama on May 28.

Referring to the series of successful anti-terrorist operations conducted in Kashmir valley, IGP said "We have had major successes this year as we have eliminated top commanders of Hizbul Mujahideen Reyaz Naikoo and poster boy Junaid Sehrai, Lashkar chief Haidar Handwara and now Fauji Bhai."

According to official sources, Fauji Bhai had infiltrated along with JeM terrorists to revive the outfit and initiate spectacular attacks on security apparatus.

Responding to another query about the presence of IED experts in Kashmir valley, IGP said there were at least two more IED experts among the Jaish ranks in Kashmir, Walid Bhai and Lambu Bhai, and the security forces were working to get them too.

When asked about the identity of two other terrorists, IGP Vijay Kumar said efforts were on to identify the other two terrorists. "If they are identified, their family will be allowed to participate in the funeral at Baramulla. We are in the process of conducting the autopsy and collecting DNA samples in case they are not identified," he added.

Trump's expansionism

US wants to expand G7 by including India and Russia, hoping to encircle China. How will the two hold their own?



At any other time, US President Donald Trump's call to expand the Group of Seven (G-7) would have been seen as reformatory considering it has gone past its sell-by date. Formed in the 1970s, its main objective was to ensure the supremacy of the Western democratic and liberal economic model in the Cold War era. But with emergent economies, China and Southeast Asian powers coalescing around G-20, it lost clout with only five of its members — the US, Germany, Japan, UK and France — figuring among the top seven global economies. Italy and Canada have been upstaged by China and India. So now Trump's move to invite India, Russia, South Korea and Australia into the club is not just about correcting geo-strategic realities of the contemporary world but to stifle China for the COVID-19 outbreak by encircling it with a comity of nations and diminishing its global dominance. And though he has been attempting this for quite some time, considering that both Russia and India didn't want to upset China too much given their market dependencies, the US President wants to make a show by postponing the summit to September, when hopefully the COVID-19 crisis abates. The intent is clear, capitalise on all reports emerging that China hid crucial information, play upon collective anxieties of affected nations and make them allies in the larger US design to isolate China. Already, he has gone ballistic with the World Health Organisation (WHO) for allowing itself to be taken in by China's versions of the truth, withdrawn the special status to Hong Kong in response to a new Chinese security law there and is limiting Chinese students above undergraduate level from enrolling in US institutions. It is also trying to cut off China from global supply chains, hoping to cripple it in the long run. In fact, soon after Trump's announcement, the UK Government said it wanted a group of 10 countries to develop its own 5G technology and reduce dependence on China's tech major Huawei.

For India, this is an opportunity to be a key player in the Western bloc. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has established a rapport with Trump and the recent 25-minute phone conversation between the two did dwell on Chinese incursion in Ladakh with the US administration being sympathetic to India's predicament along the Himalayan border. Modi also took up race riots, hoping that the US hypocrisy on the violence would blunt the stereotypical edge of its propaganda on India's rights situation. But India needs to walk the line carefully without appearing to be endorsing a polarising move that runs counter to its multilateral worldviews. It has, therefore, rightly refused the US offer to mediate in Ladakh and upheld bilateral mechanisms. It cannot afford to be played by both China, which is into heavy duty posturing to intimidate us against being party to any anti-China narrative, or the US, which dangles trade tariffs now and then to get things done its way. Besides, India still doesn't have the manufacturing edge to cut off China and is dependent on its factory floors for sourcing. But India can certainly negotiate better for a permanent seat on the UN Security Council, considering that it has surpassed France and the UK in terms of the GDP, both of which hold a permanent seat on the global panel. India has support from France, too, as its President Emmanuel Macron had invited Modi to the G-7 Summit at Biarritz last August as a special invitee. The entry of Russia, though it has given an in-principle nod to the idea, is also going to be complicated considering that it has grown closer to Beijing ever since Trump's predecessor Barack Obama expelled it from the original grouping following its takeover of Crimea. But Putin and Trump have an equation going and preliminary reports indicate that Moscow has shown its interest in accepting the invitation to attend the G-7 meet but will confirm only when the agenda is decided. Besides, it stayed away from joining the global defence of human rights in Hong Kong. This is one of the reasons why existing G7 members, particularly Canada, have reservations. But Trump is pushing Russia, without which it would be difficult to isolate or even censure Beijing. Australia, for example, features high on Trump's scale of preferences simply because it called for an impartial investigation into the Wuhan outbreak. Trump may want an expanded G-11 in this new age cold war with China but its success will depend on how the new hopefuls leverage their power.

Elephantine problem

Laws make no sense if not enforced. And people will play with animals till we realise the right to co-existence



All of humanity needs to hang its head in shame for an inhuman deed that took place on May 27 in Malappuram, Kerala. A 15-year-old pregnant tusker, looking for food, strayed into a village where the trusting and unsuspecting creature was fed a pineapple stuffed with crackers. The fruit exploded in the elephant's mouth ripping off a part of its face and tongue. The poor pachyderm, despite being in intense pain, ran through the streets without harming a soul till it came to the river. It stood in the water for hours, defeating all attempts by the forest department to help it, before dying a slow and excruciating death, due to the injuries and asphyxia as water had gone into its lungs and trachea. Sadly, this is not the first incident of such unspeakable cruelty inflicted on animals in India. A similar incident had happened in Kollam with another elephant in April where the animal had eaten fruits laden with explosives and died a slow and painful death. So, the question is how is it that the perpetrators of such heinous crimes go unpunished when cruelty against animals is a cognisable offence under Section 428 and Section 429 of the Indian Penal Code and the country also has one of the strictest wildlife protection laws in the world? While some countries are now waking up to regulating trade in wildlife, India leads the prohibition on ivory trade. Some of the biggest triumphs for animal welfare here in the last decade saw the ban of dolphinariums in 2013, prohibition on animal testing for cosmetics in 2014, followed by a ban on the import of cosmetics tested on animals. India also prohibited the export of shark fins for use in soup and does not allow wild animals in circuses.

Yet we are confronted with heart-wrenching stories of depraved behaviour towards animals. For this to happen, we must make our law enforcement agencies aware about the rights of animals to be treated with kindness and dignity and about how grave an offence it is to subject an animal to cruelty. Punishment should be quick and stringent. Law enforcement agencies must not always wait for activist judges to lead the way in this regard. Plus, we, as a society must teach our children the basic truth that the world is meant to be shared by all God's creations and we must learn to live together with them. They have as much right to live on this planet as we do. In fact, animals form a vital part of the biodiversity and each creature has a role to play in the circle of life. If we disrupt that, we will have to bear the consequences of it.

Yet we are confronted with heart-wrenching stories of depraved behaviour towards animals. For this to happen, we must make our law enforcement agencies aware about the rights of animals to be treated with kindness and dignity and about how grave an offence it is to subject an animal to cruelty. Punishment should be quick and stringent. Law enforcement agencies must not always wait for activist judges to lead the way in this regard. Plus, we, as a society must teach our children the basic truth that the world is meant to be shared by all God's creations and we must learn to live together with them. They have as much right to live on this planet as we do. In fact, animals form a vital part of the biodiversity and each creature has a role to play in the circle of life. If we disrupt that, we will have to bear the consequences of it.

Liberal agenda in America

Like the White rioters, the Democrats and their media supports are also exploiting the most disadvantaged among their fellow Americans with hopes of winning the November polls



DOMINIC GREEN

There was no rest for the wicked on the seventh day. The shooting of police officers on Monday night in St Louis, Missouri and Los Angeles opens a new phase in the disorder that began in Minneapolis on May 26. On Monday, Terrence Floyd, the brother of George Floyd, the Minneapolis man murdered on camera by a police officer, called for calm. So did US President Donald Trump, incongruously waving a Bible in front of Washington DC's St John's church, where every President since 1815 has prayed and which rioters set on fire on Sunday night. But on Monday night, America's tragedy moved closer to catastrophe.

It's not just that race is the American agony and that African American men are disproportionately likely to be targeted by the police. A particular chain of events turned the initial protests in Minneapolis into nationwide protests, which turned into violent riots. Some filmed evidence appears to suggest that the crucial second phase of these events, the phase in which protests in poor and majority-Black neighbourhoods turned into confrontation with the police and assaults on civic symbols, was inflamed and exploited by the far Left.

This is why the violence must stop. Not just because lives and property are being lost. Not because it takes decades for an inner-city neighbourhood to recover from an assault by its own residents. Not because it shreds the tendrils of racial amity that have grown since the civil rights reforms of the 1960s. But because the course of events has at crucial moments been directed by affluent Whites. And they know that the butcher's bill will not be delivered to their suburban communities.

The Americans have a name for this: White privilege. A few weeks ago, White men protested the COVID-19 shutdown by storming the Michigan statehouse in military fatigues and carrying assault weapons. The police allowed them to rampage around the Statehouse while White protesters shoved the police lines on the statehouse steps and no one was injured. Pass a fake \$20 bill as George Floyd did, however, and you risk a rapid escalation, which may end in injury or death.

The same inequality of risk attaches to the White grad student who dons the black hoodie of Antifa and throws fireworks and bottles at the police and the Black women and children, who standing on the porch of their home in Minneapolis, were shot at by the national guard as one of the guardsmen shouted "Light 'em up!"

It is inaccurate to say that all of Black America is on the streets. Fifty years of deindustrialisation and drugs have created a Black underclass but 50 years of civil rights and affirmative action have accelerated the growth of the Black middle class. In Atlanta, Georgia, the capital of the Black



middle class, initial protests did not lead to open-ended rioting.

The Mayor, who is White, ventured onto the streets and talked to protestors as equals. In a further instance of the civic responsibility that has been lacking in most Democratic-run States and cities, the local rapper, Killer Mike, the son of a police officer, issued an emotional plea "not to burn your house down."

This kind of plea works best if you have a house to burn down. It doesn't work on people who have no property and no prospects as in the heavily Black neighborhoods of western Philadelphia, where helicopter footage showed the police abandoning their cars to entirely Black mobs.

Nor does this appeal work on people who have the luxury of burning down other people's homes and businesses — and those people, the White rioters, are the ones who commandeered the initial protests and forced them towards violent confrontation.

Nearly half of the population of Washington, DC is Black. Yet some footage appears to show hardly any non-White

NEARLY HALF OF THE POPULATION OF WASHINGTON, DC IS BLACK. YET, SOME FOOTAGE APPEARS TO SHOW HARDLY ANY NON-WHITE FACES AMONG THE MOB WHO ATTACKED POLICE OUTSIDE THE WHITE HOUSE AND SET FIRE TO ST JOHN'S CHURCH

faces among the mob who attacked police outside the White House and set fire to St John's church. Here in Boston, we saw an orderly march from a heavily Black neighbourhood to the city centre, led by church leaders. It was black-clad Whites who fought the police after the curfew. I observed teenagers from my suburban neighbourhood, students at Ivy League colleges and exclusive private schools, setting off in the black costume of Antifa.

"It happens most often that a people, which has supported without complaint, as if they were not felt, the most oppressive laws, violently throws them off as soon as their weight is lightened," Alexis de Tocqueville wrote of the French Revolution.

The radicalism of the American Left is rarefied and spoilt: More troubled by student loans and an absence of exciting jobs than failed schools and police violence. Antifa's revolution, like that of 1968 and most other Western revolutions, is a "revolution of rising expectations." The concerns of the young White men and

women, who are attacking the police, are not those of the young Black men who will be killed in the nights to come.

Most of the media endorse the radical Left's political costume drama. So do prominent figures on the Democratic Party's Left, like Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and Keith Ellison, the ex-Nation of Islam agitator who was second-in-charge of the Democratic National Committee and is now Minnesota's Attorney-General.

Like the White rioters, the Democrats and their media supports are also exploiting the most disadvantaged among their fellow Americans. They are exploiting the suffering of Black people in the hope of winning November's elections by painting Donald Trump as the second coming of George Wallace.

This strategy is unlikely to succeed. No candidate ever harmed his chances by running on a law and order ticket. Its greater failure is, however, moral.

(The writer is Life & Arts editor of *The Spectator* (US). (Courtesy: *The Dawn*)

SOUNDBITE

Some owners are looking to sell their franchises. I would be more than happy to provide financial and non-monetary support to keep the PSL alive and to thrive.



Former Pakistan player — Shoab Akhtar

Boredom is the most common disease that afflicts all people. It is the root of a lot of mental, emotional and physical disorder. So I learned: To be bored or not, is a choice.



Actor — Milind Soman

China and India have a full-fledged border related mechanism and communication channel. We have capability to resolve this issue through dialogue and negotiations.



Chinese spokesperson — Zhao Lijian

There is no need to panic looking at the increasing number of COVID-19 cases. The Centre and State Governments have done the planning. We have increased testing.



MoS for Health — Ashwini Kumar Choubey

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Unjust act

Sir — This refers to the editorial, "Boots on the street" (June 3). Massive protests have erupted in the US following the death of George Floyd after a police officer knelt on his neck for more than eight minutes while he was handcuffed and his face pushed to the ground. The officer, Derek Chauvin, was responding to a call about an alleged counterfeit bill used at a store. He refused to relent even though Floyd cried out for help saying that he could not breathe. Chauvin was fired from his job the next day, along with three others.

It is true that racial discrimination is still prevalent all over the world. Racism has contaminated the idea of solidarity in the US, making it difficult for White people from the underprivileged sections of society to empathise with their compatriots from other races, even though they are threatened by the same social problems.

