

OPINION 6

WAR OF WORDS

MONEY 9

MARKETS BACK TO WINNING WAYS ON STIMULUS LIFT

SPORT 12

KLOPP PICKS MESSI OVER RONALDO

NEW DELHI, THURSDAY MAY 14, 2020; PAGES 12 ₹3

the pioneer

www.dailypioneer.com

SOCIAL MEDIA HAS ITS PROS: PANKAJ 10 VIVA



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

*Late City Vol. 30 Issue 133 *Air Surcharge Extra if Applicable

Succour for India Inc, ₹3-L cr unsecured loans

Focus on MSME, ₹20K crore subordinate debt for stressed businesses



Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman wearing a face mask gestures as she announces the Government's economic package to fight the coronavirus pandemic, during a Press conference in New Delhi on Wednesday

PTI

FINANCIAL PROP

- Global tenders to be disallowed up to ₹200 crore
- ₹50,000 cr equity infusion through MSME Fund of Funds
- New definition of MSMEs
- ₹2,500 crore EPF support for businesses and workers for 3 more months
- ₹30,000cr liquidity facility for NBFC/HCs/ MFs
- ₹45,000cr partial credit guarantee scheme 2.0 for NBFC
- ₹90,000cr liquidity injection for DISCOMs
- Relief to contractors
- Extension of registration and completion date of real estate projects under RERA

cent of basic salary as employer's share to employee provident fund (EPF) contribution has been reduced to 10 per cent to boost their liquidity.

To boost construction, all Government agencies will give up to 6 months extension to all contractors to complete construction, and goods and service contracts.

"Essentially this is to spur growth and to build a very self-reliant India. It addresses ease of doing business, compliance, and due diligence and the intention is also to build local brands," she said.

Sitharaman said collateral-free loans will benefit 45 lakh small businesses. The loan will have 4-year tenure and will have a 12-month moratorium, she said, adding the loans will

be guaranteed by the Government. Also, ₹20,000 crore subordinate debts will be provided for stressed or loan defaulting MSMEs, she said, adding this would benefit 2 lakh such businesses.

A fund of funds for MSME is also being created, which will infuse ₹50,000 crore equity in MSMEs with growth potential.

The Government also changed the definition of MSMEs to allow units with higher investment as well as introduced turnover criteria to allow more companies to remain small businesses to get fiscal and other benefits.

Also, to help them get more business, global tenders for Government procurement up to ₹200 crore will be barred.

Continued on Page 2

ITR filing deadline now Nov 30; TDS rate slashed by 25%

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In a relief to taxpayers, the Government on Wednesday extended the deadline for filing of all Income Tax returns for 2019-20 fiscal till November 30, 2020 and also slashed TDS (tax deducted at source)/TCS (Tax collected at source) rates for non-salary payments to residents by 25 per cent.

"From tomorrow till March 31, 2021, the TDS/TCS rates have been reduced by 25 per cent of the existing rate... This shall also apply to all payments for contracts, interest, rent, dividend, commission or brokerage... all of these will be eligible for 25 per cent rate reduction.

"This reduction would release nearly ₹50,000 crore in the hands of the people who would have otherwise paid it as TDS," Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman.

The Government has also extended, the Vivad Se Vishwas scheme for direct tax dispute resolution has been extended by six months till December 31, 2020.

Sitharaman said the income tax department will



fast track processing of pending refunds to charitable trusts, LLPs, non-corporate businesses and proprietorship firms, among others.

Also, assessments getting time-barred on September 30 have been extended till December 31, 2020 and those getting time-barred on March 31, 2021 have been extended till September 30, 2021.

She also said the income tax department has already cleared ₹18,000 crore worth of refunds where the quantum due was up to ₹5 lakh.

"This coupled with release of pending refunds to all non-corporate tax payers would fast track the revival of business and enterprises," he added.

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A day after Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced a special economic and comprehensive package of ₹20 lakh crore — equivalent to 10 per cent of India's GDP — for the revival of the coronavirus-hit economy, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Wednesday came out with a slew of measures for relief and credit support to businesses, especially MSMEs.

The FM announced ₹3 lakh crore of collateral-free loans for small businesses, cut the tax rate for non-salary payments and provided liquidity to

non-banking companies to help them tide over the disruptions caused by the lockdown.

Announcing the first set of components stimulus package announced by the Prime Minister, she said ₹90,000 crore liquidity infusion will be made in electricity distribution companies to help them fight the current financial stress.

The Minister also extended by three months the Government support to companies with less than 100 employees to meet retirement fund obligations.

For companies, the statutory obligation to pay 12 per

Stimulus package eyewash: Opp

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Opposition leaders on Wednesday gave a thumb down to the Prime Minister's stimulus package of ₹20 lakh crore terming it hollow announcement.

Senior Congress leader and former finance minister P Chidambaram stated there is nothing in what Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said for the lakhs of poor and it's a cruel blow to those who

toil everyday,

Trinamool Congress chief and West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee echoed her views and said while people expected to get relief, but the announcements by the FM is a big zero. "There is nothing for the States," Mamata said.

Referring to the economic stimulus package, other leaders, including from Left parties, said neither the PM nor the FM mention about the rehabilita-

tion road plan for laborers whose lives have been upended by the lockdown.

The former Finance Minister said, "Except for modest MSME package, we are disappointed with announcements made by FM."

"Centre has announced ₹3.6 lakh crore in the ₹20-lakh crore package; where is the rest of ₹16.4 lakh crore," Chidambaram asked. He said the Government is a prisoner of its own ignorance and fears.

"The Government must spend more, borrow more, and allow states to borrow more but it is not willing to do so," he said. "Wrong time to bring labour law changes by BJP-ruled States. Wrong precedent set by them," the Congress leader further opined at AICC video Press conference soon after Sitharaman Press conference. He said in case of the credit guarantee fund, not the entire fund would be spent.

Continued on Page 2

Delhi updates death count, adds 20 more

Unreported deaths in April-May raise Capital's toll to 106

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

With 20 deaths which took place in April and May in the national Capital as reported on Wednesday by the authorities, the death toll due to Covid-19 in Delhi has gone up to 106.

The total number of coronavirus cases in Delhi climbed to 7,998 after 359 fresh cases were reported.

In a bulletin issued on Wednesday, the Delhi Health Department said the 20 deaths reported on Wednesday, took place in April and May as per case sheets received from hospitals, and audited by the Covid-19 death committee.

However, it also carried a footnote, saying certain figures mentioned in the bulletin were subject to change on receipt of



Passengers arrive at New Delhi Railway station following the resumption of passenger train services by Indian Railways connecting major cities, during the ongoing Covid-19 nationwide lockdown in New Delhi on Wednesday

PTI

additional information.

In the first week of May, the city also recorded its largest single-day spike of 448 new Covid-19 cases.

On Tuesday, the total number of cases stood at 7,639 with 86 deaths. With 20 more fatalities, the death toll from Covid-19 in Delhi has risen to 106.

Of the total deaths, 86 took place at various Covid-19 dedicated hospitals, with RML Hospital accounting for 41 of these fatalities, the maximum among the dedicated hospitals, according to the bulletin, which added that the others took place at other hospitals.

Continued on Page 2

Maharashtra retains top slot; total over 78K

Death toll 2,551 across India; 26,392 people have recovered

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

With Maharashtra recording nearly 1,500 new cases and 54 deaths, at least 123 fresh Covid-linked deaths and 3,712 positive cases were reported from across the country on Wednesday taking the toll to 2,551 and total number of infections to 78,055.

Of the total number of cases 26,392 people have recovered or have been discharged.

Of the total deaths in Maharashtra, 40 were recorded in Mumbai alone taking the overall case count to 25,922 and the number of fatalities to 975. The total number of Covid-19 infected cases crossed the 1,000 mark in Mumbai's worst pandemic-hit Dharavi on Wednesday, as 66 more persons tested positive for Covid-19.

On a day when the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) pegged the number of deaths in Dharavi at 40, as many as 66 new infected cases were reported from various parts of Asia's biggest slum. With the fresh infected cases, the total num-

Covid-19 In India	
CASES: 78,055	
DEATHS: 2,551	
RECOVERED: 26,392	

ber of infected cases rose to a staggering 1,028.

Attributing the increase in the number of deaths to the new information received from the BMC's Epidemic Cell, the BMC said, "New nine deaths have been reported by epidemic cell. These deaths had happened earlier on different dates and conveyed to ward office subsequently."

As many as five positive cases were recorded in Dhondu Mistry Chawl, while four cases were reported from Matunga Labour camp.

Three cases each were

STATES	CASES	DEATHS	RECOVERED
Maharashtra	25,922	975	5,547
Gujarat	9,268	566	3,562
Tamil Nadu	9,227	64	2,176
Delhi	7,998	106	2,858
Rajasthan	4,328	121	2,573
Madhya Pradesh	4,173	225	1,860
Uttar Pradesh	3,758	86	1,965
West Bengal	2,290	207	702
Andhra Pradesh	2,137	47	1,142
Punjab	1,924	32	200

recorded in Geetanjali Nagar, Azad Nagar and 90 feet Road area, while the areas like Kerusheth Chawl, Vijaynagar and Rajiv Gandhi Nagar registered two positive cases.

There is a race between Tamil Nadu and Gujarat for the second spot. The former has now replaced Gujarat from the second spot with 9,268 cases, nine cases more than Gujarat. Tamil Nadu reported 509 cases and Gujarat 364 on Wednesday. Delhi, the State with the fourth-highest number of cases, has 7,998 with the addition of 359 new cases on Wednesday.

Covid cases in Madhya Pradesh touched 4,173 with 187 new infections while in Uttar Pradesh, the cases surged to 3,758.

Bihar reported 932 cases. In Uttarakhand, the total number of cases touched 71. In Punjab, 1,924 Covid-19 cases were reported while 32 people died in the State. Odisha, which a few days ago, was reporting a few cases has now started witnessing surge in number daily with 101 new cases on Wednesday pushing up the total to 538 positive cases.

Continued on Page 2

Maha seeks 20 CAPF companies to aid overworked police during Eid

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

In an effort to give some rest to "overburdened" State police personnel who have been "working day and night in these challenging times of coronavirus", the Maharashtra Government has requested the Centre to make available 20 companies of the Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF) ahead of the Eid.

State Home Minister Anil Deshmukh on Wednesday said, "Owing to the outbreak of coronavirus in the State, our police personnel have been working day and night. Considering that Eid is round the corner and we have to maintain law and order situation in the State, the State Government — in order to give some rest to our police personnel — has requested the Centre to make available 20 companies CAPF to the State".

32 companies of the State Reserve Police Force (SRPF) are working in tandem with the Maharashtra Police.

Continued on Page 2

10 Agra Central Jail prisoners test +ve

PNS ■ AGRA

Ten prisoners of Agra Central Jail tested positive for Covid-19 on Wednesday. They have been moved to an isolation ward, prison senior superintendent VK Singh said.

The jail authorities have requested the Uttar Pradesh health department to collect samples of other prisoners and staff for tests. Singh said, "There were 14 suspected cases and reports of four were negative while 10 inmates tested positive for the coronavirus."

The prisoners who tested positive were being held in barrack number three.

"We have evacuated barrack number three and requested the health department to collect samples of other inmates of the barrack and the jail staff," Singh said.

Jailor SP Mishra said the request for collecting the sam-



ples of the other prisoners and staff had been made to the chief medical officer of Agra. According to Mishra, there are 1,941 inmates in Central Jail and about 120 jail staff, including senior officials.

On May 9, a prisoner who tested positive for Covid-19 died at Sarojani Naidu Medical College (SNMC). Subsequently, an 85-year-old prisoner from the same barrack, who was suffering from chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, died at SNMC on Tuesday.

Paramilitary canteens to sell only desi products from June, says Shah

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Central paramilitary forces' canteen will sell only Swadeshi/made in India products from June 1 as part of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's announcement of making India self-reliant through "vocal for local" campaign.

Modi had on Tuesday made an appeal to make the country self-reliant and use products made in India. Home Minister Amit Shah on Wednesday described PM's appeal as "a guiding light to make India the global leader."

In keeping with the PM's call, the Home Ministry has decided that all the Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF) canteens and stores across the country will now sell only indigenous products, from June 01, 2020.



The total purchase value would be around ₹2,800 crore. With this decision, 50 lakh family members of about 10 lakh CAPF personnel will use indigenous products.

"You should use the products made in the country as much as possible and encourage others to do the same. This is not the time to be lagging behind, but to turn the crisis into an opportunity," the Home Minister said in his appeal to the people of the country.

Continued on Page 2

Crowd gathers for Jain Monk in Sagar, defies social distancing rules

PTI ■ SAGAR

Defying the social distancing guidelines for preventing spread of Covid-19, a crowd gathered to welcome a monk and his group when they arrived at a town in Madhya Pradesh's Sagar district.

Some videos of the incident went viral on social media, following which police have started an investigation into it. A large number of people came out on a road on Monday when a group of Jain monks, headed by Muni Pranam Sagar, reached Banda town, located about 35 km from the district headquarters.

In the video clips shared on social media, a large number of people without masks were purportedly seen out on the road to welcome the monk and



his group.

When contacted, Additional Superintendent of Police Praveen Bhuria told PTI on Wednesday that they got information about the incident from videos shared on social media.

"This seems to be a case of violation of preventive orders issued under the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC) Section 144. Directives have been issued to Banda police station officials to register a case after verification of the videos," he said.

Pak locusts invade Raj, Guj, Punjab

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

In the third attack in the past six months, swarms of locusts from Iran and Baluchistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa of Pakistan have invaded parts of Rajasthan, Gujarat and Punjab, compounding the woes of farmers, who are battling the coronavirus nationwide lockdown.

The Union Agriculture Ministry has convened a high-level meeting with fertilisers and pesticides companies to discuss the course of action against the locusts. This is the third attack of locusts in less than a year, the worst one began in December and lasted till February of this year.

According to global reports, locust swarms are expected to arrive all the way from East Africa and attack farmlands in South Asia in the



coming months. According to Locusts Warning Organisation of Ministry of Agriculture, 31 spots in Rajasthan and Gujarat are under attack of locusts, covering thousands of hectare.

After a high-level meeting, Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh has assured help. "The Government has ordered new machines from the UK to control locust swarms. Tractor-mounted sprayers and fire-tender vehicles are deployed at various locations in these States for locust control. Additional equipment also being procured," he said.

Continued on Page 2

India to end locust attack with UK machines: Min

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India has ordered new machines from the UK to control locust swarms that can destroy crops on the India-Pakistan border, Union Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar said on Wednesday.

Unfazed by the COVID-19 crisis, government officials in Rajasthan, Gujarat and Punjab are working to control the outbreak of Desert Locust, he said in a statement.

Tractor-mounted sprayers and fire-tender vehicles are deployed at various locations in these states for locust control. Additional equipment are also being procured, he added.

“The central and state governments are working together on the Desert Locust control measures and have been able to check its spread. New machines have been ordered from the United Kingdom and will arrive soon,” Tomar said after a video conference with pesticides manufacturers to fine-tune a strat-

egy to prevent locust attack on farm fields.

He said the government will leave no stone unturned to ensure uninterrupted sowing and harvesting operations. Ministers of State for Agriculture Parshottam Rupala and Kailash Choudhary were also present during the video conference.

In the statement, the Agriculture Ministry said that normally, locust swarms enter the desert areas of India via Pakistan for breeding in the summer of June-July, but this time Locust Hoppers as well as Pink Adult Swarms had entered border districts of Rajasthan and Punjab in April itself.

“One reason for this was the uncontrolled swarms of the previous season in Pakistan that breed continuously. Swarms of Pink Immature Adults fly high and travel long distances with strong winds coming from Pakistan. Most of these Pink Immature Adults settle on trees during the night and mostly fly during the day,” it said. Around

10 Locust Circle Offices of Government of India located in Jaisalmer, Bikaner, Phalodi, Barmer, Jalore, Churu, Nagaur, Suratgarh districts of Rajasthan; Palanpur and Bhuj districts of Gujarat are working in scheduled desert area of more than 2 lakh sq km in India.

The locusts are monitored, surveyed and controlled in coordination with the State Agricultural Departments and the concerned District Administration. In addition, pest control in crops is done by the Agriculture Department of the concerned State Government.

“So far (till 11.05.2020), the Hoppers and Pink Swarms have been controlled in an area of 14,299 hectares of Jaisalmer, Sri Ganganagar, Jodhpur, Barmer and Nagaur districts in Rajasthan and Fazilka district of Punjab,” the Ministry said.

Presently, swarms of immature Pink Locusts are active in Barmer, Phalodi (Jodhpur), Nagaur, Sriganaganagar and Ajmer districts of Rajasthan.

Gujarat Law Minister moves SC against HC order nullifying his election victory

New Delhi: Gujarat Minister Bhupendrasinh Chudasama on Wednesday moved the Supreme Court challenging the High Court's decision nullifying his 2017 election on the ground of malpractice and manipulation.

Chudasama is currently the minister for law and justice, legislative and parliamentary affairs, education and some other departments in the Vijay Rupani government.

As an interim prayer, the minister sought stay of the operation of the Gujarat High Court's Tuesday order till the disposal of his appeal.

The high court had held that Returning Officer “illegally rejected” 429 postal ballots during the counting of votes, while the victory margin was only 327.

Congress candidate Ashwin Rathod had challenged his BJP rival's victory from Dholka constituency by a margin of mere 327 votes in the 2017 Gujarat Assembly polls. **PTI**

SC asks lawyers not to put on coat, long gowns during coronavirus pandemic

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Wednesday came out with a formal notification asking lawyers not to wear coats and long gowns during the hearings through video conferencing “till medical exigencies exist or until further orders” in the wake of COVID-19 pandemic.

The notification came in the evening, hours after Chief Justice of India (CJI) S A Bobde, said such dresses should not be donned as they make it easier to “catch virus”.

“It is notified for the information of all concerned that considering the medical advice, as a precautionary measure to contain spread of Coronavirus (COVID-19) infection under the prevailing conditions, the Competent Authority has been pleased to direct that the advocates may wear ‘plain white-shirt/white-salwar-kameez/white saree, with a plain-white neck band’ during the hearings before the

Supreme Court of India through Virtual Court System till medical exigencies exist or until further orders,” said the notification, issued by apex court Secretary General, Sanjeev S Kalgaonkar.

Besides sharing the notification on the apex court's website, it will be served to the secretaries of Supreme Court Bar Association and the Supreme Court Advocates-on-Record Association to ensure compliance.

The observation of the CJI and subsequent formal notification assumed significance in view of the fact that the apex court has been holding courts through video conferencing only from March 25 due to the nation-wide lockdown to contain the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19) and had even suspended the entry of advocates and other staff into the high security zone on the basis of their proximity cards, till further orders.

Haryana, J&K to provide potable water to entire rural areas 2 years ahead of goal

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

By December 2022, Haryana Band Jammu and Kashmir will be providing potable water to their entire rural population under the central scheme Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM), ahead of national goal of 2024-25.

According to statement here by the Union Rural Development Ministry, Haryana has provided 1.05 lakh tap connections during 2019-20 under the JJM and now the State Government is planning 100 per centage coverage by December, 2022.

By doing so, Haryana will be among the leading states to accomplish the ambitious target of providing tap connection to each rural household.

State officials said there are 28.94 lakh households in Haryana, out of which 18.83 lakh are already provided with functional household tap connection (FHTCs). Out of the remaining 10.11 lakh households, Haryana plans to provide tap connections in 7 lakh households by 2020-21.

During the current year, Haryana is planning for 100 per cent coverage of one district and 2,898 villages out of total 6,987 villages.

Maharash...

From Page 1

Three people have died in the States so far.

In Kerala, ten fresh cases were noted, taking its tally to 534. Wayanad, Palakkad, Malappuram, Kozhikode, Kottayam reported fresh cases on Wednesday. A total 490 people have recovered in the State.

Total coronavirus infection in Karnataka stands at 959 while Rajasthan noted 65 new cases with total infections in the State jumping to 4,278 while the recoveries stand at 2,459. So far, 120 people have died in the State.

With the new 29 Covid-19 cases, Bihar's total has increased to 908. Uttarakhand too witnessed rise in cases to touch to 70.

Coronavirus infections climbed to 783 in Haryana as 3 more cases were reported from Jhajjar, Rewari, and Rohtak in Haryana. As of now, 421 cases are active.

Situation in Andhra Pradesh too was not encouraging with reports of 48 fresh cases pushing the tally to 2137.

The fresh cases were noted in East Godavari, Anantapur, Chittoor, Krishna, Guntur, and Kurnool.

Andhra Pradesh has recorded 1,142 recovered cases so far, including Wednesday's 86 recoveries and a total 47 fatalities.

Maha seeks 20 CAPF companies to aid overworked...

From page 1

“Many of our police personnel have tested positive for Covid-19. They need time to rest and recuperate... Since Eid will be on May 25, and we will have to augment security presence to ensure law and order is not disturbed. Hence, we have asked the Centre for immediate deployment of 20 CAPF companies to assist our

police,” the State Home Minister said in elaboration. Deshmukh's announcement came a day after an Assistant Sub-Inspector (ASI) of the Mumbai police succumbed to Covid-19.

“ASI Murlidhar Shankar Waghmare from Sewri Police Station, Mumbai lost his life to Coronavirus. May his soul rest in peace. DGP and all ranks of Maharashtra Police offer their condolences to the Waghmare family” the Maharashtra police tweeted on his twitter handle @DGPMaharashtra late on Tuesday night.

Waghmare, attached to the Sewree Police Station, had been undergoing treatment after having tested positive for Coronavirus.

With Waghmare's death, the total number of fatalities among the police force has gone up to five in Mumbai and the total death tally in the state has climbed to nine.

Meanwhile, the total number of Maharashtra police personnel testing positive for Covid-19 has crossed 1,000 mark. “More than a 1000 cops have tested COVID-19 positive while

serving the state tirelessly & ensuring the safety of its people @DGPMaharashtra have left no stone unturned in keeping the state safe and yet breathing in the ongoing pandemic,” Maharashtra Minority Development Minister and NCP's national spokesperson Nawan Malik tweeted.

In response, State Home Minister Anil Deshmukh tweeted: “Thank you @nawabmalikncp for your kind encouragement for #MaharashtraPolice! Means a lot in these times!! #MaharashtraGovtCares”

Delhi updates...

From Page 1

The deaths recorded till date at other Covid-19 denied facilities are — LJNP Hospital (19), Apollo Hospital (8), Sir Ganga Ram Kolmet Hospital (5), Max Hospital, Saket (5), Safdarjung Hospital (4), AIIMS (Delhi & Jhajhar) (2) and Rajiv Gandhi Super Speciality Hospital (2), the bulletin said.

Of the total number of deceased patients, 58 were aged 60 and above, accounting for over 54 per cent of the fatalities here.

Twenty-eight of them were aged between 50-59 years and 20 were less than 50 years, the

bulletin said.

Facing criticism for “under reporting” COVID-19 deaths, the Delhi Government on Sunday had issued standard operating procedure (SOP) for hospitals and other health facilities in the city on reporting fatalities due to coronavirus.

Delhi Chief Secretary Vijay Dev had issued an order along with the SOP under which all Covid-19 hospitals and other facilities will e-mail a ‘death report’ to the Government by 5 pm every day.

As many as 2,858 patients have recovered so far, while there are 5,034 active cases, the Delhi Health Department said.

A total of 1,13,345 tests for Covid-19 have been conducted till date, it said.

Paramilitary...

From Page 1

According to Shah, if every Indian pledges to use products made in India (Swadeshi), the country can become self-sufficient in next five years.

“Let us all strengthen the hands of Prime Minister Modi in this journey of making India self-reliant, by using indigenous products,” Shah added.

Earlier, the Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC)

was entrusted to design fabric for the 10 lakh strong paramilitary forces like CRPF, BSF, ITBP following a directive from Shah who had stressed introduction of products from the cottage sector.

Last year, Shah had stressed the introduction of cottage products as part of the celebration of 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi.

Besides the adoption of the khadi fabric, the paramilitary forces were also asked going to introduce only ‘swadeshi’ origin items manufactured by the khadi sector in messes and canteens.

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Four days ahead of the end of Flockdown-three in Maharashtra, State industries Minister Subhash Desai on Wednesday projected a rosy picture of the industrial activity in the State by saying that 35,000 industrial units had resumed production, while nine lakh workers resumed duty in these units.

Speaking to media persons after reviewing industrial activity at the Aurangabad district collector's office, Desai said: “We have in all given permission to 65,000 industrial units in various parts of the State. Of them, 35,000 industrial units have resumed production. In all, 9 lakh workers have so far reported for duty”.

The Minister said that a Task Force had been set up a road map for increasing the industrial activity in the State. “The Task Force is preparing a

plan to attract foreign investment in the state. The Task force officials have been negotiating with their counterparts from the countries like US, Japan, Tiwan, Germany and United Kingdom”.

“Maharashtra Industrial Development Corporation (MIDC) has reserved as much as 40000 hectares of land for foreign investors. We are trying to reduce the number of permissions for foreign investments so as to facilitate setting up new industrial units by the international companies,” Desai said. The Minister said that to ensure that there was no shortage of workers, the departments of Industries and Skill Development would set up employees’ bureau. “We will train the workers in seven days and ready for employment. In this process, we intend to create skilled and unskilled labour on a large scale in the state,” Desai said.

Succour for India inc..

From Page-1

The FM announced a ₹30,000 crore special liquidity scheme for non-banking financial institutions (NBFCs), housing finance firms (HFCs) and microfinance institutions (MFIs) with a view to provide credit support to them and create confidence in the market.

Further, ₹45,000 crore partial credit guarantee scheme 2.0 was also announced for NBFCs, HFCs, and MFIs with low credit rating to help them extend a loan to individuals and MSMEs.

“Essentially, the goal is to build a self-reliant India that is why the Economic Package is called AatmaNirbhar Bharat Abhiyaan,” Sitharaman said.

Citing the pillars on which India would seek to build an AatmaNirbhar Bharat

Abhiyaan, the FM said, “Our focus would be on land, labour, liquidity and law”

The FM said the announcement about the package for different sectors would be made over several days. That means the Finance Ministry would hold a daily conference now.

“Beginning today, for the next few days, I shall be coming here with the entire team of the Ministry of Finance to detail the Prime Minister's vision for AatmaNirbhar Bharat laid out by the Prime Minister on Tuesday,” Sitharaman said.

Following measures were announced today:-

1. Rs 3 lakh crore Emergency Working Capital Facility for Businesses, including MSMEs

To provide relief to the business, additional working capital finance of 20 per cent of the outstanding credit as on February 29, 2020, in the form of a term loan at a concessional rate of interest will be provided. This will be available to units with up to Rs 25 crore outstanding and turnover of up to Rs 100 crore whose accounts are standard. The units will not have to provide any guarantee or collateral of their own. The amount will be 100 per cent guaranteed by the Government of India providing a total liquidity of Rs 3.0 lakh crore to more than 45 lakh MSMEs.

2. Rs 20,000 crore subordinate debt for stressed MSMEs Provision made for Rs 20,000 crore subordinate debt for two lakh MSMEs which are NPA or are stressed. The Government will support them with Rs 4,000 crore to Credit Guarantee Trust for Micro and Small enterprises (CGTMSE). Banks are expected to provide the subordinate-debt to promoters of such MSMEs equal to 15 per cent of his existing stake in the unit subject to a maximum of Rs 75 lakh.

Stimulus package...

From Page 1

“The expenditure will be limited to the extent of NPAs in the outstanding guarantee credit to MSMEs. Assuming an NPA level of 20-50 per cent, the actual expenditure over the loan period (which may be years) will be a maximum of Rs 3,00,000 crore,” he said.

Mamata questioned about States getting nothing.”There is nothing in public spending, money transfer, and nothing for Covid,” she told reporters in Kolkata minutes after

Pak locusts...

FromPage 1

In a statement, the Agriculture Ministry said that normally, locust swarms enter the desert areas of India via Pakistan for breeding in the summer of June-July, but this time Locust Hoppers as well as Pink Adult Swarms had entered border districts of Rajasthan and Punjab in April itself.

“One reason for this was the uncontrolled swarms of the previous season in Pakistan that breed continuously. Swarms of Pink Immature adults fly high and travel long distances with strong winds coming from Pakistan. Most of these Pink Immature adults settle on trees during the night and mostly fly during the day,” it said.

The Ministry said that the Hoppers and Pink Swarms have been controlled at 145 spots covering in an area of 14,299 hectares of Jaisalmer, Sri Ganganagar, Jodhpur, Barmer and Nagaur districts in Rajasthan and Fazilka district of Punjab.

Sitharaman shared details of the package. “It is eyewash, they are cheating the people. This is bulldozing federal structure,” she said.

Leaders of eight Opposition parties, including five of Left parties, also staged a protest against dilution and annulment of labour laws by State Governments.

On the issue of labour laws, the leaders protest was a follow up to their joint representation to the President of India Ram Nath Kovind on belittling of labour laws, a few days ago.

Presently, swarms of immature Pink Locusts are active in Barmer, Phalodi (Jodhpur), Nagaur, Sriganaganagar and Ajmer districts of Rajasthan. Around 10 Locust Circle Offices of Government of India located in Jaisalmer, Bikaner, Phalodi, Barmer, Jalore, Churu, Nagaur, Suratgarh districts of Rajasthan; Palanpur and Bhuj districts of Gujarat are working in scheduled desert area of more than 2 lakh sq km in India. In the last few days, medium-sized swarms of locusts have attacked crops in at least 12 districts including Ajmer, Pushkar, Jaisalmer, Fazilka, Nagore, Barmer and Sri Ganga Nagar in Rajasthan.