This incident is especially shocking, given the American ethos of being liberal towards African-Americans or people from diverse races. It is likely that the officer's actions were racially

The better side of humanity

This refers to the editorial, "Boots on the street" (June 3). The social media was flooded with images of protests in the US against the killing of George Floyd that has engulfed the country. Horrifying images of police using brutal force against peaceful protesters, looters and rioters causing wanton property damage and toxic insults being hurled with abandon emerged. Against this backdrop, one video from Houston, Texas, stood out. Instead of violence or hate, it showcased solidarity and understanding. The video was of a "prayer test" being held in Houston where parishioners of a local church gathered to join hands and pray to bring an end to the troubling events.

The gathering was held in Houston's 3rd Ward Cuney Homes where Floyd grew up, giving it an added significance. At one point during the "prayer test", the White attendees stood opposite to their Black counterparts and knelt down to ask forgiveness for "years and years of racism" from their brothers and sisters. The visuals were powerful, signalling a way out for a just future where stereotyping is replaced by compassion. The video quickly went viral, drawing praise from across the world for it showcased the better side of humanity. This does not mean that there were no doubters. Some saw the ges-

motivated — many White Americans still believe in racial supremacy. The US Government is often found to denounce instances of discrimination in other countries but its own response to Floyd's death has

been rather tepid. Is the US regressing into the dark days when African-Americans were enslaved? This is indeed an affront to Abraham Lincoln.

TK Nandanani
Kochi

Flouting rules

Sir — As the country emerges from a two-month lockdown and with a gradual ease in movement, it has been seen that peo-



ture at the "prayer test" as pandering and called it cringe-worthy for the way it depicted White people asking for forgiveness for crimes of their ancestors. However, those who chose to call out the video for perpetuating inequality, did not have all the information as shortly after the White parishioners took a knee, their Black counterparts joined them, going down on their knees as well and participated in joint prayer. Though its undeniable that the US has a problem with systemic racism, incidents like these light the way to a better and a more just future.

Javvadi Lakshmana Rao
Andhra Pradesh

ple are not maintaining social distance at market and public places. The dangers of the spread of infection from Delhi to regions in the NCR have increased significantly. Strict guidelines as issued by the Delhi Government to seal the border need to be taken by other State Governments. The Government has relaxed some rules after lockdown 4.0 but this does not mean that people should flout rules. Bypassing the rules will be harmful to all.

Yugal Kishore Sharma
Faridabad

Knee-jerk reaction

Sir — There has been a growing rhetoric on social media to boycott Chinese goods and apps. But a groundswell of anti-China opinion may not be enough to take on China for it has a good hold on the Indian market. A sudden ban will badly affect several sectors. We must enhance economic competitiveness and build capacity for innovation to make the shift.

Shambhavi
Via email

Send your feedback to:
letterstopioneer@gmail.com

FIRST COLUMN

Chinese are the neo-imperialists

India should not do any appeasement of the Chinese as Chamberlain did towards Hitler but boldly confront them like Winston Churchill



MARKANDEY KATJU

The Chinese Army recently penetrated about four kilometres into Indian territory in the Galwan area of Ladakh. Many people in India may think that this incident was only due to some small misunderstanding about the border between the two countries but that is not so. The incident is part of a much larger imperialist design of the Chinese, so let me explain. In the 1930s-1940s, Nazi German imperialism was the real danger to the world and not British or French imperialism. This was because German imperialism was rising and expanding and hence was an aggressive imperialism while British and French imperialism were only defensive. While the latter two nations only wanted to hold on to their colonies, the Nazis wanted to conquer and enslave other countries. Hence the Nazis were the real danger to the world at that time. Similarly, today the real danger to the world is not from the US but from China, because the Chinese are on the road of aggressive expansionism in the world. With their massive industry seeking markets for its goods and with their huge \$3.2 trillion foreign exchange reserve hungrily seeking avenues for profitable investment, the Chinese are today aggressive imperialists and the greatest danger to the world. It is true that they are not expanding militarily like Nazi Germany at the moment but they are aggressively expanding economically by penetrating and undermining the economies of many countries of the world.

In the last decade, Chinese overseas investment has skyrocketed. Today the Chinese are almost everywhere, Asia, Africa, Latin America and of course the US and Europe. Their Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is a network of roads, railways, oil pipelines, power grids, ports and other infrastructure projects connecting China with the world. It aims at improving infrastructure and connectivity between China and the rest of Eurasia in order to dominate it. China's focus is often on vital infrastructure like ports, for instance, Gwadar in Pakistan, Piraeus in Greece and Hambantota in Sri Lanka, the aim being to get a strategic foothold in these countries.

By selling goods at less than half the price at which the American or European manufacturer can afford to sell (in view of his higher labour cost), the Chinese have destroyed many American and European industries. Now the Chinese are seeking to capture the markets and raw materials in underdeveloped countries by dumping goods at very low prices so as to make the local products uncompetitive. Pakistan, for instance, is flooded with cheap Chinese goods.

While capturing foreign markets, the Chinese were carefully protecting their own industry by putting high tariffs. It has to be said to the credit of US President Donald Trump that he called the Chinese bluff and bluntly told the Chinese that this strategy won't do. You can't have 25 per cent tariff on import of automobiles into China when the US imposes a tariff of only 2.5 per cent for import of cars into its territory. Trump has imposed tariffs on several Chinese goods and has announced more in the future. To this, the Chinese announced retaliatory tariffs but that will hurt the Americans little. It is well-known that the Chinese have no business ethics and that is why many US and European companies are reluctant to hire Chinese from mainland China as they often commit espionage and steal industrial secrets.

Let us now look at China's economic relations with India. As is well-known, India was a British colony till 1947 and the British policy was broadly to keep India unindustrialised. However, after Independence, a certain degree of industrialisation took place in India and we started manufacturing goods which we had to earlier import.

Now the Chinese have, to a certain extent, penetrated our market at the expense of our domestic industries. An article entitled *How Chinese companies are beating India in its own backyard*, published in *The Economic Times*, gives some interesting details. Indo-Chinese trade is heavily skewed in favour of the Chinese. Indian exports to China are to the tune of \$16 billion, mainly of raw materials. But its imports from China are worth \$68 billion, mainly of value added goods like mobile phones, plastics, electrical goods, machinery and its parts. This is typical of the relation between a colony and an imperialist country. Chinese companies use aggressive pricing, State subsidies, protectionist policies and cheap financing. In certain industries, Chinese companies dominate the Indian market, for instance the telecom sector, 51 per cent of which has been captured by the Chinese. Indian homes are full of Chinese goods like fittings, lampshades, tubelights and so on. The Indian Government and the citizens of the country must seriously start opposing Chinese imperialism. To ignore this danger will be behaving like an ostrich, just like Neville Chamberlain who kept thinking that Adolf Hitler was no danger until it was almost too late. Apart from opposing the aggressive Chinese moves at the border, the Indian Government should ban the entry of Chinese goods into the market and get rid of Chinese firms from the country. India should not do any appeasement of the Chinese as Chamberlain did towards Hitler but boldly confront them like Winston Churchill. Appeasement only whets the appetite of the aggressor.

(The writer is a former Judge, Supreme Court of India)

POINTCOUNTERPOINT

YOU WON'T FIND IT (ACCUSATION THAT INDIA LOST DELIBERATELY TO ENGLAND) BECAUSE I HAVE NEVER SAID IT. IT'S TWISTING OF WORDS OR CLICK BAIT.
 —ENGLAND ALL ROUNDER
 BEN STOKES



THEY DID IT. I SAID IT AT THAT TIME AND EVERYONE FELT THE SAME. A PLAYER WHO CAN HIT A SIX OR A FOUR IS DEFENDING THE BALL, YOU JUST KNOW.
 —FORMER PAKISTAN ALL ROUNDER
 ABDUL RAZAQA

Opening doors to prosperity

The changes announced in the rules of agriculture marketing might provide women and vulnerable sections easier access to markets but we need a wider social security net and modernisation



ARIJIT DAS

Given the agrarian crisis that the country had been going through, which got exacerbated by the pandemic, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced 11 measures to boost the farm sector, ranging from the amendment to the Essential Commodities Act to a ₹1 lakh crore fund to boost agriculture infrastructure. The changes announced in the rules of agriculture marketing might provide women and vulnerable sections easier access to markets.

The existing Agricultural Produce Market Committee or APMC Act was planned to protect the interests of the British Government, which wanted to ensure the supply of pure cotton at reasonable prices to the textile mills of Manchester. The first regulated market (Karanja) under the 'Hyderabad Residency Order' was established in 1886 and the first legislation was the Berar Cotton and Grain Market Act of 1887, which empowered a British Resident to declare any place in the assigned district as a market, for the sale and purchase of agricultural produce and constitute a committee to supervise the regulated markets. In 1928, the Royal Commission on Agriculture proposed a regulation of marketing practices and the establishment of regulated markets. The Government of India prepared a 'Model Bill' in 1938 and circulated it to all the Indian States. It became the guiding force for our APMC Act. So, it is not difficult to infer why the spirit of the APMC Act favours buyers rather than farmers. Of course, some would argue that it allows States to protect the farmers, as procurement is done under the supervision and surveillance of the State. But many mechanisms are available to protect the interests of farmers rather than being discriminatory against them.

The APMC Act designates a few patches as formal procurement centres. Currently, there are only 6,746 pockets in a vast country like ours and this allows limited buyers to purchase from farmers. This is a classic case of a State-backed oligopsonistic market structure, in which the number of buyers is small while the number of sellers is large. This gives enough power to buyers to pay the minimum price to farmers. Ironically, the maximum distance between a farmer and the *mandi* is five kilometres (km) but our field information suggests a minimum of 30-40 km travel for a farmer out to sell his produce. This means the APMC Act not only gives oligopsonistic power to buyers but also creates a geographical monopoly for them.

Further, the small number of APMCs and traders poses a challenge for farmers to sell their produce as they have to wait for days for their turn. This makes some sense for big farmers but not for small producers. Field data from Maharashtra, Karnataka and Telangana shows a minimum of three to five man-day loss for small farmers.

How the proposed changes will help: An independent country should favour the marginalised and protect their interests. This proposed change in agri-marketing rules is a step in that direction. Hopefully, new rules will encourage big-aggregators and start-ups to use technology in a better way to procure directly from farmers. These channels may be existent in pockets but operate informally due to stringent market rules (procurement and cross-border trade). A big push is necessary to bring the changes on the ground.

“ MOST WOMEN, PARTICULARLY IN RURAL AREAS, ARE ENGAGED IN THE INFORMAL SECTOR AND DERIVE THEIR LIVELIHOOD FROM ACTIVITIES RELATING TO AGRICULTURE, HANDLOOMS AND ARTISANAL PRODUCTS. UNFORTUNATELY, THESE WOMEN REMAIN AT THE LOWEST END OF THE VALUE CHAIN, WITH THEIR SHARE IN EARNINGS BEING LOW OUT OF MARGINS WHICH ARE EVEN OTHERWISE VERY MINUSCULE. IN THIS CONTEXT, THERE IS SCOPE TO INCREASE THEIR INCOME BY CONTINUING IN THE EXISTING ACTIVITY AND BECOMING ORGANISED AS A COLLECTIVE, SO AS TO POOL THEIR OUTPUT



The pandemic is an opportunity to deregulate agri-marketing effectively to ensure social distancing. A perfect model of social distancing could be doorstep collection of agri-produce or at least at the village/cluster level. As an experiment, local collection centres were set up in parts of Vidarbha region of Maharashtra to procure agri-produce at the doorstep. These also acted as local storage and sorting facilities. All procurement activities were done by women farmers who were otherwise absent in post-harvest management. The process was iterated with *tur daal*. Calculations show that through this process small farmers save about ₹175 per 50 kg of tur or approximately 10 per cent of its price; which means a marginal farmer can gain up to 10 per cent from doorstep collection. A similar experiment was done in other parts of Maharashtra and other States like Telangana and Karnataka. The outcome in those areas was also on a similar line; of course with a little variation.

Farmers can also minimise wastage in the direct procurement system. For example, a year ago the India Development Foundation (IDF) studied a vegetable value chain in Siddipet in Telangana and found big savings when Big Basket and Reliance Fresh started procuring vegetables directly from the farmers for their shops in Hyderabad. Farmers used to get the order one-day in advance and usually pluck the exact amount and quality of vegetable demanded. These are some out-of-the-box experiments that reveal huge benefits for small and marginal farmers through local collection.

New marketing rules should encourage such initiatives which are resilient in the current context, efficient and pro-farmer.

Gender aspect: The rising participa-

tion of women in farm work in India — a phenomenon commonly referred to as the feminisation of agriculture — is a huge reality now. According to OXFAM 2018, the agriculture sector employs 80 per cent of all economically productive women in India. They comprise 33 per cent of the agricultural labour force and 48 per cent of self-employed farmers. Despite their large contribution, women continue to remain invisible in the rural economy of India. Our critical evaluation suggests that women are acting as non-paid workers in agriculture or any other traditional sector; be it handicraft or weaving. Men are in control when it comes to selling their products to *mandis*/APMCs or handicrafts to local traders.

A vast majority of women, particularly in rural areas, are engaged in the informal sector and derive their livelihood from activities relating to agriculture, handlooms and artisanal products. Unfortunately, these women remain at the lowest end of the value chain, with their share in earnings being low out of margins, which are even otherwise very minuscule. In this context, there is scope to increase their income by continuing in the existing activity and becoming organised as a collective, so as to pool their output.

Others can be helped by getting them involved in some productive activity that is or can be popularised in the locality, and then selling the output as a group of women producers.