SOUTH WESTERN RAILWAY

Corrigendum to E-Tender Notice No. 01 UBL 2020-21 Dated 01.04.2020

The above Tender Notice which was to be opened on 11.05.2020 & 12.05.2020 are postponed to **20.05.2020 & 21.05.2020** on administrative grounds.

For details log on: www.ireps.gov.in

Divisional Railway Manager/Works Hubballi

PUB/36/AAV/PBR/ISWR/2020-21

DTC operates buses for migrants from New Delhi Rly Station

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Solving a major concern of the migrants labourer and other railway passengers dependent on public transport in the National Capital, the Delhi Transport Corporation (DTC) has started to operate buses from New Delhi Railway Station to the city's eleven districts headquarters with the terminal point being the District Magistrate (DM) office complex.

Meanwhile, Delhi Police said those people using private conveyance can take Bhavbhuti Marg/Minto Road while the passengers taking DTC buses will board at the parking area in front of Ajmeri Gate.

According to Harendra Kumar Singh, the Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP), Railways unit, those railways passengers dependants on public transport had some anxious moments but with the availability of DTC buses, efforts have been made

to provide seamless services to the people.

After the train services stopped during lockdown, Indian Railways started operating special trains meant for general public on 12.05.2020 from New Delhi Railway Station and three trains departed for Bilaspur, Dibrugarh and Bengaluru. Similarly, four trains arrived on May 12 from Patna, Ahmedabad, Mumbai and Howrah at New Delhi Railway Station on May 13.



"Delhi Police made elaborate arrangements to ensure that the people have no inconvenience and at the same time follow the guidelines to protect from Corona. For the passengers boarding trains, dedicated corridor was made on the Paharganj side where people queued up, all wearing masks and maintaining social distance," said the DCP.

"After thermal scanning they boarded the trains. Sanitizer dispensers were placed at prominent

places for the passengers. Police team through public address system not only guided them, team also counseled to take adequate precautions during journey," said the DCP.

"Thus, Delhi Police ensured that no inconvenience is caused to the passengers and with the efforts made in close coordination with Railway Authorities the whole operation went off very well and will continue in the same way in the coming days," the DCP added.

DJB gears up to meet water demand

CHANDAN PRAKASH ■ NEW DELHI

In order to supplement water availability in deficient areas across the National Capital and to meet peak summer demand, Delhi Jal Board (DJB) has completed a series of works such as installing 254 new tube-wells this year, up-gradation of 'Water Treatment Plant' (WTP) and replacement of old and rusted pipes besides fixing leakage to achieve targeted 925 MGD (millions of gallons per day) of potable water production.

Every year water demand in the city reaches to its peak during the summers. To cater the need of consumers during the summer, the DJB has targeted water production of about 925 MGD in its summer action plan by optimizing all its resources, a senior DJB official said.

The DJB will also deploy 1,077 tankers between April and July in water deficient areas to meet the demand. It has identified 8738 numbers of supply points for delivery of water on daily basis through tankers.

To monitor the movement of 'Stainless Steel Tankers' the DJB has also put an efficient mechanism in place by equipping it with GPS (Global Positioning System). "Many of areas which are either deficient or not connected with pipe lines are supplied water by

tankers during summer. Now with installation of GPS, the DJB can monitor the movements of these tankers," he said.

As many as 117 water ATM and e-piaos have been installed by DJB in water deficit areas and strategic locations to reduce chances of water unavailability, he further said.

The civic body has also carried out works to upgrade WTPs and associated pumping installations through measures like replacement of old pumps, old panels and other accessories for their optimum performance.

"All preventive maintenance activities for water treatment plants and associated infrastructure including for standby arrangements has been completed and ordinarily there will not be any requirement for shutdown of water treatment plants and associated pumping installations during peak summer months," he said.

The official further said that daily trips of tankers will be optimised to supplement drinking water demand in both the areas that are not connected with pipe lines and in deficient areas depending on the requirement, he said, adding that tanker filling capacity at each filling point location has also been optimized. There will be 155 tanker filling hydrants in operation for improved efficiency in deployment of water tankers.

- ◆ The DJB will deploy 1077 tankers in water deficient areas to meet the peak demand
- ◆ Replacement of old pumps, panels and other accessories has been completed to ensure optimum performance
- ◆ 117 water ATM and e-piaos have been installed in water deficit areas and strategic locations
- ◆ Water tankers are equipped with GPS to monitor movement
- ◆ DJB has targeted to achieve 925 MGD potable water production this year



Delhi Police against plea in HC to shift Saad's case to NIA

New Delhi: Delhi Police Wednesday opposed a plea in the Delhi High Court seeking direction that the NIA be handed over the investigation of a case against Tablighi Jamaat leader Maulana Saad for holding a congregation in alleged violation of the orders aimed at containing the spread of coronavirus.

A bench of Justices Siddharth Mridul and Anup Jairam Bhambhani, conducting the hearing through video conferencing, asked the petitioner to place the judgements in support of his plea to transfer the investigation from Delhi Police Crime Branch to National Investigation Agency (NIA).

The petition, filed by Mumbai-based lawyer Ghanashyam Upadhyay, has also sought direction to the NIA to investigate the matter in a time bound manner and the probe be monitored by the high court. It alleged that Delhi Police has failed to arrest the leader despite the lapse of considerable time.

Delhi government standing counsel (criminal) Rahul Mehra and advocate Chaitanya Gosain opposed the plea saying Delhi Police was conducting the investigation in a fair manner and argued that the petitioner has no locus standi to file the plea.

The court listed the matter for further hearing on May 28. Advocates Subhash Jha and Yash Chaturvedi, representing Upadhyay, claimed that the crime branch of Delhi Police has miserably failed in tracing out/ apprehending/ arresting Saad despite lapse of considerable time and his photograph being published in electronic media.

"It is virtually impossible for Maulana Saad to hide himself for such a long time and that too in the capital of the country. Performance of Delhi Police has been pathetic from the very inception and outset. Failure of Delhi Police is explicit from the fact that despite there being lockdown and curfew like situation, Maulana Saad was able to

The plea alleged that the acts of omission and commission of Saad and his associates / Tablighi Jamaat constitute "terrorist acts/activities" as defined under the UAPA



arrange gathering of thousands of people belonging to Tablighi Jamaat in the capital of India," the plea claimed.

It further alleged that "from media reports and evidence so far collected by Delhi Police Crime Branch, it is now axiomatic that Maulana Saad and his henchmen conspired to spread and transmit coronavirus in different parts of the country, with oblique and ulterior motive of causing massive deaths all over the country and thereby to derail the Government of India in preventing the deadly disease".

The Delhi Police's crime branch had on March 31 lodged an FIR against seven persons, including the cleric, on a complaint by Station House Officer of Nizamuddin police station here for holding a congregation of Tablighi Jamaat followers in alleged violation of the orders against large gatherings to contain the spread of coronavirus.

The ED has also filed a money laundering case against Saad, trusts links to the Jamaat and others.

The plea alleged that the acts of omission and commission of Saad and his associates / Tablighi Jamaat constitute "terrorist acts/activities" as defined under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) and claimed that the Delhi Police has failed to arrest the leader despite lapse of considerable time. It said people of Tablighi Jamaat have been spreading the deadly virus all over the country not only by defying the national lockdown, also by assaulting corona warriors who have been treating the patients.

50 cases filed, 1,860 detained for breaking lockdown rules

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Police on Wednesday registered over 50 cases and detained 1,860 people across the national Capital for violating Government orders during the coronavirus lockdown.

According to the data shared by the police, 58 cases were registered under section 188 (for disobedience to order duly promulgated by public servant) of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) till 5 pm.

Police said that a total of 1,860 people have been detained under section 65 (persons bound to comply with reasonable directions of police officers) and 143 vehicles have been impounded under section 66 of the Delhi Police Act.

"The police also registered 21 cases against people for stepping outside their residence without wearing masks. A total of 373 movement passes have been issued," police said. Since March 24, more over lakh people have been detained so far for violating order under section 65 of the Delhi Police Act.

However, on Wednesday Delhi Police received over 650 calls on their 24x7 helpline



number to resolve issues related to lockdown. Police said that total 43, 923 number of calls received by police till Wednesday on their helpline 011-23469526.

"Police received 688 calls from Tuesday 2 pm to Wednesday 2 pm. Out of 688, around 84 calls were related to outside Delhi, which have been referred to respective state helpline numbers. However, one call was received related to no food/no money, which have been forwarded to NGO for direct relief at their addresses," said police.

"While 403 calls were related to movement passes and

642 Shramik trains run so far, 8 lakh migrants ferried: Railways

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Indian Railways has operated 642 "Shramik Special" trains till May 13 across the country and ferried home around 7.90 lakh passengers to their home States.

The Railways Ministry said these 642 "Shramik Special" trains were terminated in various States like Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Chattisgarh, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Manipur, Mizoram, Odisha, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Tripura, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand and West Bengal.

"Proper screening of passengers is ensured before boarding the train. During the journey, passengers are given free meals and water," it said in a statement.

Following the order of Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) regarding movement of migrant workers, pilgrims, tourists, students and other persons stranded at different places by special trains, Indian Railways had decided to operate "Shramik Special" trains.

3,000 labourers leave for MP, Bihar from Gurugram

PARVESH SHARMA ■ GURUGRAM

The Gurugram district administration on Wednesday sent about 3,000 labourers of Madhya Pradesh and Bihar back to their native States via two labour special trains which were dispatched from Gurugram railway station.

Of these, one train left for Tikamgarh in Madhya Pradesh at 10:30 am and the second train left for Madhubani in Bihar at 12:30 pm.

"Thermal scanning of all those workers and their families before boarding the train ensured that none of them was corona infected," said Amit Khatri, deputy commissioner Gurugram.

An administration official said the workers who were going to Tikamgarh were accommodated at Government College, Sector-14, Gurugram, from where they were taken to Gurugram railway station via buses.

The first labour special train from Gurugram railway station was dispatched to Tikamgarh in which about 1,400 labourers left for their homes.

Similarly, a second labour special train from Gurugram railway station left for



Madhubani in Bihar, with around 1,600 workers going to their villages. The train had 20 bogies and each bogie had a capacity of 80 seats.

"All the workers who went to Madhubani had their registration done. They were accumulated at Tau Devi Lal Stadium in Sector 38. Only those workers have been sent who had no symptoms of corona infection," Khatri said.

A 40-year-old migrant worker Rambihari from Jhansi, who was going to Tikamgarh in Madhya Pradesh said he used to work in Gurugram and lived with his family in Dundaheha.

He said that due to the lockdown, he made up his mind to go to his state and as soon as the conditions are good, he and his family will come back here.

Expressing similar views, another worker Narendra Rajput (21) a resident of Chhatrapur said he used to work in a shop in the village

Khandsa and would come back here after the things will be normal.

Apart from this, five more Covid-19 cases have been detected in different areas of the millennium city on Wednesday, taking the tally to 166. Of this, 99 are active cases and 67 have been cured and discharged from hospitals.

No response from Nitish, will pay migrants' trains fare: Delhi

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Government will bear the cost of sending home stranded migrant workers from Bihar in three Shramik Special trains on Wednesday as the Nitish Kumar-led Government has not yet responded to its request to pay for their tickets, an official said.

Each special train will carry around 1,200 migrant workers, according to the official.

This comes days after a war of words broke out between Delhi and Bihar governments over expenses incurred by the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP)-led dispensation to send around 1,200 migrant workers to Muzaffarpur on a Shramik Special train.

"The Delhi Government will bear the cost of ferrying migrant workers as the Bihar government is yet to respond on the payment (for train tickets)," the official said.

The three special trains will leave for Bhagalpur, Barauni and Darbhanga in Bihar.

Last week, the AAP had said it bore the cost of ferrying migrant workers from Delhi to Bihar.

However, Bihar's ruling Janata Dal (United) rejected the claim.

It alleged the AAP was speaking "half-truth" on the issue as the Delhi Government had sought from the Chief Minister Nitish Kumar-led Bihar dispensation a reimbursement of the train fare. The JD(U) had also accused the AAP of resorting to "cheap politics to gain popularity".

LOCKDOWN RELAXATIONS

After CM's proposal, Govt gets 10K emails, 4 lakh WhatsApp messages

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Government has within a day received 10,000 emails, four lakh WhatsApp messages and 27,000 recorded messages, carrying suggestions on relaxations that can be allowed in the national capital after May 17.

According to Delhi Government's spokesperson, the suggestions were accepted till 5 pm on Wednesday evening.

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Tuesday has announced that the government in its proposal to the Centre, on post May 17 lockdown relaxations, incorporate suggestions from the people and medical experts as well.

Government official said that a dedicated team has been going through the suggestions. The government has issued a WhatsApp number -

8800007722, helpline number -1031 and an email id - delhicm.suggestions@gmail.com to take in the suggestions.

Meanwhile, Delhi Government has been appealing to the Centre to reassess the categorisation of red zones in the city factoring in population density and the need to reopen businesses and other commercial activities.

Kejriwal raised the matter at Prime Minister Narendra Modi's video conference with various Chief Ministers on Monday.

Leaders of the AAP have also been pressing for greater decentralisation in enforcing and lifting the measures to contain the spread of corona.

According to senior officials the Centre plans to involve the states consider their suggestions in drawing up the list of red, green and orange zones. Currently, all the 11 districts in Delhi are classified as red.



Police reserve beds for its personnel

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

With rising number of Covid-19 cases and to keep its personnel safe while maintaining law & order situation in National Capital, the Delhi Police on Wednesday said they have reserved beds for their personnel in case they are infected with the virus as many of them have been performing duties at sensitive locations.

Police said that over 100 Delhi police personnel have been tested positive for Covid-19 and out of them, 35 personnel have recovered from the infection and resumed their duties.

According to police, with rise in Covid-19 cases in Delhi, difficulties are being faced in the admission of Covid warriors in the dedicated Covid government hospitals in the

city, so Delhi Police Commissioner SN Shrivastava, spoke to few private hospitals and on his request, they have placed few beds at the disposal of Delhi Police to meet emergency admissions since several police personnel are performing duties at sensitive locations including containment zones, covid hospitals and quarantine facilities.

A team led by Special Commissioner of Police (Traffic) Taj Hassan and Special Commissioner of Police (Women Safety) Nuzhat Hassan are overseeing the admission of police personnel in such new facilities and ensure that police personnel get adequate relief in getting admission in critical cases.

The police said that six of their modified police vehicles which serves as ambulances



will be used for shifting covid positive police personnel and their families.

Those policemen who were tested positive for COVID-19 are currently undergoing treatment at government hospitals such as Lok Nayak Jai Prakash Narain Hospital, Rajiv Gandhi Super Speciality Hospital in Dilshad Garden, Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia Hospital,

Man held for buying, selling stolen phones

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Police has arrested a 25-year-old man who used to allegedly purchase stolen mobile phones from robbers and snatchers and then sold them in States of Uttar Pradesh (UP), Rajasthan and Haryana.