Doorstep selling/localised procurement will be liberating for women farmers. It will open up an opportunity for women farmers to participate in the selling activity and directly deal with the buyers. Our experience shows that exposure to agri-marketing made women aware of the information inputs and

upgrades that could make their work more gainful. It made them receptive to new skills and knowledge on good agriculture practices and agri-markets. Communities witnessed that the traditionally-gendered division of agricultural work has changed. Women farmers are more confident, deciding on crop-related activities like the choice of crop, selection of fertiliser, taking loans or even children's education.

Putting Women Self-Help Groups at the forefront: SHGs are a great way of empowering women in villages. However, the sustainability of such groups is a challenge as limited contribution from women and frequent defaults make them fragile. SHGs are formed and get dissolved in a few years. Connecting these SHGs to value chains is a great way to sustain them in the long-run. With the changed law, the SHGs now can participate in selling activities effectively, directly contact end-buyers and get a five per cent hike in the value of their produce. This amount is enough to sustain them for most of the year. And more importantly, it will increase activities in SHGs, encouraging women to meet others regularly. It has been observed that once the SHGs are linked to value chains, beneficiaries actively participate in entrepreneurial activities and have a much better understanding of their profits and savings.

In the end, one must understand that changing marketing laws is not a panacea to all of our farm woes. Agriculture is a delicate area which needs continuous attention and care. Reforming a colonial-era marketing practice will definitely help the disadvantaged section of farmers but a wider social security and modernisation of agriculture is needed.

(The writer is Fellow, IDF. The views expressed are personal)

Trump must create an alternative to the WHO

The US must also ensure that Beijing does not start its 'Health Aid Diplomacy' to fill the leadership vacuum



GAURIE DWIVEDI

US President Donald Trump, who has been a vocal and strident critic of the World Health Organisation's (WHO) handling of the Coronavirus epidemic and the deferential treatment it meted out to Beijing, finally made good on his threat recently and exited the 72-year-old global body the US had co-founded. The US' withdrawal will severely impact the overall functioning of the WHO and there has been concern over the timing of the President's decision as well.

First, it comes at a time when countries continue to see a huge upsurge in cases. Second, global efforts to discover a vaccine have

never been as united as they are right now. The US' efforts to fight or find a cure/drug/vaccine for the Coronavirus, not just on its own soil but around the world, need to further intensify after it chose to exit the WHO. In failing to do so, it will create a leadership vacuum that Beijing will exploit to further cement its position not just as a global alternative to the US but as its possible replacement.

China did so at the time of the initial outbreak when it sent PPEs to Europe, Africa, America, Asia including India, as part of Beijing's "Mask Diplomacy" despite being accused of deliberately misleading the world. This public relations exercise was part of a larger design where even the pandemic was identified as an opportunity to score points for global supremacy, make big money by selling substandard medical equipment/PPE and cover up its failure to contain the outbreak.

Xi Jinping projected himself as the world's saviour by sending aid which was a complete eyewash driven

by propaganda. In the first 35 days (March 1-April 5) of the outbreak in Europe, China exported medical equipment worth \$1.45 billion. These were commercial contracts that Chinese companies entered into with nations that were most severely hit by the virus.

Agencies like the USAID (United States Agency for International Development), which helped Africa fight the Ebola outbreak in 2016, are not around to help countries fight the Coronavirus this time. Caught up in a deep crisis itself, the US, for the first time since World War-II (WW-II), is not at the forefront of relief and aid measures.

Beijing's propaganda machinery — which aimed to position China as a benign global power, more so in poor CIS countries like Belarus — was helped by the US' virtual absence from the world stage during the pandemic. Beijing is aware that several countries may start viewing it as a friendly power, which would in turn reduce the resistance that Chinese corporations

like Huawei face and also provide fresh impetus to its ambitious Belt and Road Initiative initiative.

The US' exit from the WHO raises many questions. How significantly will the WHO's functioning be impacted due to reduced funds? Will the US' exit lead to a reform of the UN and its key agencies like the WHO? Is the announcement a precursor to setting up of an alternate organisation or will the US spearhead all its aid efforts independently? Will Beijing step in to fill the leadership gap left by the US?

The WHO — for all its noble causes, including eradication of polio and other diseases — has an overall budget of \$5.62 billion (2018-2019). Of this, 80 per cent comes from voluntary sources and only 17 per cent comes from assessed sources, with others accounting for the remaining three per cent. In 2019, the US' contribution was \$419 million, which includes \$119 million in assessed and \$300 million in voluntary contributions. The other top donors to the WHO are

the UK, Germany, Japan and the EU. China comes in at number 15.

The WHO reports that the US contribution of \$450 million represented nearly 16 per cent of its total revenue in the 2018-2019 biennium and almost a fifth of its programme budget. Compare this to the nearly \$12 billion annual budget of the Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) — the US' leading federal agency for national public health that is working to save American lives. The CDC has over twice the budget of the WHO which has a charter to save all mankind from disease. Clearly, the WHO's role and scope, in spite of its exalted image as the world's leading health agency, is practically limited due to its existing funding constraints.

The US' withdrawal from the agency will impact its functioning to some extent but a part of the gap will be filled by other resources.

While the WHO may be further hamstrung in running its programmes across least developed

countries (LDCs) and the developing world, it can be expected to sustain itself, albeit with some interim constraints. This move by the Trump Government appears to be more of political posturing, since the President is set to face an election in five months. For the domestic audience, it is an unequivocal expression of displeasure by the US Government indicating that Trump will focus on policies that protect American interests.

The message to the UN is also clear that the US will not watch from the sidelines if its interests are either compromised or not fully addressed by multilateral agencies like the WHO. Reform and course correction is long due for the UN and its agencies and the US' exit from the WHO could be the trigger to undertake those tough reforms, including accountability and transparency from the organisation and its top bosses.

To ensure that the US, as the world's richest country, does not abdicate its responsibility towards

low income and poor countries, Trump should immediately announce substantial increase in resources of the USAID from the present \$2.7 billion to at least \$4 billion. Additional funds should be directed to LDCs in Africa that will be most significantly impacted due to any budget cuts in WHO projects. It will also ensure that the US will focus on providing aid directly to vulnerable and smaller nations and regain some of the leadership vacuum created since February. It will also ensure Beijing does not start its "Health Aid Diplomacy".

Another major fallout of Trump's announcement will be the urgent need for most countries to beef up their health infrastructure and create more capacity. It will be the first time since WW-II that low-income countries will have to almost exclusively rely on their internal strengths to tackle healthcare issues due to greater uncertainty around the WHO's future prospects.

(The writer is a senior journalist)

NIFTY RECLAIMS 10K-MARK

SENSEX CLIMBS 284 PTS

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The Sensex climbed 284 points while the Nifty finished above the 10,000-mark on Wednesday as risk-on sentiment remained in full gear amid supportive global cues.

Banking and finance counters saw heavy demand, helping the benchmarks close in the green for the sixth straight session. After hitting a peak of 34,488.69, the 30-share BSE Sensex shed some gains in flag-end trade to finish at 34,109.54, up 284.01 points or 0.84 per cent.

Similarly, the NSE Nifty jumped 82.45 points or 0.83 per cent to end at 10,061.55. The index closed above the crucial 10,000-level for the first time since March 11, 2020.



M&M was the top gainer in the Sensex pack, spurring 4.82 per cent, followed by Kotak Bank, Bajaj

Finance, SBI, Nestle India, ICICI Bank, ONGC and HDFC Bank. On the other hand, NTPC, Bharti Airtel,

Maruti and Hero MotoCorp were among the laggards, slipping up to 2.12 per cent.

Global markets soared to three-month highs as investors cheered the gradual reopening of economies the world over, even as the rising coronavirus cases and US-China tensions remained an overhang.

The domestic markets were also aided by robust foreign fund inflows, analysts said.

On a net basis, foreign portfolio investors bought equities worth ₹7,498.29 crore on Tuesday, provisional exchange data showed. "The buoyancy of the global markets triggered gap up opening and it traded range-bound thereafter. However, profit-taking in the last hour trimmed the gains. Amid all, Nifty reclaimed 10,000 mark and settled above the hurdle of 10,050 as well.

"Mixed trend was witnessed amongst the sectoral indices wherein sectors like

metal, banking, and capital goods were the top gainers while sectors like IT and telecom ended in the red," said Ajit Mishra, VP - Research, Religare Broking Ltd. BSE realty, bank, finance, capital goods, oil and gas, industrials and consumer durables indices rallied up to 3.07 per cent, while telecom, power, teck and IT shed up to 0.95 per cent.

Broader BSE mid-cap and small-cap indices surged up to 1.24 per cent.

Meanwhile, India's service sector activities declined sharply in May as the coronavirus pandemic continued to impair business operations, restrict consumer footfall at shops and resulted in job losses, PMI data showed on Wednesday.

On the currency front, the rupee surrendered all intra-day gains to provisionally settle 11 paise lower at 75.47 against the US dollar.

AMRAPALI CASE

ED: Morgan used sham deals, shell firms to launder homebuyers' funds

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Employees of JP Morgan India Ltd, who were on the board of various Amrapali real estate group companies, "laundered" deposits worth ₹187 crore of homebuyers and "diverted" them to the multi-national financial advisory firms entities based in Mauritius and Singapore by undertaking sham transactions and using shell companies, the Enforcement Directorate has found in its probe.

The central probe agency submitted to the Supreme Court these findings of its investigation as part of a reply-affidavit after it attached ₹187.34,92,519 in bank deposit of JP Morgan India Pvt Ltd at a bank branch in Mumbai on May 26 under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA). The company, during the last hearing of the case in the Supreme Court on May 27, had denied any wrongdoing and said that this attachment of properties by the ED was blatantly illegal as it was not part of any kind of financial dealing with the Amrapali Group.

The SC had asked the central agency to file a reply on this grievance raised by the company. The ED, through Additional Solicitor General Sanjay Jain, filed the reply in which it

described the modus operandi of the company to allegedly launder the hard-earned money of homebuyers who wanted to purchase an abode in Amrapali real estate projects.

The apex court, which is monitoring this case, had in December last year directed the ED and its Lucknow zone Joint Director Rajeshwar Singh, who was present in the court, to take action against JP Morgan India under the anti-money laundering law and the Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA).

The top court had first cracked the whip in July last year on errant builders for breaching the trust of home buyers and ordered cancellation of Amrapali Group's registration under the real estate law RERA and ousted it from its prime properties in the national capital region by nixing the land leases.

The ED probe in the case found the role of "shell companies" and "dummy directors" in perpetration of the alleged money laundering crime.

"It is revealed in the PMLA investigations that the employees of JP Morgan India Ltd on board of Ms Amrapali Zodiac Developers P Ltd and Ms Amrapali Silicon City P Ltd were not only in complete control of the material decision of the

respective companies and securing interests of the funds but they also indulged prima facie in money laundering to divert the home buyers' funds to the tune of ₹187 crore to JP Morgan India Property Mauritius Company-II in Mauritius and Ms JP Morgan IPF-I Singapore 2 PTE Ltd in Singapore," the agency said in its affidavit that was accessed by PTI. The employees were identified as Gunjan Bahl, Hrushikesh Kar and Chanakya Chakravarty.

The agency said the Mauritius company "was an active participant in the conspiracy from the very outset" and that JP Morgan India "played a key role in the remittance of diverted funds of the home buyers to Mauritius and Singapore."

These employees of JP Morgan India P Ltd, it said, serving on the board of directors of Amrapali Zodiac Developers P Ltd "got arranged the cash flow in the company through funds arranged from other companies of Amrapali group, diversion of the funds of the home buyers, staged valuation of shares, creation of shell companies with dummy directors and sham transactions to finally get accrued about ₹140 crore to JP Morgan India Property Mauritius Company-II."

Google pulls down Remove China Apps, Mitron

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Google has removed from its app store an Indian mobile application, 'Remove China Apps' that allowed users to delete Chinese games and other software from their Android smartphones, citing violation of its policies.

Alphabet Inc's Google had

previously removed Mitron app - the popular Indian alternative for China's TikTok.

The two apps had drawn millions of downloads in India as border tensions between India and China surged.

Mitron app had over 5 million downloads. Developed by little-known OneTouch AppLabs, based in Jaipur,

Remove China Apps had become a top trending free app on Google's mobile app store in India with more than five million downloads since late May.

"Our global Play policies are designed to provide a safe and secure experience for our users while also giving developers the tools they need to succeed. When violations of

these policies are identified, we have an established process of working with developers to help them find remedies," Google spokesperson said in response to an e-mail query.

Remove China Apps helped users identify the country of origin for apps installed on the phone, highlighting Chinese ones and suggesting

steps for removal.

Once deleted, a message popped up saying "You are awesome, no China app found." The app came in the limelight after innovator and educationist Sonam Wangchuk appealed to Indians to boycott Chinese products because of aggression by the Chinese army on the Indian border in the Ladakh region.

NIFTY 50

SCRIP	OPEN	High	LOW	LTP	CHANGE
NIFTY 50	10108.30	10176.20	10035.55	10061.55	82.45
M&M	470.00	492.60	466.50	488.00	25.15
BAFINANCE	2417.00	2496.85	2398.00	2420.00	73.80
KOTAKBANK	1364.00	1428.20	1342.20	1384.60	41.70
NESTLEIND	17175.00	17521.95	17152.00	17470.00	455.55
ICICIBANK	357.90	373.00	353.80	357.50	9.10
SBI	172.50	179.00	172.00	174.65	4.40
ONGC	86.05	87.45	85.30	86.40	2.10
SHREECEM	21544.00	21740.00	21251.00	21670.95	409.95
HDFCBANK	1020.00	1046.25	1015.45	1023.00	22.00
TATAMOTORS	100.00	101.45	97.40	98.50	2.00
BAJAJFINSV	5344.00	5529.80	5217.10	5290.00	105.30
HINDALCO	142.90	146.80	142.10	143.90	2.75
BREL	344.00	353.95	339.20	347.90	6.30
DRREDDY	3928.80	3990.00	3911.25	3966.00	70.70
LT	955.95	972.85	955.00	962.00	16.55
BRITANNIA	360.00	370.80	347.20	351.00	60.00
IOC	86.30	88.90	86.10	87.05	1.25
HDFC	1835.20	1859.45	1823.10	1833.00	19.45
HCLTECH	560.00	568.40	570.00	563.30	5.10
ECHERMOT	17960.00	17900.00	17505.00	17500.00	153.75
TECHM	554.00	565.50	550.00	552.00	4.50
ITAN	989.00	1005.00	979.00	984.00	7.85
CIPLA	646.85	649.50	635.30	642.35	4.75
HINDUNILVR	2115.00	2149.00	2085.00	2123.00	15.60
ASIANPNTS	1724.00	1744.00	1705.85	1727.15	11.45
JSWSTEEL	195.00	197.80	191.55	193.25	1.10
ADANIPTPS	344.00	344.95	336.85	341.85	1.90
ULTRACEMCO	3889.95	3920.00	3844.05	3853.00	18.75
RELIANCE	1545.00	1560.00	1533.35	1543.00	7.30
VEDL	97.50	102.50	95.90	97.35	0.45
SUNPHARMA	474.95	481.60	473.00	474.80	1.70
TCS	2051.85	2063.75	2020.00	2048.00	6.85
GAIL	98.40	99.35	96.00	96.65	0.10
ITC	200.00	200.90	196.60	197.45	0.20
POWERGRID	165.50	167.10	163.85	164.80	-0.25
GRASIM	600.55	610.00	592.35	595.00	-1.30
BAJAJ-AUTO	2825.00	2876.50	2770.10	2785.00	-11.10
AXISBANK	422.00	432.00	402.25	407.60	-2.50
HEROMOTOCO	2348.00	2371.00	2298.00	2303.00	-15.25
TATASTEEL	325.45	326.30	315.05	317.20	-2.20
INFY	710.70	711.90	696.00	702.85	-5.25
MARUTI	573.00	583.20	560.00	563.90	-51.20
BHARTIARTL	568.00	568.30	549.25	552.30	-5.80
COAL	428.45	433.80	417.00	419.00	-5.70
QILINDIA	145.00	145.10	141.10	141.30	-2.10
INDUSINDBK	445.00	452.25	426.10	428.15	-6.55
WIPRO	216.10	217.45	210.55	212.10	-3.75
INFRATEL	228.00	228.00	216.10	218.90	-4.35
NTPC	97.75	97.80	94.40	94.85	-1.90
ZEE	204.95	205.20	192.70	195.00	-3.95

NIFTY NEXT 50

SCRIP	OPEN	High	LOW	LTP	CHANGE
NIFTY NEXT 50	24844.35	25065.95	24673.60	24745.20	145.20
INDIGO	955.10	1076.70	955.10	1019.70	74.15
BOSCHLTD	10649.00	11159.00	10550.05	1110.00	610.70
IDEA	8.00	8.85	7.80	8.10	0.40
SRTRANSFIN	60.00	61.40	59.70	61.50	29.00
PETRONET	246.15	254.95	245.85	254.50	10.65
BAJAJHLDRG	2250.00	2370.00	2209.95	2271.00	82.80
PNB	29.80	31.00	29.60	30.20	0.95
SRLIFE	789.00	814.80	784.50	804.85	25.35
BERGEPAINT	508.00	519.00	502.00	519.00	16.25
BANDHANBANK	248.95	261.40	245.00	248.00	7.30
AUROPHARMA	736.00	758.00	735.15	754.90	21.70
GODREJCP	645.00	673.95	643.05	657.80	18.25
BANKBARODA	42.90	45.10	42.30	43.05	0.95
HINDPETRO	194.80	201.75	194.00	197.35	3.80
PIDILITIND	1500.00	1532.95	1491.65	1513.00	22.20
ICICIPRULI	381.25	393.50	381.25	385.85	5.45
MARICO	336.00	338.75	330.50	335.40	4.55
HAVELLS	557.00	567.40	552.10	556.90	7.55
SIEMENS	1125.00	1146.00	1112.00	1124.05	14.40
DABUR	464.10	470.60	457.10	466.00	5.15
IBULHSGFN	129.00	135.65	128.00	128.10	1.30
CADILAC	355.55	359.40	351.75	355.25	2.20
HDFCLIFE	502.10	519.75	494.45	502.00	2.30
PGHII	10035.00	10150.00	10000.00	10054.85	23.80
BIOCON	387.00	390.00	381.35	383.45	0.75
MCDOWELL-N	578.90	587.70	569.95	575.05	0.60
HINDZINC	173.80	174.90	171.25	172.00	-0.20
COLPAL	1378.40	1385.00	1352.50	1366.00	-0.65
NIACL	118.00	119.70	116.80	117.15	-0.20
LUPIN	880.00	885.85	861.15	869.20	-2.05
NHPC	20.10	20.25	19.90	19.90	-0.05
L&T	61.80	62.70	59.70	60.40	-0.15
CONCOR	394.00	405.20	386.35	390.25	-1.30
PEC	82.70	84.90	81.30	82.00	-0.50
DMART	2390.00	2450.00	2330.00	2367.00	-14.70
DLF	158.05	163.05	154.70	155.80	-1.40
MOTHERSUMI	105.00	105.00	99.45	101.00	-0.95
ASHOKLEY	48.50	49.10	46.70	47.20	-0.50
NMDC	86.10	87.15	84.20	84.45	-0.90
ADANTRAN	190.10	192.80	180.00	185.20	-2.20
HDFCAMC	2674.80	2684.00	2625.00	2631.00	-31.65
DIVISLAB	242.00	244.20	236.20	238.00	-31.00
GICRE	142.00	142.00	137.80	138.00	-2.35
ICIGI	131.00	131.00	126.70	127.95	-22.65
PGEND	2040.05	2099.55	1981.50	1998.00	-417.85
ACC	129.00	130.00	125.00	126.45	-26.65
AMBUJACEM	193.25	194.00	186.75	187.00	-4.20
UBL	97.00	98.40	91.30	93.40	-27.50
OFSS	2584.00	2603.85	2480.75	2489.45	-85.80
PEL	1198.00	1205.00	1120.60	1131.00	-48.00

BSE 500

Script	Open	High	Low	LTP
HDFCLIFE	502.90	519.70	490.00	501.40
BAFINANCE	2409.00	2496.6		

Deploying forces to DC shows how to quell protests: Trump

Washington: President Donald Trump on Wednesday took credit for a massive deployment of National Guard troops and federal law enforcement officers to the nation's capital, saying it offered a model to states on how to quell protests nationwide.

Trump argued that the massive show of force was responsible for protests in Washington and other cities turning more calm in recent days and repeated his criticism of governors who have not deployed their National Guard to the fullest.

It was a striking contrast to the harsh crackdowns outside the White House on Monday night, advocated by the president who wanted to make the aggressive action in the nation's capital an example for the rest of the country, a senior White House official said Tuesday.

"You have to have a dominant force," Trump told Fox News on Wednesday. "We need law and order." He quickly pivoted to the politics of the moment, adding, "You notice that all of these places that have problems, they're not run



Protesters reenact the scene where George Floyd was restrained by police while marching in a solidarity rally calling for justice over the death of George Floyd in New York on Wednesday. AP

by Republicans. They're run by liberal Democrats."

The Defense Department has drafted contingency plans for deploying active-duty military if needed. Pentagon documents reviewed by The Associated Press showed plans for soldiers from an Army divi-

sion to protect the White House and other federal buildings if the security situation in the nation's capital were to deteriorate and the National Guard could not secure the facilities.

But interest in exerting that extraordinary federal authority appeared to be waning in the

White House. Though the crackdown on the Washington demonstrations was praised by some Trump supporters Tuesday, a handful of Republicans expressed concern that law enforcement officers risked violating the protesters' First Amendment rights. AP

Johnson says Floyd's death 'inexcusable'

London: British Prime Minister Boris Johnson says the death of George Floyd was "inexcusable" and he understands why people are protesting.

In his first public comments on the turmoil roiling the US, Johnson told lawmakers "what happened in the United States was appalling, it was inexcusable, we all saw it on our screens and I perfectly understand people's right to protest what took place." He added "protest should take place in a lawful and reasonable way."

Johnson, who has sought to nurture close ties with President Donald Trump as he leads the UK out of the European union, deflected calls from the opposition to suspend exports of tear gas and rubber bullets to the United States. AP

Trump preening and sweeping away all guardrails that have protected US democracy: Biden

Washington: Accusing the US President of fanning the flames of hate for political gain following the custodial killing of George Floyd, Democratic presumptive presidential nominee Joe Biden has said that Donald Trump was preening and sweeping away all the guardrails that have long protected the American democracy.

The US is in the midst of the biggest civic unrest in the history of the country following the death of 46-year-old African-American Floyd who was pinned to the ground as a white police officer knelt on his neck, killing him on the spot in Minneapolis on May 25.

Curfew was imposed in several cities on Tuesday as most protests turned violent during the night. In some

cases, peaceful protests turned violent resulting in large scale looting, damage to properties and monuments, and vehicles being set ablaze.

"The president held up the Bible at St. John's Church yesterday. I just wish he opened it once in a while instead of brandishing it. If he opened it, he could have learned something. They're all called to love one another as we love ourselves. It's really hard work but it's the work of America," Biden said in a major policy speech on Tuesday. "I won't traffic in fear and division. I won't fan the flames of hate. I'll seek to heal the racial wounds that have long plagued our country, not use them for political gain. I'll do my job and I'll take responsibility," Biden said. PTI

Statue of divisive ex-Philadelphia Mayor Rizzo removed

AP ■ PHILADELPHIA

Workers removed the statue early Wednesday of controversial former Philadelphia Mayor Frank Rizzo, which was recently defaced during a protest following George Floyd's death.

As National Guard troops deployed in the wake of recent protests watched, a crane lifted the 10-foot-tall (3-meter-tall) bronze statue and workers shook it from its stand outside the Municipal Services Building, across from City Hall. It was loaded onto the back of a truck.

Philadelphia Mayor Jim Kenney said he "never liked" the statue Monday and announced a plan to move the statue later this month.

"I can't wait to see it go away," Kenney said.

Bus strikes roadside bomb in southern Afghanistan, 9 killed

Kabul: A roadside bombing in southern Afghanistan on Wednesday killed nine passengers travelling on a bus through Kandahar province, a spokesman for the provincial governor said.

Another five passengers were wounded in the explosion, said the spokesman, Bashir Ahmadi. The passengers were all civilians travelling from one district to another when the bus hit the bomb.

He said this was the third roadside bombing since a brief cease-fire declared by the Taliban for a major Muslim holiday had ended last month.

The Taliban have not claimed responsibility for any of

those attacks but they did say they carried out one attack on Afghan forces since the Eid holiday. The truce was not officially extended but neither of the warring sides appears to want a return to an all-out fighting.

On Tuesday night, a bomb exploded inside a mosque in the Afghan capital of Kabul, killing two people, including the mosque's prayer leader, and wounding eight others.

Also Tuesday, the IS group claimed responsibility for a deadly roadside bombing over the weekend that hit a bus belonging to a local TV station in Kabul, killing at least seven civilians, including a woman and several children. AP

Johnson OK's visa plans for 3 mn Hongkongers

London: British Prime Minister Boris Johnson on Wednesday reiterated the UK's plans for some of the "biggest changes" to the country's visa system in order to allow around three million Hong Kong nationals a path to British citizenship if China does not back off over a new controversial law.

Writing in 'The Times', the UK prime minister said the offer would be triggered only if China presses ahead with the new law which threatens to strip the former British colony of its traditional freedoms.

An estimated 3,500,000 Hongkongers hold British National (Overseas) passports and another 2.5 million would be eligible to apply for them. At present, these BNO passports only allow visa-free access to the UK for up to six months.

"If China imposes its

national security law, the British government will change our immigration rules and allow any holder of these passports from Hong Kong to come to the UK for a renewable period of 12 months and be given further immigration rights, including the right to work, which could place them on a route to citizenship," writes Johnson.

"This would amount to one of the biggest changes in our visa system in history. If it proves necessary, the British government will take this step and take it willingly," he said.

The offer was laid out by UK Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab in the House of Commons on Tuesday and Johnson stressed that he hopes things don't have to come to it as China risks "inflaming" the situation in Hong Kong with the new law. PTI

Carrie Lam accuses foreign critics of double standards

Beijing: Hong Kong leader Carrie Lam accused foreign critics on Wednesday of displaying "blatant double standards" over moves by Beijing to strengthen control over the semi-autonomous territory.

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson announced earlier that his country is ready to open the door to almost 3 million Hong Kong citizens if China enacts a national security law for the city.

Following talks with officials in Beijing, Lam said China has the same right as the US and Britain to enact legislation protecting its national security and that foreign criticism and threats

of sanctions could not be justified. She also said China was compelled to take the step at the national level because opposition in Hong Kong's own legislature and among government critics made it impossible to do so locally. "I can only say that the international community and some of the foreign governments have been adopting blatant double standards in dealing with this matter," Lam said.