The accused is identified as Nizam Sheikh, a resident of Sahibabad, Ghaziabad in Uttar Pradesh. With his arrest, police claimed to have recovered 143 stolen mobile phones.

According to Jasmeet Singh, the Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP), East district, the accused used to purchase such stolen mobile phones from several criminals who were indulged in street crime and

pick-pocketing.

"He used to purchase around 100-150 such phone and then disposed them to different areas including Mathura, Kosi, Bharatpur, Alwar, Nuh and Mewat. During interrogation, it was revealed that when earlier he used to drive autos at Loni Border, he came in contact with several criminals and came to know about the stolen mobile phones being disposed off at a huge margin," said the DCP.

"He then came in contact with one resident of Hapur, Uttar Pradesh who use to purchase such mobile phones and dispose them off in Rajasthan and West Bengal. He joined him and started assisting him and later started at his owner," the DCP added.

Opp dominated Upper House for 39 of 68 yrs: Naidu

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In an interesting research amidst the Corona lockdown, it has turned out that the Opposition has had an upper hand in the Rajya Sabha for 39 of the 68 years in terms of numbers. The information shared by Rajya Sabha Chairman M Venkaiah Naidu says that despite this, legislative business was not adversely impacted, though other concerns did emerge.

"The mode of elections to and tenures of Rajya Sabha and Lok Sabha are different. This could lead to a situation of the Government of the day having majority as required in the Lok Sabha and not having the numbers in the Rajya Sabha. This is what had happened over the years," Naidu noted while recounting the journey of the



Upper House on the occasion of 68th anniversary of its first sitting.

Naidu said the Rajya Sabha held 5,472 sittings and passed 3,857 Bills till the Budget Session this year, even as it asserted its independence on some occasions.

Sharing about the first sitting of Rajya Sabha on May 13, 1952, Naidu recounted the proceedings and mentioned the first observation in the House was made by the then Secretary SN Mukherjee, who read out the order of the President of India appointing Dr S Radhakrishnan and SV Krishna Moorthy Rao.



And the first ever observation in the House by the Chairman Radhakrishnan while welcoming the Members was: "May I extend to you all a hearty welcome and express the hope that by our activities we will further the speedy and all-round progress of our people?"

As per the information, 197 Members including 9

women from 16 States made and subscribed the oath or affirmation on the first day of the Council of States. The first Member to take oath was N. Gopalaswami Ayyengar, the then Minister of Defence, who was subsequently appointed the leader of the House. The first woman to take oath was Pushpalata Das. Some other

prominent members included Kunwarani Vijaya Raje, Prof. Ramdhari Singh Dinkar, Violet Alva and Dr. B.R. Ambedkar.

Naidu recalled the Upper House passing several major Bills relating to GST, IBC, triple talaq, re-organisation of J & K, citizenship amendment etc, even though the present government does not have the numbers. "This suggests that no case can be made against the Rajya Sabha as being obstructionist in law making," he noted.

He further observed that irrespective of the composition of the House, time spent on legislation remained 29 pc of the total functional time of the Upper House.

"The line between obstruction and disruption is thin and needs to be put aside," he said.

Tracing the evolution of the Rajya Sabha, Naidu stated that it is turning out to be more and more a deliberative body having spent 33.54 pc of the time of the House on discussing issues of public importance during 1978-2014; 41.42 pc during 2005-14 and a high of 46.59 pc during 2015-19.

The chairman, however, expressed concern over declining time spent on the oversight function of the House amidst rising trend of disruptions eroding the productivity of the House.

He observed that the Rajya Sabha spent 39.50 pc of the total time on ensuring the accountability of the executive during 1978-2004 which declined to 21.99 pc during 2005-14 and further to 12.34 pc during 2015-19. This was primarily on

account of the "Question Hour being abandoned due to disruptions", he said.

Naidu informed that the functional productivity of the Rajya Sabha used to be about 100 pc till 1997 and it slid to 87 pc during 1998-2004, to 71 pc during 2005-14 and further to 61 pc during the next five years.

"Since 1978, the annual productivity of the Rajya Sabha has been 100 pc in only 12 years and it has never been 100 pc in the last 29 years," he said, adding that the lowest annual productivity of 38.63 pc was recorded in 2018.

He also referred to three Joint Sittings in 1961, 1978 and 2002 when the Rajya Sabha rejected the Dowry Prohibition Bill, 1959, the Banking Services Commission (Repeal) Bill, 1977, and the Prevention of

Terrorism Bill, 2002, respectively. In 1959, the then government had majority in the Upper House.

The Rajya Sabha also differed with the Lok Sabha when it rejected the Constitution (Twenty-fourth Amendment) Bill, 1970, seeking to abolish privy purses to the erstwhile rulers and two more such Constitution Amendment Bills in 1989 seeking to strengthen the Panchayats and Municipalities which later became the Acts of Parliament.

Referring to delaying of passing of some other Bills by the Upper House, Naidu said that if they amounted to checking 'hasty legislation', the Rajya Sabha passed five Constitution Amendment Bills in a day on August 25, 1994, when the then Government did not have the numbers.

Army mulls 3-yr Tour of Duty for civilians

Proposal has come forward to overcome shortage of officers and attract talent; 8,000 junior officers-level vacancies exist in forces

RAHUL DATTA ■ NEW DELHI

In an effort to overcome shortage of officers and attract talent into the armed forces, the Army is mulling a proposal to allow a three-year 'Tour of Duty' to common citizens on a trial basis in the force. The induction will be purely voluntary in nature and will have no dilution of selection standards. Those selected will on an average get a higher pay package than their peers in the corporate or civilian sector besides income tax exemption benefits. At present, the briefest stint is for five to 10 years as a Short Service Commission (SSC) inductee.

The Army top brass is considering all aspects of the proposed 'Tour of Duty' process where in those men and women desirous of donning the uniform, though for a short period, can serve the nation, sources said here on Wednesday.

The proposed scheme will enable the Army both to reduce shortage of officers to a large extent and also bring down the burgeoning salary and pension bill, the sources added.

This is expected to free up funds for modernisation for the Army too. At present, there is a shortfall of more than 8,000 officers in junior positions.

Giving details of the 'Tour of Duty,' the term first used by the US during Vietnam when its personnel served stints of six months to a year and then re-inducted for the next 'tour,' sources said the induction will be for both officers and other ranks initially for a limited number of vacancies and then expanded later.

The overall purpose of this entry scheme is



○ This is expected to free up funds for modernisation for the Army too. At present, there is a shortfall of more than 9,000 officers in junior positions.

○ Giving details of the 'Tour of Duty,' the term first used by the US during Vietnam when its personnel served stints of six months to a year and then re-inducted for the next 'tour,' sources said the induction will be for both officers and other ranks initially for a limited number of vacancies and then expanded later.

○ The overall purpose of this entry scheme is 'internship/temporary experience' and so there will be no requirement of attractive severance packages, resettlement courses, professional encashment training leave, ex-servicemen status and Ex-servicemen Contributory Health Scheme (ECHS)

'internship/temporary experience' and so there will be no requirement of attractive severance packages, resettlement courses, professional encashment training leave, ex-servicemen status and Ex-servicemen Contributory Health Scheme (ECHS).

Elaborating upon the expenditure, they said the cost of training incurred on each personnel compared to the limited employment of the manpower for three years is more. Explaining the benefits of the proposed scheme, they

said the cumulative approximate cost of pre-commission training, pay, allowances, gratuity, proposed severance packages, leave encashment and other costs is nearly ₹5.12 crore and ₹6.83 crore respectively on an SSC officer if he or she is released from Service after 10 and 14 years.

The overall cost goes up even further as 50-60% of the SSC officers opt for Permanent Commission and continue in service till 54 years and thereafter as pension benefits. However, similar costs for

those released after three years is just ₹80-85 lakh, they said.

Similarly, estimates for a non-commissioned soldier with 17 years of service as compared to with the 'Tour of Duty' jawan with three-years-service, shows that the prospective lifetime savings for just one jawan is ₹11.5 crore. Therefore, savings for only 1,000 jawans could be ₹11,000 crore which could be used for the much needed modernisation of the Army, the proposal said.

Underlining the advantages of the scheme, officials said it focuses on those individuals who do not want a full career in the Army but still want to put on the Uniform.

Those opting for this process will get a much higher salary than their peers on an average who start a career in the corporate sector. They will also have advantage after leaving the Service and going to the Corporate sector, the proposal States. The Army hopes this scheme will attract individuals from the best colleges.

The proposal has suggested several measures to incentivise this scheme like a tax-free income for three years and a token lumpsum at the end of three years about ₹ 5-6 lakh for officers and ₹ 2-3 lakh for jawan.

The Army's pay and pension bill has been increasingly steeply over the years accounting for 60% of the Army's budget allocation. During the last five years though the growth in defence budget has been 68%, and for defence salaries 75%, defence pensions have increased by a staggering 146%.

Army Chief downplays face-off with China

New Delhi: The face-offs between troops of India and China have no connection with any domestic or international situation prevailing today, Army Chief Gen Manoj Mukund Naravane said on Wednesday.

In an interview with ANI, Naravane said these face-offs have been happening in the past and it has happened again now and "we will deal with it as per protocol between the two countries".

The Army chief said face-offs between Chinese People's Liberation Army troops and Indian troops are nothing new as the Line of Actual Control (LAC) is not very "well defined" but asserted that the armed force will deal with the issue as per the protocol laid out between the two countries.



The Army chief's remarks came after Indian forces had face-offs with Chinese forces in northern Sikkim and in eastern Ladakh earlier this week.

"As far the situation in northern borders is concerned, LAC is not very well defined. There are different perceptions where the LAC runs. Accordingly, both sides patrol up to their accepted claimed lines and, therefore, when patrols reach at the same place and at the same time such face-offs do occur. They have occurred in the past and there is nothing new in what has happened in last week or ten days," Naravane said.

The Army chief said face-offs between Chinese People's Liberation Army troops and Indian troops are nothing new as the Line of Actual Control (LAC) is not very "well defined" but asserted that the armed force will deal with the issue as per the protocol laid out between the two countries

"It is just a matter of chance that the face-off in eastern Ladakh happened during the same period but we should not read too much into this that this is part of some coordinated plan. There is nothing like that... But we will deal with it as per the protocol which has been laid out between the two countries and in accordance with strategic guidelines," he said.

Naravane said that Indian

Army is always working towards self-reliance and a majority of its orders have gone into firms in the country.

"We always working towards self-reliance and I have been fully in support of the Make in India initiative. In the past, we have also had new categorisations like Make 1, Make 2 which make it much easier for private industries to participate in defence-related products and they can make it in India for us. So, we are not only doing indigenisation through our PSUs and Ordnance Factory Board (OFBs)," he said when asked about Prime Minister Narendra Modi's call for self-reliant India.

"We also want to get local industry and indigenous players into the fold of making defence-related products. More than 70-80 per cent of Army's orders both in number and cost have gone to Indian firms and we will continue doing it in the future also. Recently, we have signed an order of ₹70 crores with L&T and we will continue to support indigenisation process," he said. ANI

New draft guidelines for hotels

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

Making it clear that the hotel industry needs to be ready for changes as lockdown restrictions get gradually eased amid the Covid-19 pandemic, the Government has prepared draft guidelines for hotels and other accommodation units to ensure social distancing and adequate safety measures.

Besides listing Covid-19-related must-have amenities at hotels, the draft 'Post COVID-19 Protocols for Accommodation Units' details procedures for check-ins and check-outs, room allocation process and in-room provisions, daily thermal checking of guests and staff, room and common area cleaning, food service, and other dos and don'ts for hotel staff and guests.

The Union Tourism Ministry has now sought suggestions from the stakeholders like Hotel Association of India (HAI), Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) and Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (Ficci) and Federation of Hotel and Restaurant Associations of India (FHRAI).

The draft protocols seek to minimise all possible touch points between a staff and guest while at the hotel, and propose a 'special recommendation' that the staff should have the Aarogya Setu app for guest surveillance during check-ins.

"As the Coronavirus pandemic has brought in new norms in day-to-day life, turning our lives upside down the time has come to think and organize our near future. We know that Coronavirus has already had and will also have important economic consequences and that tourism is one of the sectors most affected by this crisis. Draft protocols are way forward in the Coronavirus times," said an official from the Tourism Ministry which has prepared the guidelines.

Prepared in consultation with the Union Health Ministry and other agencies, the protocols will be finalised soon, he said.

"This policy is developed with the view of the government's guidelines of maintaining social distancing at all times by multiple preventive actions and safety measures in addition to making hotels aware about how to operate and manage running operations during the current

Protect interest of homebuyers, real estate sector: MoHUA advisory to States, UTs

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

To protect the interest of homebuyers as well as the real estate sector, the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA) on Wednesday issued an advisory to all States and Union Territories and their respective Real Estate Regulatory Authorities (RERA) to automatically extend registration of all projects registered under RERA which were due on or after March 25 by six months and further upto three months if the situation in a particular state or any part thereof needs consideration in view of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The regulatory authorities now cannot take action against the developers until the revised timelines get over.

In a statement, the ministry said it has issued an advisory to all States / UTs and their respective Real Estate Regulatory Authorities to consider the current pandemic of COVID-19 as "force majeure" being a natural calamity, which is adversely affecting the regular development of the real estate projects and extend registration of all real estate projects registered under RERA by 6 months and further upto 3 months, as per situation evolving in view of the COVID-19 pandemic.

According to the ministry, this measure will safeguard the interest of homebuyers to get them the delivery of their

flats/homes although with the delay of few months but it will definitely ensure the completion of the projects.

To avoid unnecessary litigation against real estate developers Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on May 13 announced an extension in registration and completion date of real estate projects under RERA.

"The nationwide lockdown forced the labours to return to their home and in such circumstances, work on the real estate projects will take quite some time to restart in full gear. In the absence of urgent remedial regulatory measures under RERA, there is also a possibility of many real estate projects getting stalled leading to litigation etc. This will ultimately result in non-delivery of flats to the homebuyers, who have invested their lifetime savings for their dream homes," the ministry said.

A lot of projects got stalled due to various reasons leaving lakhs of homebuyers in a very difficult situation, where they were running from pillar to post for their booked homes. "It is clear that in such circumstances, work on the real estate projects will take quite some time to restart in full gear. In the absence of urgent remedial regulatory measures under RERA Act, 2016, there is also a possibility of many real estate projects getting stalled leading to litigation etc. This will ultimately result in non-delivery of flats to the homebuyers, who have invested their lifetime savings for their dream homes," the ministry said.

and the entire floor, reception and all common areas should be deep cleaned and fumigated. Linen and other items must be washed separately. Details of the guest, including travel history and medical condition along with ID and self-declaration form must be provided by the guest at the reception for the time being.