"It is within the legitimate jurisdiction of any country to enact laws to protect and safeguard national security. USA is no exception. UK is no exception," Lam said. AP

With wins in 7 States, DC, Biden closes in on nomination

AP ■ WASHINGTON

Washington: Joe Biden is on the cusp of formally securing the Democratic presidential nomination after winning hundreds more delegates in primary contests that tested the nation's ability to run elections while balancing a pandemic and sweeping social unrest.

Biden could lock down the nomination within the next week as West Virginia and Georgia hold primaries. On Tuesday, voters across America were forced to navigate curfews, health concerns and National Guard troops after election officials dramatically reduced the number of in-person voting sites to minimise the spread of the coronavirus outbreak. AP

US to suspend flights by Chinese airlines from June 16

AP ■ WASHINGTON

The United States on Tuesday ordered the suspension of all flights by Chinese airlines into and out of the country after Beijing failed to allow American carriers to resume service to China.

"US carriers have asked to resume passenger service, beginning June 1st. The Chinese government's failure to approve their requests is a violation of our Air Transport Agreement," the US Transportation Department said in a statement. The suspension order takes effect June 16, but could be implemented sooner if President Donald Trump orders it to be.

COVID-19 OUTBREAK

China delayed releasing virus info, frustrating WHO

Washington: Throughout January, the World Health Organization publicly praised China for what it called a speedy response to the new coronavirus.

It repeatedly thanked the Chinese government for sharing the genetic map of the virus "immediately," and said its work and commitment to transparency were "very impressive, and beyond words." But behind the scenes, it was a much different story, one of significant delays by China and considerable frustration among WHO officials over not getting the information they needed to fight the spread of the deadly virus, The Associated Press has found.

Despite the plaudits, China in fact sat on releasing the genetic map, or genome, of the virus for more than a week after three different government labs had fully decoded the information.

Tight controls on information and competition within the Chinese public health

system were to blame, according to dozens of interviews and internal documents.

Chinese government labs only released the genome after another lab published it ahead of authorities on a virologist website on January 11.

Even then, China stalled for at least two weeks more on providing WHO with detailed data on patients and cases, according to recordings of internal meetings held by the U.N. Health agency through January — all at a time when the outbreak arguably might have been dramatically slowed.

WHO officials were lauding China in public because they wanted to coax more information out of the government, the recordings obtained by the AP suggest.

Privately, they complained in meetings the week of Jan. 6 that China was not sharing enough data to assess how effectively the virus spread between people or what risk it posed to the rest of the world, costing valuable time. AP

Two Pakistani lawmakers die from Covid

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

Two Pakistani lawmakers died from the novel coronavirus here on Wednesday, a day after a provincial minister succumbed to COVID-19 in the southern Sindh province.

Mian Jamsheed Kakakhel, 65, a Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Member Provincial Assembly (MPA) from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, died here while undergoing treatment after having tested positive for the coronavirus 10 days ago.

"Mian Jamsheed was on ventilator for the last three days and passed away this morning," an official said.

"His son Mian Omar has recovered from coronavirus while other family members have tested negative for it," he added.

Kakakhel was elected from the constituency of PK-63 Nowshera in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in 2018.

Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz) MPA from Gujranwala Shaukat Manzoor Cheema also died after being on ventilator since Eid, Geo News reported.

BRITAIN

Ethnic minorities face higher proportion of lockdown fines, arrests

PTI ■ LONDON

Scotland Yard on Wednesday released its first set of data from policing action taken to impose the coronavirus lockdown across London, which reveals a high proportion of ethnic minorities being fined or arrested for breaches.

The Metropolitan Police said it had issued 973 fines, or Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs), between March 27 and May 14. Those categorised as Asian, which would include people of Indian origin, received 220 fines reflecting 22.6 per cent of FPNs compared to their 18 per cent share of London's population.

Black people received 253 fines, reflecting 26 per cent of FPNs compared to their 12 per cent share of the UK capital's population. This compares with 444 fines for those categorised as White British, making up 45.6 per cent of the FPNs while making up 59 per cent of London's population. "When compared with the

composition of the resident population, higher proportions of those in black and minority ethnic (BAME) groups were issued with FPNs or arrested across London as a whole," the Met Police admitted.

"The reasons for this are likely to be complex and reflect a range of factors. This includes interactions between the areas subject to significant proactive policing activity targeting crime hot-spots and both the variation in the age-profile and geographical distribution of ethnic groups in London," it said.

Of a total of 711 arrests made in connection with COVID-19 legislation, the largest group of arrested people were white at 38 per cent, followed by blacks at 31 per cent and 14 per cent Asian. When taken just in terms of total numbers without proportionality, more white people received FPNs or were arrested than other individual ethnic groups.

Italy reopens to tourists from Europe

AP ■ ROME

Rome: Italy reopened to travellers from Europe on Wednesday, three months after the country went into coronavirus lockdown, with all hopes pinned on reviving the key tourism industry as the summer season begins.

Gondolas were ready to punt along Venice's canals, lovers will be able to act out "Romeo and Juliet" on Verona's famed balcony, and gladiator fans can pose for selfies at Rome's Colosseum.

But there were fears many foreign tourists would be put off coming to a country still shaking off a vicious pandemic.

"Come to Calabria. There's only one risk: that you'll get fat," the southern region's governor Jole Santelli said on Sunday as the race began to lure big spenders -- or any spenders -- back to Italy's sandy shores.

Italy was the first European country to be hit hard by the coronavirus and has officially reported more than 33,000 deaths.

It imposed an economically crippling lockdown in early March and has since seen its contagion numbers drop off dramatically. AFP

Yemen programmes fighting virus might stop by end of June, warns UN

AP ■ CAIRO

Cairo: The United Nations warned on Wednesday that its programmes to fight the coronavirus in war-torn Yemen might have to stop by the end of the month unless they get an immediate injection of cash.

The warning comes a day after a UN appeal for countries to fund emergency aid in the Arab world's poorest nation fell a billion dollars short of what aid agencies needed — USD 2.41 billion — to cover essential activities from June to December.

"This will severely handicap efforts to contain the outbreak, which is already spreading rapidly," said Hayat Abu Saleh, a spokesperson for the U.N. Officer for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

At least 31 major UN programmes in Yemen, covering essentially every sector, from food to health care and nutrition, were at a "serious risk of significant reduction or closure," she said.

The coronavirus is threatening to decimate Yemen's health care system, already ravaged by more than five years of civil war. AP

Around the Globe

Islamabad: Pakistan has reported a record 4,132 fresh cases of the coronavirus in the last 24 hours, taking the total number of infections to 80,463, the health ministry said on Wednesday.

Madrid: Spain's national statistics body says nearly 44,000 more people have died since the beginning of 2020 than in the same period a year earlier — an increase of 24%.

Singapore: Coronavirus cases in Singapore crossed the 36,000-mark on Wednesday as 569 new cases, mostly foreign workers living in dormitories, were confirmed, a day after low-risk businesses resumed operations with the end of the two-month long "circuit-breaker" period.

Berlin: Germany's government says it plans to lift a travel warning for European countries on June 15 — but it may still advise against travel in some cases, for example to Britain if quarantine rules there remain in place.

Seoul: South Korea has reported 49 new cases, continuing a weeklong resurgence that has alarmed a nation where millions of children have begun returning to school. The figures announced by the Korea Centers for Disease Control and Prevention on Wednesday brought national totals to 11,590 cases and 273 deaths.

Global stock markets continue to rise as economies reopen

AP ■ TOKYO

Global stock markets rose Wednesday, extending three days of gains, as more economies reopened from shutdowns they had imposed to stem the coronavirus pandemic.

Asian indexes closed higher and European markets were up in midday trading, while Wall Street futures pointed to gains on the open in the US.

"The theme of reopening optimism has its stronghold on markets going into the mid-week," said Jingyi Pan, market strategist for IG in Singapore.

So far, the markets' momentum has not been

derailed by the wave of protests across the US that began last week in Minneapolis after a black man, George Floyd died with a Minneapolis police officer choking off his air. President Donald Trump has threatened to send troops to quell the unrest.

Investors appear to be focused instead on hopes that the worst of the pandemic downturn has passed, or will soon, as governments slowly lift the restrictions that left broad swaths of their economies at a standstill beginning in March.

France's CAC 40 was up 1.8% to 4,947, while Germany's DAX gained 2.2% to 12,288. Britain's FTSE 100 rose 1.1% to

6,290. The futures for the Dow industrials were up 0.7% and those for the S&P 500 picked up 0.4%. Economic data in Europe was mixed, with a small increase in unemployment due both to governments' efforts to keep workers on payrolls as well as a drop out of the labor market by discouraged jobseekers. The rate edged up to just 7.3% in April, the first full month when pandemic lockdowns hit the continent, from 7.1% in March.

The US jobless rate was near 15% that month and is expected to hit almost 20% when the May figures are released on Friday. Payroll processor ADP is due to issue

its May survey of hiring by private U.S. companies on Wednesday.

The government's weekly tally of applications for unemployment aid, meanwhile, comes on Thursday.

In Asian trading, Japan's Nikkei 225 gained 1.3% to 22,613.76. South Korea's Kospi surged 2.9% to 2,147.00. Hong Kong's Hang Seng was up 1.4% at 24,325.62, while the Shanghai Composite was little changed, inching up less than 0.1% to 2,923.37.

Australia's S&P/ASX 200 rose 1.8% to 5,941.60 despite news that the economy contracted at a 0.3% rate in January-March and is forecast

to weaken much more in the current quarter, falling into recession for the first time since 1991. India's Sensex gained 1.7% while shares climbed nearly 3% in Singapore and almost 2% in Jakarta.

In other trading, benchmark U.S. crude shed 51 cents to \$36.30 a barrel in electronic trading on the New York Mercantile Exchange. It rose \$1.37 to \$36.81 a barrel on Tuesday. Brent crude for August delivery lost 50 cents to \$39.07 a barrel.

The dollar inched down to 108.58 Japanese yen from 108.67 yen late Tuesday. The euro climbed to \$1.1194 from \$1.1171.

European jobless rate up modestly, Germany mulls stimulus

Berlin (AP): Europe's unemployment rate ticked up modestly last month, contained by use of labour programs that have kept millions of workers on payrolls and as some people stopped looking for work, official data showed Wednesday.

The jobless rate in the 19 countries that use the euro rose to 7.3 per cent in April, the first full month when pandemic lockdowns hit the continent, from 7.1 per cent in March, statistics agency Eurostat said Wednesday.

Europe's rise in unemployment has been moderate by international standards because employers are making extensive

use of government-backed short-time work programs that allows them to keep employees on the payroll while they await better times.

In Germany, Europe's largest economy, the federal labour agency pays at least 60 per cent of the salary of employees who are on reduced or zero hours.

Some 10.66 million people were registered for that program in March and April, and 1.06 million followed in May, the labor agency said — though it stressed that this doesn't mean all of them were actually put on short-time work. Germany has a population of 83 million. The European jobless fig-

ures also appear flattered by the fact that some unemployed people likely stopped looking for work and stopped counting as jobseekers.

That seems to be the case in a country like Italy, where the jobless rate actually fell, to 6.3 per cent from 8 per cent in seasonally adjusted terms. In Germany, the unemployment rate rose modestly to 6.3 per cent from 5.8 per cent according to its own labor agency measures.

On Wednesday, Chancellor Angela Merkel's governing coalition was spending a second day hammering out a stimulus package meant to help kick-start the economy.

Trend Slazer

Bhumi launches anti-spitting campaign

BHUMI PEDNEKAR is a socially conscious star who has come forward strongly to raise awareness on Coronavirus during this lockdown. The versatile actor is now urging the entire nation to fight the COVID-19 pandemic through an anti-spitting campaign that aims to educate people.

The actor says, "We have to defeat Coronavirus and everyone has to join hands. Leave the habit of spitting. Currently, our country is under the threat of Corona and the fatal disease spreads even by spitting."



'I am not my child's friend and don't think I need to be. I am his parent and why can't I be a friendly

parent and have a great time together. There are certain things he will speak with his father, with his aunts, with his friends, with his grandparents, there needs to be an outlet for healthy relationships.'

—Sonali Bendre

Actor **MALAIKA ARORA** has shared her various stages of lockdown in a hilarious new post on social media.

She took to Instagram, and she shared a photo collage of four images of herself.

In the first picture, Malaika is seen playing with her hair, the second features her flaunting flawless skin, the third picture has her hair on her face and in the fourth she is seen lying in bed.

"My various stages of lockdown... #stayhomestaysafe #staysane," Malaika captioned the image.

Tom builds Corona-free village

Hollywood star **TOM CRUISE** is reportedly planning to build a 'coronavirus-free village' for the cast and crew of *Mission: Impossible 7* so that they can complete the shoot of the film without contracting the virus.

"Cruise is planning to create a makeshift village at an abandoned RAF site in Oxfordshire. It is being reported that the actor and producer along with his A-list cast will stay in VIP Winnebago trailers so they can protect the crew from catching Coronavirus," said a source.



Everybody has their own vision of what a happy home filled with love looks like. However, this year more than the past ones, we have been practically forced to spend more time confined to our houses. Earlier, we believed that life would bounce back to normal but now are learning to live with the virus in order to survive and embrace the new conditions. So it is time to redesign our houses to fit the needs of the current times, where safety against diseases, is the prime focus.

Adete Sawhney from Altus Interio says "This is the time where we have no option but to stay home. So, we need to make relevant changes, especially, in the areas where we spend a lot of time like the kitchen, bedroom, living area and bathroom. They would need a change to begin with." On the other hand interior designer Punam Kalra, creative director of I'M the Centre says, "We have been reminded that our lifestyle is nothing but an ode to nature and hence it's essential to embrace the green movement by shifting our focus to biophilia and easy to recycle elements like wood, vegetable fibre, jute, sisal, hemp, stone, metal, terracotta and many more. We have to also become more sensitive to the sourcing of our materials, the manufacturing process and the end design, so that our interiors are environment conscious, heartfelt and inspiring."

Since there is a stronger focus now on cleanliness and sanitation, there will be emphasis on incorporating uncomplicated, easy to maintain and innovative surfaces within the house for easy upkeep in the future. "The role of interiors has always been to aid daily routines and lifestyle of the inhabitants. It can't build immunity on its own, but provides its users with a safe space and convenience to successfully achieve it," says Kalra.

This intimate relationship between spaces and the human experience needs new terminology like immunity assisting décor, modern essentialism, interior hygiene and resilient interiors.

HEALTHY INTERIOR

Curtains and carpets are always integral part of interior décor. But they also attract dust which is harmful, especially during these times. "These are essential part of the décor which we can't remove from our houses. But now we have to choose light and natural fabrics which are easier to clean on a daily basis. The upholstery should be in distinctive, natural fabrics like linen and silk, bamboo mats, and woven rugs which can add an organic feeling of luxury and intimacy," says Sawhney.

Curtain are essential to maintain our privacy and make the interiors look beautiful. Interior designers, Pooja and Arbays Ashley, co-founders of Ashley, say, "Curtain fabrics can be coated with special technology to make them easy to maintain. Anti-microbial coating can be used on any upholstery and carpets too. These make the furnishing more hygienic. Rather than curtains one can opt for tech-based switchable glass films too which can be used over any glass surface. These technologically advanced films can be dimmed by a wave of hand, voice or by a remote. These can even be smart and automated to change the intensity of opacity depending upon sunlight."

Our home is our safe haven and a healthy interior is all about eco-friendliness. The world is now realising the importance of designing spaces which



BRING OUTSIDE INSIDE

Clean lines, uncomplicated easy-to-maintain and innovative surfaces will dominate homes in the future, says **PRIYANKA JOSHI**

connect well with our state of mind while creating a balance between our physical and mental health. Sawhney says, "This is the time to choose environment-friendly options for our houses. For instance, we can use all natural fabric for sofa and other covers, bamboo chairs and tables, indoor plants, wooden furniture and natural lights. Secondly, we can use energy saving devices like eco-friendly kitchen appliances and solar lights."

INVOKE EMOTIONS

Using a combination of colour in décor means introducing various shades of emotions. The work from home culture brings in the opportunity to reimagine both, how we live and how we work, as colours can influence our moods and thoughts. Kalra says, "A combination of materials, patterns, textures and colours within a space will be necessary to create an interesting and inspiring ambience, that is also acoustically sound, multi-functional, easy to maintain and comfortable". Colour can also be added in the form of wallpaper, photographs, memorabilia and big art work, used as feature walls, statement ceiling finishes, wall art and installations.

"Bold and dramatic, or soft and understated, or an eccentric mix of the two; the freshly coloured walls, ceilings and furniture immediately make the interiors look new. The Pantone Colour of the year — classic blue — paired with earthy and neutral tones, highlighted with bolder shades like orange and terracotta create an elegant and artistic ambience. Pastel and muted shades of pink, green and lilac give the space a hint of cheery pop and modern vintage glamour. Adding deep forest tones to the upcycled furniture creates a fresh natural look. Nature-inspired motifs and vivid colours like mauve, black, purple and yellow in wallpapers, tiles and



statement accessories create a vibrant interior," says Kalra.

SPACE MANAGEMENT

With homes doubling up as offices a dedicated space to work in may become the new trend. Pooja and Arbays said, "People have learnt that working from home is a possibility and more people may engage in it. It may be more advisable to look at furnishing options which are natural and comfortable to body contact and health as you spend longer hours at home. Quieter spaces with sound absorption and soundproofing are going to be important."

Since we might be spending more time at home in the future, our private spaces need to change in their fundamental use. We need to make more space for daily activities like exercising and soaking in the sun, create dedicated work spaces and accessible healing areas which facilitate easy disinfection and natural ventilation.

The existing spaces have to be decluttered and reorganised to accom-

modate new open furniture layouts, personal working and relaxation corners which can be conveniently sterilised at the entrance. These areas also need to incorporate minimal exposed surfaces, clean forms, hygienic surface treatments like brass and copper and more automation with touchless technology like automatic doors, motion-sensor lights and temperature control. Kalra says, "The dedicated space should be inspiring, well-lit and quiet. Personalising a small corner with comfortable furniture and chic accessories like lamps, small planters, vibrant art, tea coasters, speakers and cosy rugs, throws and cushions, can create an ideal work environment. The colour tones and materials can be balanced with a healthy dose of neutrals and wood, along with bolder accent colours and highlight accessories, while also ensuring minimal clutter and visual conflict of the arrangement."

In a small space choose a corner in your living room or bedroom to create a compact desk so that it does not occupy too much of floor area. Create space

THINGS TO DO

Convert the rooms into art galleries, libraries and personal memoirs.

Creating orderly yet more personalised and intimate spaces within the home is required. Sculptures, artwork, books and photographs, can be stitched together scrupulously to create new mood boards and spatial arrangements. Refashioned in moderation, *avant garde* rugs can be used as wall art and rugged woven fabric as throws, while paintings and installations can be create a statement wall, or even a ceiling. Grouping similar objects in clusters of three further creates a natural symmetry and a sense of luxury within the space.

GREEN FINGERS

A mix of modern aesthetic planters and recycled household items like old ceramics and glass jars, can be upcycled to create an interesting green space. Huge corner planters are a calm and lively highlight, while smaller succulents and bonsai plants make the space look classy and delicate. Simple vases with fresh flowers, along with lamps, poufs, Ottomans, benches, bean bags, coffee tables and artwork add a dreamy, charming, cozy and relaxing look.

NOVEL FURNITURE

Furniture in natural materials, with accessories in macramé, rattan and wicker add an effortless charm to the space. Reclaimed furniture, designed with a skillful use of lines, forms and artwork, paired with upcycled experimental accessories, in a combination of modern bio-synthetic and recyclable materials, radiate an affable, ultra-modern vibe. Soft curves and solid, rounded, irregular shapes, along with sharper geometric shapes, expressed in furniture, pillows, prints, modern artwork, contemporary accessories and statement lighting, create indulgent and mesmerising interiors.

Bringing in the decorative glory of maximising with an understated expression, subtle metallic details in rose gold, copper, steel, tin and brass, with delicate surface finishing like patina, rust, mercury glass, give a raw and intimate textural feel to the décor. These details can be added in the form of discreet upholstery patterns, luminous metallic fabrics, lighting details, sleek furniture details, crockery, wall hangings and screens for a more dramatic space with an enhanced ornamental look.

— Punam Kalra

for your pens, pencils and other paraphernalia along with some small potted plants. Decorate the wall behind the desk with inspirational quotes and miniature artworks.

Sachin Gupta from Beyond designs says, "By choosing a sofa that will double up as a bed whenever needed, a centre table with storage and floating shelves on the wall for your memorabilia and accessories, the living room can have space for all essentials with minimal furniture. Similarly, you should go for furniture pieces that also offer storage in all rooms so that you can do without separate storage units that occupy precious floor space."

No boundaries for toxins

Discovery and Discovery Plus will showcase *The Story of Plastic* on World Environment Day. It focusses upon man-made pollution and its worldwide effects



This World Environment Day, June 5, Discovery, Discovery HD and recently launched Discovery Plus app will showcase, *The Story of Plastic*, a look at the man-made crisis of pollution and the effect it has on our planet and the people that inhabit it. Spanning three continents, the film illustrates the ongoing catastrophe: fields full of garbage, veritable mountains of trash; rivers and seas clogged with waste; and skies choked with the poisonous emissions from plastic production and processing.

It features interviews with experts and activists on the frontlines of the fight, revealing the disastrous consequences of the flood of plastic smothering ecosystems and poisoning communities around the world — and the global movement rising up in response. With engaging original animation, archival industry footage starting in the 1930s and first-person accounts of the unfolding emergency, the film distills a complex problem that is increasingly affecting the planet's and its residents' well-being.

"The issues highlighted in the film illuminate how the decisions made locally can affect us globally. We are eager to highlight the solutions laid out in the film that will help make our world a cleaner and healthier place to live in," says Nancy Daniels, chief brand officer, Discovery and

Factual.

"It was always a priority for us to find the film a home that would amplify the important messages and voices," states filmmaker Deia Schlosberg. "I have been passionate about this issue for over 10 years. *The Story of Plastic* showed us the truth of what plastic is doing to our planet," explains co-executive producer and award-winning musician Jackson Browne.

It shines a light on the environmental damage and human rights abuses that occur throughout the life cycle of plastic — not just once it's disposed off. The message around plastic has, for decades, been controlled by its producers, who have deliberately focussed on waste. The film reveals how the plastics' industry is simultaneously blaming consumers for pollution and aggressively investing to produce more single-use plastic than

ever before. It highlights, that while cleanup is important, the real solution lies in stopping the mass production of plastic in the first place. "The crisis doesn't start when the plastics enter the ocean. It starts when the oil and the gas leave the wellhead, and it keeps on being a problem at every step along the way," says film subject Carroll Muffett of Centre for International Environmental Law.

Beyond illuminating the nature of the crisis, the film also puts the spotlight on the global resistance and network of every-day heroes working internationally to combat this urgent problem, including Charlie Moore (Algalita Marine Research & Education) who discovered the North Pacific Garbage Patch, Ellen and Elise Gerhart of Pennsylvania who protested the construction of a fracked gas pipeline through their family's property and Yvette Arellano (Texas

Environmental Justice Advocacy Services), who supports communities sitting at the fence-line of the petrochemical corridor along the Gulf Coast.

The Story of Plastic forcefully identifies a pressing global challenge which first surfaced around 15 years ago. It highlights how the actions of one group can affect not only their world but that of their neighbours on the other side of the globe too. As activist Shibu K Nahir explains, "Look at our globe: it's a water world... So if you imagine that we are in a womb filled with water, whatever I do here is going to affect every single life form on this earth... Whether a person in Europe or US or India or Africa or Philippines, it's a life... We need to bring in that kind of a spirit of unity across boundaries, because these toxins do not understand political boundaries."

Anushka urges strict hygiene



Anushka Sharma has come forward to raise awareness on the need to maintain hygiene and sanitation during the pandemic. She is urging people to stop open defecation and is making them aware of the health hazard associated with it. The superstar has been associated with the *Swachh Bharat Mission* and the new campaign aims to tell the citizens that the COVID-19 crisis can be curbed through strict sanitation.

The actor says, "When women all over the country had decided that they would educate everyone on the lesson of close the door, shun the disease, no one had thought that their initiative would turn into such a huge wave. Today, we all have to remember that and remind others about the lesson of cleanliness."

She urges her fellow citizens by saying, "If we take care of cleanliness around us, by not defecating in the open, we will keep ourselves healthy and India clean. We will become strong to fight against any kind of disease. Drive the disease out of the country by stopping defecating in the open and closing the toilet door at all times."

A NOTCH HIGHER

The government of Rajasthan and its Department of Information and Public Relations primarily have set new dimensions in fighting the pandemic



DIPR Commissioner and Special Secretary, Mahendra Soni

In the ongoing fight against Coronavirus, all departments of Rajasthan Government played a vital role. The main Corona warriors were doctors, paramedical staff, police, district administration, revenue officers, teachers, sanitation staff, media personnel newspaper hawkers, NGOs and philanthropists.

When people of the entire state were sitting at home, scared of coming in contact with the virus, these corona warriors were busy treating people (doctors and paramedical staff), maintaining law and order (police), making people abide by the lockdown guidelines and helping people by addressing their problems (administrative personnel, teachers, revenue officers and others), maintaining cleanliness (sanitation staff), delivering news through newspapers and electronic media and distributing newspapers (media personnel and hawkers), helping people stuck due to lockdown by providing food and water (NGOs) and helping the society by providing food, sanitisers and masks (philanthropists).

In the government departments, Department of Information and Public Relations (DIPR) was silently playing its role and was keeping people of the state and media informed about the developments of the state government including the announcements and decisions through various platforms.

According to DIPR Minister, Dr Raghu Sharma, the department was



Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot

quite alert and gave every piece of government information to the people through press releases, advertisements in newspapers, social media posts and electronic media through scripts on television channels and jingles on FM radios.

The department also arranged 11 video conferences (VCs) of Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot with media and his interviews with national and regional media including print and electronic. Media veterans believe that 11 daily VCs with media is perhaps a historic initiative.

After the first Corona positive case was reported in Jaipur on March 2, the DIPR immediately sprang to action to make people aware about this pandemic. Till now, more than 50 advertisements have been published in newspapers starting from March 5. "The decisions taken by Gehlot were published so that the people get to know about them and benefit from various schemes announced during the lock-



down," informed DIPR Commissioner and Special Secretary, Mahendra Soni.

It is notable that Rajasthan was the first state to announce lockdown from March 22 and since then people were kept informed about the routine decisions.

Some of the major decisions and

announcements include: only chemists, provision/grocery and vegetables and fruits shops to remain open during lockdown; distribution of free wheat to National Food Security Act (NFSA) beneficiaries; distribution of free packets of food items to daily wagers, street vendors and other needy people who do not

come under the ambit of NFSA; food for all as no poor should sleep hungry; one-time assistance of ₹ 2500 to 33 lakh needy people; important helpline numbers at the state level and district level for assistance to people during the Corona pandemic; payment of outstanding pension up to March to more than 78 lakh social security pensioners including the precise communication of vital information during the entire period of lockdown 1.0 to 4.0.