Regarding the check-out procedure, the draft SOP proposed that guests should inform at the reception an hour before the check out and they should only check out once he/she is confirmed by the reception.

In case of a guest is sus-

mately result in non-delivery of flats to the homebuyers, who have invested their lifetime savings for their dream homes," officials said.

The construction work of ongoing real estate projects was halted leading to reverse migration of labourers to their native places. Further, there was large scale disruption in the supply chain of construction materials which adversely impacted the construction activities across the country. The officials further added that it is also anticipated that construction activities in pre-monsoon could not be undertaken, which will further delay the construction cycle. Moreover, due to the impending monsoon season followed by festivals like Dussehra, Diwali and Chhath, the labourers are not expected to come back soon.

Project registration certificates will also be issued automatically with revised timelines and all timelines for various statutory compliance under RERA are extended concurrently. These measures will distress the developers of the compliance burden and will ensure that they focus on the completion of the project as per revised timelines.

There was a demand for providing special relief for the sector so that it is able to cope up with adverse impact of the crisis. Covid-19 has already disrupted construction activities due to reverse migration.

pected of COVID-19 infection, the draft guidelines say they should not be denied check-in if they are coughing or sneezing, instead social distancing should be maintained and medical assistance should be offered.

"In case suspected guests flee/not traceable, inform the police immediately," as per the document. The protocols come days after the Union Health Ministry prepared guidelines for the hotels interested to offer their rooms/accommodations for Covid-19 suspected/patients needing quarantine/isolation facilities.

41 more afflicted with Covid in CISF

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The CISF on Wednesday recorded a major spurt in Covid-19 cases with the detection of 41 coronavirus-infected persons. A maximum of 38 Covid-19 positive cases were reported from its unit deployed at Kolkata-based defence PSU GRSEL.

For their part, the BSF reported 13 new cases and the CRPF three cases.

The Garden Reach Ship Builders & Engineers Limited (GRSEL) is a strategic warship building facility on the banks of Hooghly River in West Bengal which caters to the requirements of both Navy and Coast Guard.

On Monday, a 55-year-old Assistant Sub Inspector of the paramilitary at GRSEL had succumbed to the disease. This was the third death from the pandemic in the force with the other two in a unit that guards the Indian Museum in Kolkata and the one that protects the

Mumbai international airport.

The CISF unit at GRSEL has 38 active COVID-19 cases now, with all but one being reported in the last 24 hours, officials said.

Over 400 armed Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) personnel were deployed at GRSEL in 2016 for securing the campus.

In a statement, the GRSEL said, "An ASI of CISF deputed in GRSE and having history of diabetes & hypertension tested positive for Covid 19 and passed away on 11 May 2020. The Shipyard stands in solidarity at this hour with the bereaved family."

All CISF personnel who reside within the barrack accommodation of GRSE Main Unit have been placed under quarantine and their samples have been immediately sent for testing. Personnel found Covid positive have already been shifted for treatment at State Medical Facilities designated for treatment of Covid 19, as per extant norms, the Mini

Ratna further said.

The GRSE has been under lockdown since March 23 in

full compliance with Government of India and State Government directives.

INDIAN RAILWAYS
GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS
(INDIAN RAILWAYS ORGANIZATION FOR ALTERNATE FUELS)
4th Floor, Railway Offices Complex, Tilak Bridge, New Delhi-110002
CORRIGENDUM-II, DATED: 12.05.2020
Corrigenda has been issued to E-Tender No. FLEXI-DEMU-P11-20 already uploaded on the website www.ireps.gov.in

Tender No.	Corrigendum No.	Dated
FLEXI-DEMU-P11-20	Corrigendum No. IV	12.05.2020

Bidders may visit the website to download the details mentioned in the Corrigendum-IV and submit E-Bids accordingly.

1089/2020

SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

NORTHERN RAILWAY TENDER NOTICE	
The Dy. Chief Engineer/Const.-II, Northern Railway, Shivaji Bridge, New Delhi for and on behalf of President of India invites open e-tender under Single Packet System for the under noted work :-	
1. Name of work and Location	"Hiring of two Vehicles such as Jeep, Gypsy, Tata Sumo type of vehicles on monthly hiring basis for three years one for XEN/C-I/CSB & other for XEN/C-II/CSB working under Dy. Chief Engineer/Const.-II, Northern Railway, Shivaji Bridge, New Delhi".
2. Completion period of the work	36 (Thirty six months)
3. Approx. cost of work	Rs. 38.18 Lakh (Rupees Thirty eight lakh & eighteen thousand only)
4. Earnest money amount (to be deposited online)	Rs. 76,400/- (Seventy Six thousand four hundred only)
5. Date, Time for submission of E-tender and opening of tender	Tenders may be uploaded up to 11.30 hrs. on 04.06.2020 on IREPS web site i.e. www.ireps.gov.in The bidders can only participate in the e-tender, the tender will be opened at 11.30 hrs. on 04.06.2020.
6. Detailed Tender Notice & Tender Document:	The detailed e-tender notice is available on Northern Railway website i.e. www.nr.indianrailways.gov.in Above tenders document will be available on IREPS website i.e. www.ireps.gov.in from 12.05.2020 to 28.05.2020. All other terms and conditions in respect of above tenders are given in tender document. The detailed tender notice also can be seen on the Notice Board of the above office.
No: 114-Acs-Dy-CE-C-II-CSB, Dt. 12.05.2020 1091/2020	
SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE	

9-month pregnant woman walks 196 km to home

Jaipur: It was a tough trail for a 9-month pregnant woman who walked 196 kilometres on foot, from Ahmedabad with her husband, son (1-year-old) and daughter (2-year-old) for 6 days to reach her native place in Madhya Pradesh's Ratlam.

Surprisingly, no one took pity on her condition throughout the way as she crossed district after district, checkpoint after checkpoint with an aim to reach her native place at the earliest.

However, it was her luck to get a few good samaritans at Dungarpur checkpoint, who seeing her plight, stopped her and offered her food and transportation to help her reach her hometown.

Dungarpur SDM Rajeev Dwivedi told

IANS, "This woman, with her family, including husband and two kids, reached Dungapur checkpoint on Monday evening. The staff at the location was stunned to see her feeble condition as she looked quite tired and lacked energy. When asked if she had food, she simply refused. It also seemed as if she was in pain."

The officials at the checkpoint hence informed the SDM and other officials. Soon a team of doctors from nearby medical checkpoint arrived at the location to review her medical condition. It was evident that she was not in a condition to walk but had walked all along from Ahmedabad and hence they asked the family to rest overnight and offered them food and shelter, said Dwivedi.

Mamata calls Centre's package 'zero'

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Tuesday dismissed the 'muchbandied' central package worth ₹20 lakh crore as a 'big zero' and 'eyewash' intended to 'hoodwink' the people of the country.

Accusing the Centre for "bulldozing the federal structure" of the country she said "in the name of a special package this Government has produced a Ghorar Deem (mare's nest) ... it is a big zero, a big eyewash aimed at hoodwinking the people in the name of fighting corona crisis."

Banerjee was referring to the Tuesday's press conference of Union Finance Minister Nirmala

Sitharaman in which she elaborated on the Centre's package.

Claiming that there was "no consistency between what the Prime Minister said yesterday, and what we were given to hear today," the Chief Minister said "when the PM announced ₹20 lakh crore package, we were hopeful that the interest of the states will be looked into, the FRBM limit would be increased. But today ... it was found that everything that was said yesterday was a bluff ... There is nothing in public spending, money transfer, and nothing to fight the pandemic."

Comparing the central package with her own new scheme called "Maatir Shristi" --- that would entail setting up of environment friendly units on 50,000

acre of land creating thousands of jobs --- Banerjee said, the Finance Minister's announcement had "nothing to generate employment ... no fund for health infrastructure ... no fund for fighting the pandemic... neither it has put cash in the pocket of the poorest of the poor who have lost their jobs and were travelling back hundreds of miles to their villages."

Accusing the Centre for trying to "bulldoze" and "destroy" the "cooperative federalism" Banerjee said "the State's rights are being taken away." How the States would run without financial assistance from the Centre she asked wondering "why the farmers' debts were not waived."

IMD predicts cyclone storm by May 16

New Delhi: The India Meteorological Department (IMD) on Wednesday forecast that a low pressure area has developed in the southeast Bay of Bengal and the same could intensify into a cyclonic storm by the evening of May 16. The low pressure area, to be named 'Amphan' if it develops into a cyclonic storm, is likely to move northwestwards initially till May 17 before recurving north-northeastwards.

According to the IMD, there were 354 heavy rainfall events --- defined by IMD as absolute rainfall above 64.5 millimetres (mm) --- across India in March and April. Of these events, 224 occurred in April, while 130 occurred in March. Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh

were impacted the most (52 occurrences), followed by West Bengal (41) and Odisha (40), while Meghalaya recorded 29 such events in two months. The heavy rain and storms led to cooler-than-normal temperatures across north, central and east India.

The IMD recorded some unusual climatic changes to forecast for the upcoming summer. "With no major heat waves recorded in the core zones so far and excess rainfall across the country, this summer is turning out to be unusual," it said. In its weather forecast on Wednesday, the IMD said that a low pressure area has formed over southeast Bay of Bengal and adjoining south Andaman Sea, in the Wednesday morning.

509 new cases takes TN total tally at 9,227

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

There are 9,227 Covid-19 cases in Tamil Nadu as on Wednesday evening 7 pm. The daily medical bulletin issued by the Government of Tamil Nadu stated that 509 persons tested positive for coronavirus all over the State on Wednesday taking the number of patients to 9,227.

With three more persons succumbing to the pandemic on Wednesday, the fatalities in the State reached 64.

Chennai, the capital city, saw the number of covid-19 patients going up by 380 making the total number of patients in the metropolis to 5,262. This means that the number of coronavirus positive persons in the city increasing two-fold during the last week.

According to the details furnished by the Government, there were 2,644 patients on May 7 in the city. This has shot up to 5,262 in six days, a shocking increase.

But Chief Minister Edappadi Palaniswami told reporters early in the day that the hike in the number of coronavirus cases is due to the increased testing of samples which he claimed as the highest in the country.

66 more +ve cases in Dharavi

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

The total number of Covid-19 infected cases crossed the 1,000 mark in Mumbai's worst pandemic-affected Dharavi on Wednesday, as 66 more persons tested positive for Covid-19.

On a day when the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) pegged the number of deaths in Dharavi at 40, as many as 66 new infected cases were reported from various parts of Asia's biggest slum. With the fresh infected cases, the total number of infected cases rose to a staggering 1,028.

Attributing the increase in

the number of deaths to the new information received from the BMC's Epidemic Cell, the BMC said: " New

nine deaths have informed by epidemic cell. These deaths had happened earlier on different dates and conveyed to ward office subsequently". As many as five positive cases were recorded in Dhondu Mistry Chawl, while four cases were reported from Matunga Labour camp.

Three cases each were recorded in Geetanjali Nagar, Azad Nagar and 90 feet Road area, while the areas like Kerusheth Chawl, Vijaynagar and Rajiv Gandhi Nagar regis-

tered two positive cases.

Rest of the infected cases were reported from most parts of Dharavi, where positive cases are being recorded on a regular basis.

The spike in the number of infected cases in Dharavi came a day after this densely populated slum recorded 46 positive cases and one death on Tuesday. Matunga Labour camp, which on Wednesday accounted for four infected, has been the worst-hit area in Dharavi. On Tuesday, eight infected cases were recorded in Matunga Labour camp. On Monday, this area had registered eight cases.

1 more death, 37 new cases in J&K

PNS ■ JAMMU

One more death due to Covid-19 was reported from Jammu district on Wednesday after test reports of a patient, who was admitted in the Government Medical College hospital late Tuesday night, tested positive posthumously while 37 fresh cases were detected across Jammu & Kashmir taking the total tally to 971 cases.

The total death toll due to Covid -19 in Jammu and Kashmir has gone up to 11. So far, nine deaths have been reported from Kashmir and two from Jammu division.

Out of these 37 fresh cases, Kashmir valley recorded 30 cases while Jammu division recorded 7 new cases of coronavirus. 11 patients were discharged from the hospitals, 2 from Jammu and 9 from Kashmir division. On Wednesday, dis-

trict Anantnag recorded 18 fresh cases, Budgam 7 while 4 cases were reported from Kathua and 3 from Jammu.

Meanwhile, panic gripped among the hospital authorities in Jammu especially among those who had handled the patient in the emergency department before the patient breathed his last. Apparently, the patient had no travel history but official sources claimed his son had returned from New Delhi recently. The district authorities have launched contact tracing exercise and sealed the area to prevent spread of coronavirus in the vicinity.

On the other hand, the hospital premises witnessed high voltage drama when the family members of the deceased patient were denied ambulance facility to ferry his dead body to the cremation ground.

Youngster killed in Budgam firing

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

A youngster from Central Kashmir's Budgam district Wednesday paid a heavy price for jumping the security checkpoint, twice, on Srinagar-Gulmarg road after security forces stationed there opened fire on him resulting in his death.

The deceased has been identified as Mehrajuddin Peer son of Ghulam Nabi Peer resident of Makhama Beerwah Budgam.

As news of his death, at the hands of security forces, spread like wild fire in the area, the district authorities snapped mobile internet services in the area and rushed additional security personnel to handle any law and order situation.

According to police

spokesman, "on Wednesday at about 10.20 a.m, during Joint Naka at Khalisa Kawoosa in the jurisdiction of Police Station Magam, a Wagon-R vehicle bearing registration No. JK02AK-6702 was signaled to stop. However, the said vehicle ignored to stop and fled away from two Naka points in suspicious condition".

The police spokesman said, "the Naka party opened fire at the vehicle to thwart the attempt. The driver of the vehicle got injured and was shifted to hospital for medical treatment, however he succumbed to his injuries. Police has registered a case and started investigation in to the matter".

Mainstream political parties in Kashmir valley condemned the killing of a civilian and called for an impartial

enquiry to punish the guilty. Former Chief Minister Omar Abdullah termed the incident as unfortunate. "Very unfortunate. The circumstances surrounding this shooting need to be impartially investigated & findings made known. My condolences to the family of the deceased," he tweeted. Jammu and Kashmir Pradesh Congress Committee (JKPCC), in a statement, strongly condemned the killing of Mehrajuddin.

"The firing should have been avoided. The loss of innocent lives has the potential to lead to further alienation of the people," the JKPC said. The party demanded a probe into the circumstances, which led to the killing of the civilian in order to fix the responsibility.

Banks should show compassion, kindness towards us: Industrialists


KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

Leading industrialists and entrepreneurs owning micro, small and mini industrial units in South India in general and Tamil Nadu in particular are of the view that banks should show compassion and kindness towards them. This is in the backdrop of the coronavirus induced economic melt-down and set-back suffered by industrial sector in Tamil Nadu.