"As per the commissioner and special secretary, the department substantially enhanced the activities on social media and was continuously updating its website, facebook, twitter and instagram accounts with latest information, decisions and announcements that helped the general public and media. As a result, the followers on twitter touched 2 lakh. The timely decisions taken by Gehlot were praised by one and all in the state as well as the country," he added.

IN SHORT

Virendra Nath Datt, director (Marketing), NFL, has taken over the additional charge of chairman and managing director (CMD) of the company. An MBA from Maharshi Dayanand University, Datt has a rich professional experience of over 35 years with premier CPSEs such as GAIL and ONGC besides the fertilizer industry. Datt is credited with sustained growth in fertilizer sale of company from 43 lakh MT in 2017-18 to 57 lakh MT in 2019-20, an increase of 32 per cent over past two years. During this period, NFL established a pan India footprint in the fertilizer industry.



Indian Railways had suspended its regular passenger train services during the nationwide lockdown to contain the spread of the Coronavirus. As the trains were cancelled en masse, railways faced the challenge to refund huge amount of money to the rail passengers.

Railways has successfully refunded ₹ 1885 crore towards cancellation of tickets to passengers from March 21 to May 31 on tickets booked online. The entire cost of the ticket purchased has been refunded in the account from where the payment was made during the booking of the ticket. Due to the initiative taken by the national transporter, the passengers got their refund in time and did not face the inconvenience of visiting a PRS counter for collecting their amount.



Dharmendra Pradhan, Minister of Steel, Petroleum and Natural Gas, chaired a video conferencing with officials from Ministry of Steel, Ministry of Road Transport and Highways, Ministry of Railways, INSADG, SAIL and steel fabricators from Bhilai to work out a detailed plan for developing a steel fabrication cluster around the Bhilai Steel Plant.



The steel fabrication cluster envisaged will give boost to the MSME sector in the region, facilitate employment generation and give impetus to the local economy. This is in line with the spirit of PM's call for an *Aatmanirbhar Bharat*. Pradhan directed the CEO of the Bhilai Steel Plant to ensure that the steel plate requirement of the steel fabricators is fully met and any restrictive conditions coming the way of such procurement be removed.



NHPC has diversified its portfolio to include Solar Power business. It has given Letter of Awards (LOA) to solar power developers for interstate transmission system (ISTS) grid connected photovoltaic projects aggregating to 1,600 MW installed capacity. Previously, NHPC had successfully conducted the e-reverse auction for ISTS grid connected solar PV project to be set up anywhere in India. As part of the LOA, NHPC shall purchase the power generated from the proposed ISTS-connected solar PV power project at tariffs of ₹2.55 and ₹2.56 per unit. The 800 MW Parbati-II Hydroelectric Project, located in Himachal Pradesh, is a run-of-the-river scheme proposed to harness hydro potential of the river Parbati. NHPC has successfully completed awarding of the above-mentioned works amid nationwide lockdown due to COVID-19 pandemic, following all guidelines of the government.



In yet another step to fight the COVID-19 pandemic, state-owned Power Finance Corporation Ltd (PFC) has come forward to provide financial assistance of ₹ 1.23 crore to the Uttarakhand government. The fund will be utilised for procurement of 500 PPE kits for frontline staff and six fully equipped ambulances which will be handed over to health department of Uttarakhand. The CSR initiative by PFC will further support the preparedness of the state in its fight against the spread of COVID-19.

Faculty project at GGSIPU

University School of Environment Management (USEM), IP University, organised a six-day faculty development programme (FDP) on environmental impacts of COVID-19 pandemic: challenges and future research. Eminent Environmentalists and experts from various fields like professor CK Varshne, professor Emeritus, School of Environment Sciences, JNU; Padma Shri professor Dr Mahesh Verma, Vice Chancellor, GGSIPU; Ravi Dadhich, Registrar, GGSIPU; professor VK Jain, Vice Chancellor, Tezpur University, Assam; Dr M Mohapatra, DG, IMD, New Delhi; Dr Anand Krishnan, professor of Community Medicine, AIIMS, actively guided the FDP.

Professor NC Gupta, Dean, USEM, IP University, inaugurated the programme. The FDP covered many themes including origin of COVID-19, lessons learned from the crisis,

healing of earth and ecosystem during the lockdown period, impact on small holding farmers/MSMEs, reverse migration and future sustainable environment, Sendai framework for disaster risk management, climate change agenda and action for post-COVID scenario.

In welcome address, professor NC Gupta enlightened the audience about importance of resources and how the water and air quality has shown significant improvement during the lockdown period. Professor Dr Mahesh Verma and Ravi Dadhich congratulated Dean, USEM and organising team for organising such an important faculty development programme. Professor Mahesh Verma said that the outbreak of COVID-19 has forced us to alter the way of understanding life. Eminent speakers and experts including professor Anubha Kaushik, professor Prodyut Bhattacharya, professor

Jens Rydell, Dr Abi T Vanak, Dr Mukesh Thakur, Dr Faiyaz Khudsar, Dr Meenakshi Arora, Dr Ravinder Khaiwal, Dr Apoorva Ratan Ghosh, professor HP Garg, professor Sas Biswas, professor Agni Mitra, Dr Sanjeev Sarangi, Bharti Chaturvedi, professor NC Pant, professor CP Kaushik, professor Anil Kumar Gupta, professor Arun Kumar, Dr Amarnath Chatterjee, professor Shyamala Mani, professor M Afzal Wani and Dr Suman Mor, share their experiences on environment and biodiversity, climate, rural livelihood, medicine, wildlife and so on.

Professor Amulya K Panda, director of National Institute of Immunology, gave the keynote address during valedictory ceremony. All deans and directors of various university schools, faculty members and research scholars were present and contributed to the successful organisation of FDP.



KIIT, KISS and KIMS salute Corona warriors through a song

Staff of KIIT, KISS and KIMS sang *Sbande Utkala Janani* to honour and motivate Corona warriors at KIMS Campus on Saturday. Odisha CM Naveen Patnaik on Thursday urged people of the state to show solidarity with COVID warriors by singing this song on May 30 at 5:30 pm. Showing solidarity with the frontline COVID warriors including doctors, nurses, paramedical staff and others, Dr Achyuta Samanta,

founder, KIIT, KISS and KIMS said that it is the duty of all Odia people to honour them. He thanked all the doctors and other staff of KIMS who are treating COVID patients, putting duty above their families. He also thanked staff of KIIT, KISS and KIMS who are dedicatedly preparing and distributing food and other essential commodities to the needy people, including police personnel on duty till date.

The healing power of Vedas

Coronavirus has indeed turned the whole world upside-down. Everybody — the government, intellectuals, scientists, doctors, social workers — have put in their best efforts to control the pandemic. They all deserve much appreciation for all their selfless efforts. But it's still very much true that it may take a long time to find out the antidote of the disease. And when all the sources to overcome any problem are not readily available then we the human-beings ultimately remember god.

It shall not be out of place to mention here — a very few people know that almighty nurses the whole universe and his preach for the same exists in Vedas. So it's clearly understood that everybody will have to pay their attention towards the eternal vedic path for a healthy and happy life.

I would like to mention the *Rigved* mantra wherein the god states, "The earth is meant for spreading happiness. All the innumerable matters — the sun, moon, forests, mountains, food



crops, vegetation, rivers — are meant to give us pleasure. But what a wonder that in the present scenario, human-beings have been experiencing unlimited problems, mental stress, anxiety and destruction. Isn't it because we human-beings have deviated ourselves from the eternal path followed by our

ancient ancestors. Another *Rigved* mantra tells us that in the beginning of the creation, knowledge of the four Vedas emerges directly from god and is originated in the heart of four *rishis*. Brahma served these four *rishis* and he alone obtained the knowledge of Vedas. It is utmost important to

possess the knowledge of Vedas and until it's given by a *guru*, it cannot be gained.

For the last several decades, human beings have ignored vedic knowledge. As a result, we have indulged in one-sided materialistic progress only. Therefore, we must pay our attention towards the ideas of the mantras and Vedas. If you only gain progress in science, leaving behind the *Brahma vidya* then the power required to understand and destroy sins such as anger, pride, ego, greed, injustice, would leave you. Thus, you would not be able to gain the main motto of human-life i.e. to realise the existence of god. Therefore, to attain healthy and joyous life, spiritualism along with science is required. If anybody follows vedic preach and performs daily *yajyen/agnihotra*, the whole universe is purified, automatically destroying all diseases and problems of life.

(The author, yogacharya Swami Ram Swarup, is the chief editor of *Ved Ishvareeya Vani*, a bi-annual magazine.)

EESL and GAIL sign MoU for trigeneration projects

GAIL (India) Limited and Energy Efficiency Services Limited (EESL) have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for cooperation in development of trigeneration projects in the country.

The MoU aims at building a closer strategic partnership between the two companies by jointly exploring business opportunities in Trigeneneration business segment. Under this MoU, GAIL and EESL shall jointly undertake studies and if found viable, 50:50 joint venture will be incorporated.

Santanu Roy, executive director (Business Development and Project Development) signed the MoU on the behalf of GAIL, while Amit Kumar Kaushik, executive director (Strategic Growth) inked the MoU on the behalf of EESL.

Trigeneneration or Combined Cooling, Heat and Power (CCHP) typically involves natural gas-fired generators to produce electricity. The waste heat from flue gas is recovered to produce hot water/steam which in turn used for heating purpose and also



in absorption chillers for cooling. During the signing ceremony, Manoj Jain, CMD of GAIL, stated, "There is a significant market potential for trigeneration projects in India, particularly small industrial and commercial sectors and office buildings. As trigeneration business is at initial stage, the collaboration would enable to take first mover advantage in the business similar to GAIL's city gas business. Further, it would also push gas usage in new applications which is in line with GAIL's Strategy 2030.

Accordingly, the strategic partnership between GAIL and EESL is a win-win situation for both the companies." Saurabh Kumar, MD of EESL, added, "The intervention potential of trigeneration technology in revolutionising India's energy landscape is significant. EESL is proud to pioneer the effort towards harnessing this potential with GAIL which will set a precedent for forthcoming trigeneration projects. I wish both the parties all the very best for the successful implementation of this initiative."

3 WI players refuse to tour Eng

Hetmyer, Keemo and Darren Bravo will not participate in three-match Test series as Caribbean squad also include 11 reserves



West Indies batsman Shimron Hetmyer and all-rounder Keemo Paul

PTI ■ ST JOHN'S

Three West Indies players – Darren Bravo, Shimron Hetmyer and Keemo Paul – on Wednesday refused to tour England for next month's proposed three-match Test series, which will be conducted in a bio-secure environment to combat Covid-19 threat. Cricket West Indies (CWI) announced a 14-man squad for the

series, which is expected to mark resumption of international cricket if it gets the final approval from the UK Government. "Darren Bravo, Shimron Hetmyer and Keemo Paul all declined the invitation to travel to England for the tour and CWI fully respects their decision to choose to do so," Cricket West Indies said in a statement. "As previously stated, CWI will

not hold this decision against these players when considering future selection," it added.

The specific reasons for their withdrawal were not given by CWI. The West Indies squad will live, train and play in a "bio-secure" environment during the seven weeks of the tour, as part of the "comprehensive" medical and operations plans to ensure player and staff safety. "The bio-secure protocols will restrict movement in and out of the venues, so the selection panel has also named a list of reserve players who will travel to train and help prepare the Test squad and ensure replacements are available in case of any injury," said CWI.

The touring party, which will be tested for Covid-19 this week, is scheduled to fly to England on a chartered flight on June 8.

The two newcomers to the Test squad are middle-order batsman Nkrumah Bonner and fast bowler Chemar Holder.

The 22-year-old Holder, who is not related to West Indies captain Jason Holder, was the leading fast bowler in the national championship with 36 wickets in eight matches at 18.91 each, and was part of the ICC Under-19 World Cup winning side in 2016.

Bonner, 31, is in line to make his Test debut after being one of the leading batsmen in the 2020 West Indies Championship with 523 runs in seven matches at an average of 58.11.

"The new cricketing environment will take some getting used to.

However, being in England and working together for four weeks before the first Test will give the squad the opportunity to get acclimatised and hopefully, mentally and technically adjusted to the demands of the new environment," said lead selector Roger Harper.

"Playing in July could be a blessing as the weather is likely to be warmer which will allow the squad more of an opportunity to play its best cricket."

THE SQUAD

Jason Holder, K Brathwaite, Shai Hope, Shane Dowrich, Roston Chase, Shemarh Brooks, Rakheem Cornwall, Nkrumah Bonner, Alzarri Joseph, Chemar Holder, John Campbell, Raymon Reifer, Kemar Roach, J Blackwood. Reserves: Sunil Ambris, Joshua Da Silva, S Gabriel, Keon Harding, Kyle Mayers, Preston McSween, M Mindley, Shane Moseley, Anderson Phillip, O Thomas, Jomel Warrican.

Root backs Stokes for interim captaincy

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

England skipper Joe Root might have to skip the opening Test against West Indies if it coincides with the impending birth of his second child with vice-captain Ben Stokes taking over the mantle.

In fact, Root has backed Stokes, whom he believes will be a "fantastic captain".

"I think if Ben was captain he would be fantastic. One of his great qualities as vice-captain and as a leader is that he sets the example, the way he goes about his training, how he wants to bowl in difficult circumstances, the way he stands up in different scenarios with the bat," Root said.

"He drags people with him and gets the best out of the players around him. I think that's a great quality to have as a leader and something he can take into captaincy if he was to get the opportunity. I could see him doing a very good job."