"The industrialists are willing to take up any challenge to revive the economy and bring the country back to life. But we alone cannot do that. There is an ocean of opportunities waiting for us and we can make it happen with some help from the banking sector," Hari Thiagarajan, head of Confederation of Indian Industries Tamil Nadu Council, told The Pioneer.

The export units in Tirupur, head quarters of India's cotton knitwear industry, MSME units in Chennai and Coimbatore and major industrial houses are encountering a number of problems because of drying up of revenue sources, said Thiagarajan, executive director of Madurai based Thiagarajar Mills Ltd. "Lot of export orders got cancelled because of the coronavirus pandemic. Whatever was cancelled has gone and there is no possibility of us getting it back in the near future. Moreover, we are burdened with the payment to the workers which we have to disburse in full. This was also the time for price negotiation with buyers for exporting the products," said the CII Tamil Nadu chief.

He said it is going to be challenging times for all sectors except pharmacy, insurance companies and Information Technology units.



बिहार सरकार

जल संसाधन विभाग

क्रय भंडार एवं सामग्री प्रबंधन निदेशालय

राष्ट्रीय प्रतिस्पर्धात्मक निविदा

(बाढ़ 2020 के पहले बाढ़ संघर्षात्मक सामग्रियों के लिए कोटेशन)

संचिका सं० 02 क्रय-03-01/2020-233

अति अल्पकालीन पुनर्कोटेशन आमंत्रण सूचना सं० 01/2020-21

केवल ई-टेंडर (पद्धति के अनुसार वेबसाइट www.eproc.bihar.gov.in पर)

1. कार्य का विवरण	2. कार्य का नाम	मात्रा	अवधन की राशि (₹00 में)	बीड (अप्रत्यर्पणीय) (₹00 में)	BELTRON को Online देय बीड प्रोसेसिंग फिस (₹00 में)	कार्य समाप्ति की तिथि
1.	जल संसाधन विभाग के मुख्य अभियंता पटना एवं मुजफ्फरपुर के पश्चिमांचाल विभिन्न प्रमंडलीय / केन्द्रीय गोदामों में विशिष्टी के अनुरूप (2m x 1.5m) आकार के नन योभेन मेगा रियो बेग का आपूर्ति कार्य ।	1,000 Nos.	13,500.00	1250.00	1180.00	30.06.2020
2.	जल संसाधन विभाग के मुख्य अभियंता समस्तीपुर, कटिहार एवं पटना के पश्चिमांचाल विभिन्न प्रमंडलीय / केन्द्रीय गोदामों में विशिष्टी के अनुरूप चौ० ८०० किल्टर का आपूर्ति कार्य ।	15000 M ³	27,000.00	2500.00	1180.00	30.06.2020
3.	जल संसाधन विभाग के मुख्य अभियंता वीरपुर, कटिहार एवं गोपालगंज के पश्चिमांचाल विभिन्न प्रमंडलीय / केन्द्रीय गोदामों में विशिष्टी के अनुरूप ३.15 मी० मी० व्यास के बी० ए० गायर का आपूर्ति कार्य ।	50 MT	75,000.00	5,000.00	1180.00	30.06.2020

12.05.2020

2. विज्ञापन निगंत करने की तिथि :- दिनांक 20.05.2020 से 25.05.2020 के अपराह्न 3:00 बजे तक । (सिर्फ वेबसाइट www.eproc.bihar.gov.in (www.eproc.bihar.gov.in) पर)

4. प्री बीड मिटिंग की तिथि, समय एवं स्थान 22.05.2020 को पूर्वाह्न 11:00 बजे निदेशक, क्रय भंडार एवं सामग्री प्रबंधन निदेशालय, जल संसाधन विभाग, बिहार, पटना का कार्यालय

5. कोटेशन अपलोड करने की अंतिम तिथि एवं समय दिनांक 26.05.2020 समय अपराह्न 3:00 बजे तक । (www.eproc.bihar.gov.in)

6. टेक्निकल बीड खोलने की तिथि एवं समय दिनांक 27.05.2020 समय 3:30 बजे अपराह्न (www.eproc.bihar.gov.in)

7. वित्तीय बीड खोलने की तिथि एवं समय तिथि एवं समय की सूचना तकनीकी बीड पर निर्णय के बाद वेबसाइट पर दी जायेगी। www.eproc.bihar.gov.in पर

8. कोटेशन खोलने का स्थान 15.10.2020 (बाढ़ अवधि तक)

9. कोटेशन की वैधता की अंतिम तिथि निदेशक, क्रय भंडार एवं सामग्री प्रबंधन निदेशालय, जल संसाधन विभाग, न्यू बैरक संख्या-5 हाडिंग रोड, पटना-800001 दूरभाष संख्या-9334107013


10. विज्ञापनदाता का पदनाम एवं पता

11. ई- टेंडरिंग प्रक्रिया में भाग लेने हेतु संवेदकों को पंजीकृत होना होगा, जिससे कि उन्हें उपयोगकर्ता का नाम (**User ID**) पासवर्ड (**Password**) एवं अंकीय हस्ताक्षर (**Digital Signature**) प्राप्त होगा। यह उन्हें वेबसाइट www.eproc.bihar.gov.in से डाउनलोड करने / ई-टेंडरिंग की प्रक्रिया में भाग लेने की योग्यता प्रदान करेगा।12. ई-निविदा मात्र वेबसाइट www.eproc.bihar.gov.in पर डाउनलोड एवं अपलोड किया जा सकता है।13. विशेष जानकारी हेतु अधोहस्ताक्षरी के कार्यालय में कार्य अवधि में दूरभाष संख्या- 9334107013 एवं 7463889198 पर सम्पर्क किया जा सकता है। ई-टेंडरिंग की प्रक्रिया से संबंधित किसी भी प्रकार की जानकारी / सूचना हेतु ई-टेंडरिंग सेल, सिचाई भवन पटना (0612-2235241) एवं सहायता कक्षा कक्ष ऑफ इंडिया बिल्डिंग, एम/22, प्लाट न०-25 एस० के० नगर, पटना से दूरभाष संख्या-07542028164 एवं 0612-2523006 पर संपर्क किया जा सकता है। 14. विशेष जानकारी के लिए www.eproc.bihar.gov.in, www.wrd.bih.nic.in एवं www.prdbihar.gov.in पर देखा जा सकता है।

निदेशक

क्रय, भण्डार एवं सामग्री प्रबंधन निदेशालय, जल संसाधन विभाग, बिहार, पटना

PR No. 0001021(WRD)2020-21

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

खाद्य सामग्री - संबंधी किसी तरह की जानकारी अथवा सुझाव हेतु दूरभाष संख्या 0612-2217636 पर सम्पर्क किया जा सकता है।

किसी भी तरह आपदा की जानकारी अथवा सुझाव हेतु आपदा प्रबंधन के हेल्पलाइन नं०, 1070 पर सम्पर्क किया जा सकता है।



Metro Railway, Kolkata
Kolkata's Pride

STANDARDISATION OF GUARD RAIL IN DUM DUM-TOLLYGUNGE SECTION

Tender Notice for e-tendering is invited by **Principal Chief Engineer, Metro Railway** for the following work: **Name of work:** Standardisation of Guard Rail in Dum Dum-Tollygunge Section of Metro Railway, Kolkata. **Tender Value:** ₹ 5,46,88,022.38. **Cost of Tender Document:** ₹ 10,000. **Earnest Money:** ₹ 4,23,500. **Completion period:** 9 months from the date of issue of LOA. **Date of closing:** 19.06.2020 at 12.00 hrs. The tender document and other details can be obtained from the website www.ireps.gov.in. The bidding for the tender is to be submitted only through e-tendering on above website. Manual offers are not allowed against this tender and any manual offer, if received shall not be accepted and will be summarily rejected.

Abridged e-Tender Notice No.: Civil-2323-2020

FASTER • SAFER • SMOOTHER • CLEANER



UJVN LIMITED
(An Uttarakhand Govt. Enterprises)
H.O.: 'UJJWAL', Maharani Bagh, GMS Road, Dehradun - 248006 CIN No.U40101UR2001SGC02586
Tel.: 0135-2763508 Fax: 0135-2763507 Website: www.uttarakhandjalvidyut.com

Date Extension

Tender No.16/EE(Maint.)/Khodri/2019-20- Replacement of Control Panels of Governor Motors of all Four units at Khodri Power House.

Due to unavoidable reasons dates of the above tender shall be read as below. All other terms and conditions of the tender shall remain unchanged: Last date for submission of bids: 18-05-2020 (upto 16:00 Hrs.) Date of opening of bids: 19-05-2020 (11:00 Hrs.) For downloading tender documents and other details, Kindly visit our portal "https://www.ujvnl.com"

Executive Engineer (Maintenance)
Ro. No. 292 Dated 12/05/2020
Khodri Powerhouse

"AVOID WASTE FUL USE OF ELECTRICITY"

INDIAN RAILWAYS

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS
(RAILWAY BOARD)

E-Tender No. 2020RSI8741TC

Executive Director, Railways Stores(S), Ministry of Railway, Railway Board, Government of India invites e-tender for procurement of 73,380 Nos. AAR approved Cartridge Taper Roller Bearings (CTRB) Class E (6"x11") complete including four items for use on Freight Stock for Indian Railways to RDSO specification No. AB/RB-39-2002 (Rev.3) of December, 2006 with Amendment No. 1 of Jan. 2008, Amendment No. 2 of Nov. 2008, Amendment No. 3 of Oct. 2016 & latest amendments.

2.0 The interested tenderers are advised to visit the website <http://ireps.gov.in> for details of the tender and submission of their e-bids.

5.0 **No manual offers will be accepted against e-tender.**

6.0 **Tender will be closed at 15:00 hours on 17.06.2020.**

Director, Railway Stores (W),
Ministry of Railways, Railway Board, New Delhi
for and on behalf of the President of India.

SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE 1073/20

INDIAN RAILWAYS

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS
(RAILWAY BOARD)

E-TENDER No. 2020RSI8742TC

Executive Director, Railways Store(S), Ministry of Railways, Railway Board, Government of India invites e-tender for procurement of **2,68,624 Nos. Grease Seal to RDSO Specification No. WD-50-Misc-2007** of Oct 2007 or latest amendments, if any for AAR Standard Class 'E' (6" x 11") bearings used on CASNUB bogies of freight stock.

2.0 The interested tenderers are advised to visit the website <http://ireps.gov.in> for details of the tender and submission of their e-bids.

3.0 **No manual offers will be accepted against e-tender.**

4.0 **Tender will be closed at 15.00 hours on 24.06.2020.**

Director, Railway Stores (W),
Ministry of Railways, Railway Board, New Delhi.
for and on behalf of the President of India.

1071/2020

SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

NORTHERN RAILWAY

TENDER NOTICE

The Dy. Chief Engineer/Const.-II Northern Railway, Shivaji Bridge, New Delhi for and on behalf of President of India invites **open e-tender under Single Packet system** for the under noted work:-

1. Name of work and Location:	"Hiring of one Vehicle such as (Jeep, Gypsy, Tata Sumo type of vehicles) on monthly hiring basis for three years for XEN/C/SRE working under Dy. Chief Engineer/Const-II, Northern Railway, Shivaji Bridge New Delhi".
2. Completion period of the work:	36 (Thirty Six Months)
3. Approx. cost of work:	Rs.15.13 Lakh (Rupees Fifteen lakh & thirteen thousand only)
4. Earnest money amount (to be deposited online):	Rs. 30,300/- (Rupees Thirty thousand three hundred only)
5. Date & Time for submission of E-tender and opening of tender:	Tenders may be uploaded upto 11.30 hrs on 04.06.2020 on IREPS web site i.e. www.ireps.gov.in The bidders can participate in the e-tender, the tender will be opened at 11.30 hrs on 04.06.2020.
6. Detailed Tender Notice & Tender Document:	The detailed e-tender notice is available Northern Railway web site i.e. www.ireps.gov.in Above tenders document will be available on IREPS web site i.e. www.ireps.gov.in from 12.05.2020 to 28.05.2020 . All other terms and conditions in respect of above tenders are given in tender document. The detailed tender notice also can be seen on the Notice Board of the above office.

No.: 120-Acs-Dy-CE-C-II-CSB Dated : 12.05.2020 1092/2020

SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE



General public is hereby informed that one lady namely Monu Chouhan, W/o Shri Satya Dev Singh, R/o H.No. 113, Gali No. 1, Near State Co-Operative Bank, Nangli Poonna, Delhi, Age 25 years, Height 4'8", Complexion Wheatish, Round Face, Thin Built, Wearing Blue colour suit salwar, white colour legging and hawai chappal in feet has been missing since 26.04.20. In this regard DD No. 40-A dated 26.04.20 has been lodged at PS Swaroop Nagar, Delhi.

Any person having any information or clue about this missing lady may kindly inform to the following.

E-mail ID: cidc@cbi.gov.in **SHO**
Tele: 011-24368638, 24368641 PS: Swaroop Nagar, Delhi
Fax: 011-24368639 Ph.: 27811415, 27811738
DP/224/ON/20



WESTERN RAILWAY

VARIOUS CONSTRUCTION WORKS

Deputy Chief Electrical Engineer, (Construction) Western Railway, Pratapnagar, Vadodara invites E-tender as per details given below:-

Sr. No.	Tender Notice No & Date	Work & Location	Approx. Cost of Work in ₹	EMD in ₹	Date of Submission	Date of Opening/ Extended
1	TR-C-3-20(RI) dtd 04.05.2020	Providing Passenger Escalators & Lifts at Kevadiya Railway Station Building & Platform No. 2 in connection with DB-CDD GC work & CDD-KEW Colony New Line.	₹3,72,74,153.78	₹3,36,400/-	04.05.2020	01.06.2020
2	TR-C-4-2020 Dtd:-11.03.20	Design, Supply, Erection, Testing & Commissioning of 25 KV AC OHE between Dabholi - Badoli Section on Vadodara Division of Western Railway in connection with Electrification of Existing BG line Between Dabholi - Chhotla Uderpur Section.	₹17,58,36,818.00	₹10,29,200/-	11.03.2020	27.05.2020
3	TR-C-7-2020 Dtd:-12.03.20	Design, Supply, Erection, Testing & Commissioning of 25 KV AC OHE between Ankleshwar Rajpipla Section on Vadodara Division of Western Railway in connection with Electrification of Existing BG line.	₹19,74,31,489.35	₹11,37,200/-	12.03.2020	28.05.2020
4	TR-C-9-2020 Dtd:-12.03.20	Design, Supply, Erection, Testing & Commissioning of SCADA between PRTN-DB-CTD,MYG-SMLA,DB-CDD-KEVADIYA section on BRC Divn of Western Railway.	₹4,70,47,859.60	₹3,85,200/-	12.03.2020	01.06.2020
5	TR-C- 10-2020 Dtd:-20.03.20	Modification of HT overhead power line of MGVLCL, Railway track crossing between Anand - Khambhat, Vasad - Kathana, AKV - Raj and KBRV - VDTL Section in connection with execution of RE work of WR. Sanction in budget 18-19 from CORE to WR.	₹1,85,80,140.60	₹2,42,900/-	20.03.2020	27.05.2020

Regarding detailed nature of work, containing cost of the tender document (non refundable), EMD, eligibility criteria, similar nature of work, detailed tender conditions, please visit www.ireps.gov.in Manual offers will not be considered.

Like us on  facebook.com/WesternRly Follows us on  twitter.com/WesternRly

3

Economic rescue

Can the Indian economy get out of its funk? A funk made worse by the Coronavirus?



The devil always lies in the details in any announcement. While addressing the nation, Prime Minister Narendra Modi promised the country and its citizens a big economic stimulus package worth ₹20 lakh crore to boost its economy and ensure self-reliance as lockdown 4 is set to be implemented for an indefinite time from May 17. Even if India puts in 10 per cent of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) to lift its economy, there will be a lot of questions that need to be answered. The most obvious one would be: Where will the money come from? Many commentators have argued that the Government must “print” more money. Of course, this is fraught with some issues because as the Chief Economic Advisor said, “There is no free lunch.” Although in these times when people are struggling to eat, any lunch, even one where a huge payment is due later, would be a smart one. India should also expand its balance sheet by issuing more Government bonds and possibly look at opening up that to the public as well. Those individuals, who have surreptitiously salted away funds in foreign jurisdictions, must be allowed to bring their money back with lower or zero penalties and be allowed to invest in Government bonds with 10 or 20 year tenures. The Government could raise a few billions like that.

The details, therefore, announced by the Finance Minister are welcome. The move to redefine medium and small scale sector enterprises and the relief offered to them is a huge positive. Whether it is the collateral-free automatic loans, the relief on employees provident fund or the support for Non-Banking Finance Corporations, there are a lot of stimulants in the announcements made by the Finance Ministry. But there has been little sign of direct spending by the Government, although some tax revenues have been foregone through lower tax deduction at source. This will give a huge sum of money to companies and individuals to spend. This is also a very positive step that might encourage additional consumption in the second half of the year. Even more tax refunds and a longer time to pay taxes are welcome. But this is just the first tranche of the Government’s economic package to fight the Coronavirus pandemic. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has made it clear that the announcements will take some time to come as she will cover all sectors of the economy over the next few days. The fact is that almost every industry has its begging bowl out for a handout. The Government will, thus, need to support large industry as well as the smaller ones. The fact is also that the Government will need to ensure job preservation across industries. It has to work towards job creation as India still adds around 10 million new youth to the market every year. Will the present Corona crisis become Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s opportunity to become the next Narasimha Rao of 1991? There are huge opportunities for reforms in labour, industrial law and even taxation. But will they come through? We do not know as yet. What’s sure is that the announcements made by the Finance Minister so far are a positive. Nevertheless, we will still have to wait a while to see what the rest of the details are and how the banks, the tax authorities and the Government implement these changes. A 10 per cent spending of the GDP can have a dramatic effect on the country’s economic growth. The efficacy of the Prime Minister’s big-bang stimulus will be judged not based on the numbers but with the details.

No summer break

After video-conferencing sessions, SC will curtail vacations to speed up hearing in crucial cases in a post-pandemic world



The unprecedented crisis caused by the Coronavirus lockdown has compelled both a systemic and individual overhaul. Like everything else, the justice delivery mechanism has been on hold though the traditional courts did have video-conferencing to settle crucial matters. This has been a big change for e-services aren’t exactly a favourite of one of our oldest institutions. But now limited operations have meant that case pendency has gone up. So the Supreme Court is ready to work through its summer break and close the gap. Being the last resort of the citizenry in getting justice, the apex court is anyway too overburdened. Despite increasing the number of judges and quicker disposal of cases, 60,469 cases were pending till March 1, up from 57,785 cases pending before it in 2019 and 55,529 in 2018. From hearing 3,500 cases on an average a month, the court has just managed to take up 593 cases between March 23 and April 24 in the middle of the pandemic. Meanwhile, though the courts remain shut, new cases are continuously being filed. Which is why it is laudable that the top court may do away with the 45-day summer break and curtail holidays. Though its decision is in line with the waiver decision of several High Courts, being the highest judicial authority, its moves are being watched as a precursor of an overhaul of colonial rituals and practices. This may be an opportunity when it gets more pragmatic and in sync with the times.

Of course, once lockdown 3 ends, the judges can start hearing cases from courtrooms while lawyers can start deliberations from their chambers staying within the protocols codified by the Health Ministry. But video-conferencing is likely to stay with judges realising its time-saving potential and its ability to fast-track case files. However, adoption of technology is not without glitches and those need to be sorted out. For example, given that existing conferencing apps are being used to conduct these sessions, there is a need to keep security gateways intact. Right now proceedings can only be viewed by the lawyers and their clients and are not open for public viewing. Many legal experts argue that while technology is here to stay, it should not erode the rule of law. In the end, the credibility of the court and its authority depend upon open hearings. So how can the Supreme Court retain public confidence in a post-pandemic world where digital pathways will have to be resorted to not out of choice but as a matter of habit? One option is live streaming, which the court itself had upheld in 2018. Justice DY Chandrachud had authorised it in the *Swapnil Tripathi v Supreme Court of India* case, saying “sunlight is the best disinfectant”. Chandrachud now heads the e-committee of the Supreme Court and could come up with codes that do not compromise the integrity of the justice system. But one thing is sure. The judiciary cannot afford any more delays. As it is, crucial hearing is awaited in cases such as the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, the abrogation of Article 370, the entry of women to Sabarimala and the use of money Bill among others. Neither can the court afford to delay a decision on those accused in scams and other criminal cases, who may just play around with the evidence and exploit loopholes.

opinion

06

War of words

India and Nepal have successfully developed a cooperative mechanism to contain the Corona pandemic. They need to resolve border issues through peaceful diplomatic means as well



RISHI GUPTA

Amid the ongoing COVID-19 crisis, India-Nepal relations are witnessing a difficult phase as a long-time low-profile diplomatic row has now intensified between the two. Following Union Defence Minister Rajnath Singh’s inauguration of the road section connecting Lipulekh pass with Dharchula in Pithoragarh, Uttarakhand, on May 8, social media went abuzz with hashtags such as #GoBackIndia and #BackOffIndia, with Nepal staking claim over the Lipulekh area. The new 80-kilometre link route developed by the Border Roads Organisation (BRO) in India is aimed at cutting down travel time for Kailash-Mansarovar pilgrims by almost 80 per cent. The newly-constructed road originates from Ghatiabagarh and terminates at Lipulekh Pass, the gateway to Kailash Mansarovar in Tibet.

Previously, Indian pilgrims had to undertake an arduous 90-km trek through treacherous high-altitude terrain running across the Indian State of Sikkim or through Nepal to reach the site. With the inauguration of the link road, travel time would be reduced by many days since the yatra will be carried out using vehicles. It is an engineering achievement of the BRO as the 80-km road spans altitudes between 6,000 and 17,060 feet.

Within 24 hours of the inauguration of the road, Kathmandu summoned India’s ambassador to protest against its inauguration. In a statement, the Nepal Communist Party (NCP), the country’s ruling party, said the road construction “violates Nepal’s sovereignty. [Our] serious attention has been drawn to the ‘inauguration’ by India of a link road to Lipulekh of Nepal via Nepali territory.” The statement was signed by the NCP’s chairman and Nepali Prime Minister Khadga Prasad Sharma Oli. Using strong language, it said, “In light of this development, the Government of Nepal calls upon the Government of India to refrain from carrying out any activity inside the territory of Nepal.”

The Indian side, too, pushed back Nepalese concerns, saying that the disputed region was “completely within the territory of India.” The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) stated, “The recently inaugurated road section in Pithoragarh district in the State of Uttarakhand lies completely within the territory of India. The road follows the pre-existing route used by the pilgrims of the Kailash Mansarovar yatra.” The MEA’s statement is in the same spirit as the one it made in November 2019 when India had again refuted Nepal’s alleged encroachment claims in the Kalapani region on India.

In fact, relations between the two countries had been strained since 2015 when India opposed Nepal’s newly-promulgated Constitution. What followed next was an economic blockade. Border tensions have renewed in the past six months. Particularly,



following the abrogation of Article 370, which gave special privileges to the erstwhile State of Jammu & Kashmir (J&K) and following the issuance of the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act, 2019, two new Union Territories of J&K and Ladakh came into existence on October 31.

With India releasing a new map, Kathmandu criticised New Delhi for prominently displaying Lipulekh in the border area of Kalapani. But despite its allegations that the new Indian map had wrongly depicted Kalapani as Indian territory, Kathmandu fell short of supporting its claims as the new map was no different than the previous one. It was the internal boundaries that were updated. No other changes were made in India’s international borders. Later, it had also come in the public domain that the officials of the Pakistani embassy allegedly held talks with the Nepalese politicians and even funded anti-India demonstrations in several parts of Nepal.

Time and again, Nepal has cited the Treaty of Sugauli as a legal document to back its claim in these regions. Surprisingly, the Archaeological Survey of Nepal and the MoFA have reportedly not been able to produce an original copy of the pact. Even after going through the document, there was no clear demarcation of the borders agreed between the then British Indian Government and the King of Nepal. It is only through the

modern-day border management exercises that the two countries have demarcated the open border. A prominent Technical Committee formed in 1981 to resolve the border issues has already clarified 76 border points out of 78 and more than 180 strip maps based on Global Positioning Systems (GPS) have been established. In fact, most of the differences were identified and resolved in 2007. On the official front, India has stated that “strip maps pertaining to 98 per cent of the boundary have been agreed to and signed in 2007.”

Additionally, in 2016, the two Governments had constituted the Eminent Persons Group (EPG) on Nepal-India relations with a mandate to recommend measures and institutional framework with a view to elevate existing relations to a new height. The group has concluded its task and prepared a consensus report, which is yet to be made public. While Nepal has agreed with India that technicalities of the EPG report need to be worked out before it comes in the public domain, it is unfortunate that the Nepalese Government has failed to inform the same to its people and this is causing confusion.

In Nepal, it is a popular belief that it is a unilateral decision of India to not make the EPG report public. Meanwhile, considering the anti-India sentiment in Nepal, India is always depicted in a dark light. This may

be paying off in the ruling Government’s political aspirations but is indeed not a wise act.

Notably, in the last 10 years, China has been attempting to manufacture artificial people-to-people relations with Nepal but it has failed tremendously. On the other hand, attempts are also being made to demolish the naturally existing people-to-people ties with India. In the long term, Nepal will have to realise the loss. Also, the Nepalese Government is well involved in the diplomatic exercises with India, including on border disputes. It has even gone on record to say that Nepal sees “diplomacy as the first and the last resort in mitigating any differences with India.” But had this been the case, a road inauguration in India would have been welcomed by it.

The 80-kilometre road construction was not an underground work that could be completed overnight without a close neighbour knowing about it, especially when there is an open border. The construction has very much been in line with India’s sovereign rights and a friendly neighbour like Nepal needs to understand this. To its right, Nepal has protested the road inauguration through an official statement. Still, the use of a strong language does not indicate the essence of the existing “special relations” between Nepal and India. Also, the use of common phrases and language in the statement issued by the ruling NCP indicated the involvement

of the vested interest that aims to benefit politically on home ground.

To conclude, relations between India and Nepal are a product of the centuries-old deep-rooted people-to-people contacts of kinship and culture. They are neither artificially constructed nor based on distrust and blame-game. Hence, relations need to be cherished. And in case of differences, like every other close-knit family has, they need to be resolved through the diplomatic mechanism with a caution that even diplomacy should not hamper the demography of the “special relations” between the two countries.

It was a decade long war in Nepal which ousted centuries-old autocratic rule of the Shah kings that led to the establishment of democracy there. Therefore, as a democracy, Nepal has the best chance to interact with the biggest democracy in the world and use democratic tools to improve relations. It needs to critically introspect its diplomatic stances because in the worst of confrontations, countries have finally opted for reconciliation through diplomatic channels. With countries facing the COVID-19 challenge, India and Nepal have successfully developed a cooperative mechanism to contain it. The same needs to reflect in the border dispute mechanism as well.

(The writer is ICSSR Doctoral Fellow, Center for South Asian Studies, JNU)

SOUND BITE

The Centre had announced economic packages in the past as well but nothing really happened on the ground. I hope the government is serious this time

LJD leader
—Sharad Yadav



Everyone is adapting new ways to deal with the Covid-19 situation. This is like a wake-up call for us. We’ve been exploiting nature every possible way. It’s time to slow down.

Actor
—Urmila Matondkar



Religious leaders can play a pivotal role in their communities and beyond to deliver solutions to not only address the pandemic but to recover better.

UN Secretary-General
—Antonio Guterres



In today’s times, there are quite a few good players — Rohit Sharma, Joe Root, Steve Smith, Kane Williamson. But Kohli is the best across formats.

Former Pakistani cricketer
—Mohammad Yousuf



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

A growing menace

Sir — The incident surrounding the chats on the Instagram group called “Bois Locker Room” by a group of teenagers discussing gangrape and objectifying girls is deplorable. This is not the mentality that school-going boys and girls should have. It is such a disgrace that young children can feel so entitled. They seem to think they can get away with such misdeeds, which is why they do not think twice before demeaning women. The messages shared online contain strong language. This is a clear violation of social media guidelines. The actions of the students cannot be justified by anyone.

However, this case has exposed only one such group: There must be many others. One hopes that the Delhi police takes serious action against all such abusive users because cybercrime can take a grim turn at any moment. Making sexually coloured remarks online is also sexual harassment. Social media laws should be made sterner to avoid such events in the future.

Ravi Teja Kathuripalli
Hyderabad

A scientific account of Covid-19

Scientific knowledge is vital to shape our response to the COVID-19 pandemic and plan a lockdown exit strategy. It is also crucial for the prevention of transmission, containment of spread, safe resumption of economic activities and development of vaccines and drugs. Thanks to the relentless research by scientists, our understanding of the virus is growing. For the layman, too, it is rewarding to learn about the disease — its origin, mode of transmission, infection and behaviour.

What’s known as of now is that the virus enters the human body by inhalation of virus-ridden particles that are contained in droplets expelled by an infected person. It comes into contact with cells embedded with ACE-2 receptors and locks into them with the aid of a surface protein and slips its RNA into the cell. The RNA makes multiple copies of the virus within the cell’s replication machinery. The infection spreads when copies of the virus burst out of the cell. Subsequently, antibodies target the virus and halt its progress in most cases. Antibodies are generated by the immune system. In some cases, the immune system goes into overdrive and causes cytokine storms. Sometimes it proves fatal. The



immune system’s response to the pathogen determines the outcome of the battle. So by now, it is evident that Coronavirus is deadly for some but harmless for others. The ability of the immune system to fight off the virus varies from person to person. But no one enjoys immunity from the virus. Whether the virus will mutate to become more lethal or less virulent is also a question scientists grapple with.