Root said Stokes can be a huge success not only in short term but even if he is given the job for long term.

"People will always look up to him and want to play for him, whether captain or not. But especially as captain he'll have people wanting to play for him and short-term he'd be a huge success. Until you get the opportunity to do it longer, you just never know, it might be a huge success. I wouldn't put it past him," he said.

Know my importance in white-ball formats: Pandya

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Flamboyant Indian all-rounder Hardik Pandya is wary of risking his injury-ravaged back for Test cricket right now and says it's because he understands his "importance" in the white-ball formats.

Pandya hasn't played a Test since September 2018, appearing in a total of 11 five-day matches, but has cemented his place as a big-hitting all-rounder in the limited overs formats. He is currently on road to recovery from the back injury which needed a surgery last year.

"I see myself as a back-up seamer for sure. After my back surgery, I don't know, playing Test cricket right now will be a challenge," the 26-year-old told *Cricbuzz in Conversation*.

"If I was a Test player and didn't have the game in white-ball cricket, I could go now and risk my back in Tests but I know my importance in white ball cricket. "It has happened that I played Tests and then didn't do well in ODIs and T20s because my plus point is my energy," he explained.

Pandya first picked up the back injury in 2018 when he was stretched off the field during an Asia Cup match against Pakistan.

Recalling the day, Pandya said he thought his career was over.

"I genuinely thought that my career is over because I'd never seen anyone being stretched off. I was knocked out for 10 minutes, after that the pain never went down.

"What happens to me is that my body goes into recovery mode straight away... Asia Cup was anyway going to be my last series before being rested but then the injury happened," he remembered. Pandya said he owes it to his IPL team Mumbai Indians' coach Ricky Ponting for being there for him during the tough phase.

"In 2015, someone who looked after me the best was Ricky Ponting. He



looked after me as a child. I felt like he was a father figure for me. Learnt so much," he said.

"Ricky taught me situations, mind-sets. He used to sit with me before I went into bat. I would sit near boundary rope and call Ricky. He would sit with me and tell me what's happening. So I grasped and learnt quickly," he revealed.

Speaking of support, national skipper Virat Kohli, coach Ravi Shastri and NCA Director Rahul Dravid are also among those, Pandya feels grateful to.

"Virat, Rohit (Sharma) or Ravi sir don't come and teach you the game. They have given me that freedom," he said.

"The security that they gave me backing with all their heart helped big time. That was the reason I started taking decisions on my own," he added.

As for Dravid, Pandya said he is thankful to the former captain for never judging him.

"...He accepted the way I am. He never judged me. Always respected me as a cricketer. He enjoyed my work ethic," Pandya said.



Learnt about handling difficult situations from Kohli: Kuldeep

IAN S ■ NEW DELHI

He is Virat Kohli's go-to-man in limited-overs cricket when the team needs a wicket. While the modern era has seen batsmen take spinners to the cleaners in the shorter formats of the game, left-arm spinner Kuldeep Yadav rarely fails to answer his skippers call. Interestingly, Kuldeep says he has learnt a lot about handling pressure situations from the skipper.

Speaking about how does he handle the role of a wicket-taker when batsmen are known to take on the spinners and runs are bound to be leaked? The 25-year-old Kuldeep says that the confidence the skipper shows in him is vital and also that he takes a leaf or two out of Kohli's book when it comes to handling pressure.

"If your captain believes in you, giving your best on the field becomes easy. From Virat, we learn a lot of things like how to manage difficult situations. He never fails to motivate young players. I remember when I was new in the team he backed me a lot. In fact, now also, he is always there for me. He always appreciates your skills and we have a great tuning together. The best quality of Virat is that he also understands the team and its player's well which makes our job easy on field," he pointed.

Teams need to be careful about injury management: Pathan

MUMBAI: Former pacer Irfan Pathan believes the Indian team management will have to focus on the bowlers and be "extremely careful" with regard to injury management once the players hit the ground after the coronavirus-forced hiatus.

Players in India haven't been able to practise since March 25 due to the countrywide lockdown.

It was pacer Shardul Thakur who became the first Indian team member to resume training after he bowled in the nets in

Palghar last month. Pathan feels that any team, including an IPL one, will have to be careful with the bowlers, who would be more prone to injury having been out of action for more than two months.

"Injury management is the most important thing. We will have to focus on all the bowlers," Pathan, who has played 29 Tests and 120 ODIs for India, said on *Star Sports show Cricket Connected*.

The ICC also recently came up with specific

guidelines for bowlers, suggesting that teams would need to exercise caution over bowlers' workloads to avoid a serious injury like stress fracture of the spine as players get ready to resume training.

"In a squad of 15, every team has 4 to 6 bowlers. Be it an IPL team, Indian team or any international or domestic team, we will have to be extremely careful about injury management as our boys have been out of action for a while," he said. PTI

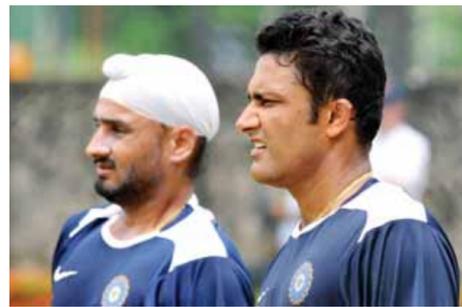
'Play around pitch to maintain balance b/w bat & ball'

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Spin great and ICC Cricket Committee chairman Anil Kumble on Wednesday reiterated the panel's reluctance to allow use of artificial substances on the ball despite the saliva ban, saying the balance between bat and ball can be maintained by "playing around" with the pitches.

"So in cricket you have the surface that you can play around with and bring about a balance between the bat and ball," said Kumble at a *FICCI* webinar.

The bowlers will miss using saliva the most in Test cricket as it aids them in generating both conventional and reverse swing. "...You can still probably leave grass on the surface or even have two spinners to play in Australia, two in England, which doesn't happen often." Like he had said right after recommending saliva ban as an interim measure, Kumble reiterated that allowing use of artificial substances would have taken the creativity out of the game. "We've been very strict about substances that have been used on the ball. That was



"And in a Test match why not get two spinners to play in Australia, two in England, which doesn't happen often." Like he had said right after recommending saliva ban as an interim measure, Kumble reiterated that allowing use of artificial substances would have taken the creativity out of the game. "We've been very strict about substances that have been used on the ball. That was

something that we felt, the creativity was something that we should not (tinker with)," he said.

Kumble, however, admitted that it would be hard for players to adjust to not using saliva. "Although it is second nature in cricket, and that's something that players will find it hard to manage. And that's why I believe that at training, they'd like to start slowly because

it's not just about coming back and playing cricket in a match," he said.

"It's also about coming back from two and a half months of being locked up... And especially if you're a bowler, you need to have those bowling overs under your belt before you start competing.

"So, it's important that you slowly and gradually come back into sort of normalcy that you can and the advantage that cricket has over other sports is that there's an element of adjustable variance in the pitch, which not many sport have," he added.

Kumble said the committee's recommendations focused on resumption of cricket at the earliest. "...I know there's been a lot of debate about shining the ball but the idea was to kickstart cricket, play the sport, and then I'm sure things will fall in place. Yes, there will be some challenges. You have to go one game at a time.

PRANNOY HS @PRANNOYHSPTI

If you ever want your name in the Awards list, make sure you have people who will get your name to the list. Performance is least considered in our country. Sad state of our county but can't help it. Let go and just play until you can. #arjunaawards

6:12 pm · 17 Aug 19

#arjunaawards Same old story. Guy who has Medals in Cwg and Asian Championships not even recommended by Association. And guy who was not there on any of these major events recommended #waah 🍌🍌 #thiscountryisajoke

9:28 pm · 02 Jun 20

Livid at not being nominated for the Arjuna award for the second consecutive year, Indian shuttler H S Prannoy took to Twitter to express his displeasure over Badminton Association of India decision

Afghanistan training camp likely in Kabul

KABUL: Afghanistan Cricket Board (ACB) on Wednesday held discussions with skipper Asghar Afghan and head coach Lance Klusener to discuss the possible resumption of cricket in the country.

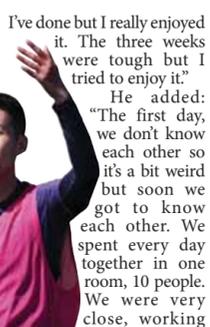
The ACB is looking to host a training camp later this month in Kabul and stated they will be following all necessary Government and World Health Organisation protocols.

"ACB leadership held a video conference with Head Coach Lance Klusener, Chief Selector Andy Moles, Skipper Asghar Afghan and some ACB officials as they discussed the training camp in June which shall be held in Kabul as per guidelines by WHO and Ministry of Public Health," the Board tweeted.

Son enjoyed 'tough' military service

LONDON: Tottenham forward Son Heung-min says he enjoyed the "tough" challenge of his three-week spell doing military service in South Korea.

Son completed his mandatory training last month while Spurs waited for the Premier League season to resume. "It was a good experience," he told *Spurs TV*. "I couldn't say everything that



I've done but I really enjoyed it. The three weeks were tough but I tried to enjoy it." He added: "The first day, we don't know each other so it's a bit weird but soon we got to know each other. We spent every day together in one room, 10 people. We were very close, working together, we helped each other so the time was fantastic." Son was out injured for the final weeks before the League was suspended and cannot wait to get going when the season restarts. "I'm physically fine, I'm working really, really hard to be at my maximum level and it's nearly there," he said. "Everyone is back, everyone is in good shape. Everyone wants to play again and everyone is motivated," he added. AFP



Germany won't punish players for Floyd protests

FRANKFURT: The German football federation will not punish players who protest against the killing of George Floyd and racism.

Several players in Germany have made statements with gestures or messages on their clothing since Floyd died on May 25 after a white Minneapolis police officer pressed his knee for several minutes on his neck.

The federation, known as the DFB, on Wednesday said it opposed punishing any players because it believes their anti-racism messages match the federation's own principles.

"The DFB has made a strong stand against any form of racism, discrimination or violence and stands for tolerance, openness and diversity, values which are also anchored in the DFB's statutes," federation president Fritz Keller said in a statement.

"Therefore the players' actions have our respect and our understanding."

The statement named four players who protested during last weekend's games — Achraf Hakimi, Jadon Sancho, Weston McKennie and Marcus Thuram — but made clear the same approach would apply to any future protests.

Germany's approach has the backing of FIFA. The governing body of world football said on Tuesday that such demonstrations "deserve an applause and not a punishment." AFP

Fitness level has dipped a bit: Neeraj

NEW DELHI: There is a stark difference between what ace javelin thrower Neeraj Chopra is used to while training and what he is doing now. However, he is just happy to be back outside even though for now it is without a javelin, an equipment that he has gained mastery over in his career but one that he could not do much with during the last two months.

"It was certainly a matter of great happiness," Neeraj said when asked about how he felt when he got the news of the resumption of outdoor training. "This is the reason why we are here at the camp, to train. So when that was not an option there was not much to do. For now we are looking to get back to the way we used to train before all this.

"It's not good for an athlete to be away from training for



too long. For the past two months I was doing some exercise to maintain core fitness but couldn't really do anything holding a javelin. Now hopefully we can slowly get back to our routine." The 22-year-old is one of several elite athletes who were holed up in the hostels of the

National Institute of Sport (NIS) in Patiala throughout the time that the lockdown had been imposed.

Outdoor training for athletes at NIS started on Monday but they are yet to be allowed to use their equipment. Neeraj however is not too bothered by that as he has to rebuild strength before going full steam.

"(Training) starts around 6.30am and for now we are not spending more than two hours. Slowly we will increase the intensity," he said.

"My fitness levels have dipped a bit in these last two months. I have to get my elbow and shoulders back to full strength again and then only will I get back to the heavy training I used to do before."

"The coaches haven't really taken a measure of exactly how much difference has come

in the body. Maybe there could be a fitness test taken some time in the future but I don't really know when. My weight has not really changed much it's just a few crucial muscles that need strengthening."

AFI had said last month that it is looking to resume the domestic calendar in September and Prez Adille Sumariwalla has made it clear that no foreign training camps will be held for any athlete this year. Neeraj said that with no competitions in the horizons, there is no rush to get back to training with full intensity.

"The thing is there are no competitions happening in the near future so we don't need to rush with anything. This year at least until November there won't be anything. There is no scope of going outside of course, for any training or competitions," he said. IANS

Advantage for Real, Barca when La Liga restarts

NEW DELHI: Former England star Steve McManaman feels that big clubs like Real Madrid and Barcelona, which feature top players and have big squads, will do better than others when the La Liga restarts next week behind closed doors amid the Covid-19 pandemic.

Lionel Messi's Barcelona and Real Madrid are at first and second position respectively in the 20-team standings after 27 matches each with two points separating them.

"The schedule is tight with just 5-6 weeks and so the teams with quality players and big squads, which have better player back-ups, will do better. Barcelona and Real Madrid have these and it is a very close race between the two at the top," McManaman said during virtual press conference.



McManaman also said that the three months break due to the Covid-19 pandemic has also given time to some top players in Barcelona and Real Madrid to recover from their injuries. "Those injured (in Barcelona and Real Madrid) are back. Everybody seemed to be fit and so they will benefit from the three months of break. I hope Real Madrid win the La Liga," said the former

England midfielder, who won 37 international caps between 1994 and 2001.

While former Spain and Barcelona midfielder Luis Garcia, said the players should avoid getting injured in the initial matches.

"The players had three months without playing and so they should not get injured in the first couple of matches. But the most important thing is their safety," he said. PTI