G David Milton
Maruthancode

Seize the moment

Sir — This refers to the article, “Opportunity in a crisis” (May 13) by Kalyani Shankar. Verily speaking, what drove a wedge between Sonia Gandhi and her political responsibilities as the Congress chief was her deteriorating health

condition, which necessitated that her son, Rahul Gandhi take charge. Ironically, he, too, was disenchanted with the top job and put in his papers in the aftermath of the party’s drubbing in parliamentary polls. However, to save the grand old party from dying, Sonia Gandhi took over as an

interim chief again mid-last year.

Intriguingly, with the Corona pandemic affecting political systems across the world, India, too, witnessed a pleasantly bizarre coming together of Opposition parties, irrespective of their political views/ideologies.

As a responsible head of the

Opposition, Sonia Gandhi extended her party’s complete support when the Prime Minister announced a nationwide lockdown. From expressing concern over the abysmal plight of the migrant workers to suggesting ways for economic revival, the Congress has not lagged behind in playing a constructive role as the main Opposition party. The writer is spot on to observe that this is an opportunity for the Congress to revive itself. But for that, party members need to unite.

Azhar A Khan
Rampur

Fight fake news

Sir — The circulation of fake news through social media platforms to the pliable public is only going to act as a breeding ground for panic. It is imperative that the Government and social media companies work in tandem to prevent the spread of false information.

Sucharita
Odisha

Send your feedback to:
letterstopioneer@gmail.com

Around the Globe

- Ride-hailing app Uber has laid off nearly 3,700 employees or about 14 per cent of its workforce via multiple Zoom calls and each call lasted less than three-minutes, with a common message: "Today will be your last working day with Uber". In video footage obtained by Daily Mail, a company manager said: "Today will be your last working day with Uber," as he informed some of the axed customer-support employees.
- German Chancellor Angela Merkel voiced frustration Wednesday that Russia was targeting her in hacking action, saying she had concrete proof of the "outrageous" spying attempts. "I can honestly say that it pains me. Every day I try to build a better relationship with Russia and on the other hand there is such hard evidence that Russian forces are doing this," she told parliament. Germany's intelligence service has repeatedly called out attempts by Russian hackers to spy on lawmakers or leading politicians.
- China on Wednesday provided medical equipment to Nepal's Army to fight the coronavirus pandemic, which has infected around 219 people in the Himalayan nation. The medical supplies reached here from Beijing in an aircraft of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) Air Force.
- In the global hunt for coronavirus treatments, a Japanese antiviral medicine known as Avigan has won plaudits from Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and \$128 million in Government funding. But it's not the only game in town. Camostat, a 35-year old pancreatitis drug made by Osaka-based Ono Pharmaceutical Co, has captured the interest of scientists in Japan and overseas with little fanfare or state assistance. The two compounds are among dozens undergoing testing around the globe and illustrate how the race to develop treatments and vaccines is still wide open despite politicians such as Abe and US President Donald Trump promoting the potential benefits of certain drugs.
- The young migrants and asylum seekers swim across the Rio Grande and clamber into the dense brush of Texas. Many are teens who left Central America on their own; others were sent along by parents from refugee camps in Mexico. They are as young as 10. Under US law they would normally be allowed to live with relatives while their cases wend their way through immigration courts. Instead the Trump administration is quickly expelling them under an emergency declaration citing the coronavirus pandemic, with 600 minors expelled in April alone. The expulsions are the latest administration measure aimed at preventing the entry of migrant children, following other programs such as the since-rescinded "zero tolerance" policy that resulted in thousands of family separations.
- Greece will allow the reopening of some beaches Saturday when a heat wave is expected to hit the country. The Civil Protection Agency says the measure would affect 515 beaches in Greece, where shade umbrellas must be planted at least 4 meters (13 feet) apart, and a maximum 40 people will be allowed per 1,000 square meters of beach.

Death toll from attack on Kabul maternity clinic rises to 24

Kabul: Officials on Wednesday raised the death toll from a militant attack on a maternity hospital in Kabul to 24, including mothers, nurses and two babies. A day after the shooting rampage, 20 infants were under medical observation, lying swaddled in blankets in hospital cribs.

Terrorists had stormed the hospital Tuesday, setting off an hours-long shootout with police. As the gunfire raged, Afghan security forces carried out babies and frantic mothers. The clinic in Dashti Barchi, a mostly Shia neighborhood in Afghanistan's capital, is supported by international aid group Doctors Without Borders.

NEW CLUSTERS POP UP
Europe debates summer tourist season

AP ■ BRUSSELS

New coronavirus clusters have appeared as nations struggle to balance reopening economies with preventing a second wave of infections and deaths, while in Europe, a debate erupted over the summer travel season.

Authorities in the Chinese city of Wuhan, where the pandemic first began late last year, reportedly were pressing ahead Wednesday to test all 1.1 million residents for the virus within 10 days after a handful of new infections were found.

In Lebanon, authorities reinstated a nationwide lockdown for four days beginning Wednesday night after a spike in reported infections and complaints from officials that social distancing rules were being ignored.

Despite the risk that loosening restrictions could lead to infection spikes, European nations have been seeking to restart cross-border travel, particularly as the summer holiday season looms for countries whose economies rely on tourists flocking to their beaches, museums and historical sites.

The European Union unveiled a plan to help citizens across its 27 nations salvage their summer vacations after months of coronavirus lockdown and resurrect Europe's badly battered tourism industry. The pandemic has prompted border closures across Europe and shut down the lifeline of cheap local flights.

The EU's executive arm, the European Commission, laid out its advice for lifting ID checks on hastily closed borders, helping to get airlines, ferries and buses running while



A quiet Waterloo Bridge in London on Wednesday

AP

ensuring the safety of passengers and crew, and preparing health measures for hotels to reassure clients.

It's not clear whether EU nations will follow that advice, since they, not Brussels, have the final say over health and security matters.

Some European countries have sought bilateral agreements with their neighbors.

Austria said its border with Germany would reopen fully on June 15, and that border checks would be reduced starting Friday. Chancellor Sebastian Kurz said Austria was aiming for similar agreements with Switzerland, Liechtenstein and its eastern neighbors "as long as the infection figures allow."

But he said it's too early to talk about such measures with Italy, one of the world's hardest-hit countries, with more than 220,000 infections and 30,000 deaths.

"There's no perspective for opening the border soon," Kurz told reporters Wednesday.

German Foreign Minister Heiko Mass said his country

will lift a blanket warning against foreign travel for European destinations before other places, but didn't specify when. Germany's warning against all non-essential tourist travel abroad runs until at least June 14. The border shutdowns have hit the travel industry hard. The Germany-based tour and hotel operator TUI said Wednesday it expects to cut thousands of jobs due to the pandemic.

Norway said it was opening its borders to people from other European countries who have a residence there or family they want to visit.

Tension in balancing people's safety from the virus against the severe economic fallout is playing out across the world.

Italy partially lifted lockdown restrictions last week only to see a big jump in confirmed coronavirus cases in its hardest-hit region.

Pakistan reported 2,000 new infections in a single day after crowds of people crammed into local markets as restrictions were eased.

Around 2,95,157 people have died from Covid-19 while almost 4,389,082 infections have been confirmed in more than 185 countries and territories. More than 1,632,915 people have recovered to date

COUNTRY	TOTAL CASES	TOTAL DEATHS
USA	1,417,398	84,141
Spain	2,71,095	27,104
Russia	2,42,271	2,212
UK	2,29,705	33,186
Italy	2,22,104	31,106
France	1,78,225	26,991
Germany	1,73,824	7,788
Brazil	1,80,737	12,635

- No immediate plans to return to strict social distancing rules in South Korea: Minister
- On a day when Covid-19 cases soared, healthcare supplies were scarce and an anguished doctor warned he was being sent to war without bullets, a cargo plane landed at the Los Angeles International Airport, supposedly loaded with the ammo doctors and nurses were begging for: some of the first N95 medical masks to reach the US in almost six weeks

US SENATE INTRODUCES CHINA SANCTIONS
BILL OVER COVID-19 ACCOUNTING

AFP ■ WASHINGTON

US Republican senators proposed legislation that would empower President Donald Trump to slap sanctions on China if Beijing does not give a "full accounting" for the coronavirus outbreak.

"The Chinese Communist Party must be held accountable for the detrimental role they played in this pandemic," said Senator Jim Inhofe, one of the sponsors of the "Covid-19 Accountability Act."

"Their outright deception of the origin and spread of the virus cost the world valuable time and lives as it began to spread," he said in a statement. The legislation will give Trump 60 days to certify to Congress that China has provided a full accounting on the Covid-19 outbreak to an investigation that could be led by the United

States and its allies, or a United Nations body like the World Health Organization.

Trump must also certify that China has closed its highest-risk wet markets and released Hong Kong activists arrested in post-Covid-19 crackdowns.

Without certification, Trump would be authorised under the legislation to impose sanctions like asset freezes, travel bans and visa revocations, as well as restricting Chinese businesses' access to US bank financing and capital markets.

"China refuses to allow the international community to go into the Wuhan lab to investigate," said Senator Lindsey Graham, another sponsor of the bill.

"They refuse to allow investigators to study how this outbreak started. I'm convinced China will never cooperate with a serious investigation unless they are made to do so."

SCO Foreign Ministers call for coordinated
multilateral efforts to fight against Covid-19

Beijing: Expressing serious concern over the "dangerous spread" of coronavirus and the mounting death toll, Foreign Ministers of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) member states said on Wednesday that the fight against Covid-19 requires coordinated and inclusive multilateral efforts with the central role of the UN system.

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar was among the Foreign Ministers of the eight-member SCO who attended an extraordinary video confer-

ence on Wednesday to discuss the cooperation to fight against Covid-19.

A joint statement issued at the end of the meeting said the fight against the Covid-19 pandemic requires strong, coordinated and inclusive multilateral efforts with the central role of the UN system.

The Ministers called for effective interaction of the SCO with the WHO and other international organisations and associations in the fight against coronavirus infection, it said.

In order to ensure epidemiological well-being and bio security in the region, the ministers consider it appropriate to adopt a comprehensive action plan of the SCO member states at the upcoming SCO summit in St. Petersburg, Russia.

The plan includes building the capacity of laboratories, improving the skills of specialists, conducting joint scientific research, developing vaccines and effective methods of treating diseases, the joint statement said.

PTI

Disease control strategies impact evolution of spreading viruses: Study

PTI ■ NEW YORK

Disease control strategies employed by Governments can dramatically alter the evolution of pathogens like the novel coronavirus, according to a study which says such measures can change the extent of symptoms a spreading virus causes in infected individuals.

The study, published in the journal PNAS, examined the pros and cons of silent transmission on the long-term survival of a virus.

According to the researchers, including those from the Princeton University in the US, the rapid spread of SARS-CoV-2 throughout the world is fuelled in part by the virus' ability to be transmitted by people who are not showing symptoms of infection.

The findings, they said, could inform how public health experts plan control measures such as quarantines, testing, and contact tracing, adding that such strategies themselves may alter the evolutionary

course of pathogenic viruses.

In the current study, the scientists sought to understand if viruses transmitting without symptoms enable the pathogen to infect greater numbers of people, or if the lack of symptoms lessen transmission and reduce the pathogen's long-term survival.

"An asymptomatic stage for various reasons could provide certain benefits to the pathogen," said Bryan Grenfell, study co-author from Princeton University.

"With the Covid-19 crisis, the importance of this asymptomatic phase has become extremely relevant," Grenfell said. He said that viruses, like more complex organisms, can also evolve by natural selection.

Mutation of the viral genome generates new variants of the pathogen, and if these changes benefit their transmission, then that strain of the virus will spread, the researchers explained.

As mutants spread across a population, they said, the

strains with strategies that contribute to their success survive, while those with infection methods that don't promote their transmission - such as killing the host before the virus can transmit to new susceptible individuals - will eventually die out.

"Viral evolution involves a tradeoff between increasing the rate of transmission and maintaining the host as a base of transmission," said Simon Levin, another co-author of the study from Princeton University.

Built for a global economy, Dubai now threatened by virus

AP ■ DUBAI

Dubai built a city of skyscrapers and artificial archipelagos on the promise of globalization, creating itself as a vital hub for the free movement of trade, people and money worldwide — all things that have been disrupted by the coronavirus pandemic.

Now, with events canceled, flights grounded and investment halted, this sheikdom in the United Arab Emirates is threatened both by the virus and a growing economic crisis. Under pressure even before the outbreak, Dubai and its vast web of state-linked industries face billions of dollars in looming debt repayments.

And though it was bailed out a decade earlier, Dubai may not be able to count on another cash infusion, given the crash in global oil prices.

"They facilitate the transport and the buying of things and the movement of people," said Karen E. Young, a scholar at the American Enterprise Institute who studies Gulf Arab economies. "That's not the world we're living in right now." Dubai's dedication to global trade is memorialized in the first sentence of the first article of its 50-Year Charter, something created last year by its ruler, Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, who has overseen much of the city's

growth.

"Dubai is destined to be a crossroad between East and West, and between North and South," the charter says.

Prior to the pandemic, it reached that status. Dubai International Airport for years has been the world's busiest for international travel. Its vast Jebel Ali Port ranks high globally for its cargo operations.

That economic diversity stems from the classic retelling of Dubai's story. After discovering oil reserves, but none nowhere as large as those in neighboring Abu Dhabi, then-ruler Sheikh Rashid bin Saeed Al Maktoum warned it would be a finite resource to the city-state.

To protect against that, Dubai became a company town. The state-owned long-haul carrier Emirates flies in foreign workers and tourists alike, who buy alcohol from state-owned duty-free shops, live in housing largely built by state-linked developers and hold credit cards from state-backed banks.

The wider nexus webs out into something U.S. diplomats have called "Dubai Inc." Much of it worked, up until the pandemic. "The aggregate of all those crises we faced in the past doesn't equal this one," said Tim Clark, president of Emirates airline, on an April 29 conference call.

AROUND THE WORLD IN PICTURES



Australia church fined for selling bleach as 'miracle' virus cure

AFP ■ SYDNEY

A church in Australia has been fined for unlawfully advertising a purported "miracle" coronavirus cure that contains a bleach product, the Therapeutic Goods Administration said Wednesday.

The medical regulator said MMS Australia had received 12 fines totalling Aus\$151,200 (US\$98,000) for promoting its "Miracle Mineral Solution" (MMS), which the TGA said contained a high concentration of sodium chlorite — a chemical used as a textile bleaching agent and disinfectant.

MMS Australia is a chapter of the US-based Genesis II Church of Health and Healing, which is subject to a US Justice Department injunction preventing it from selling or distributing its own version of MMS containing the bleach product chlorine dioxide.

A website purportedly linked to the Genesis II Church has listed testimonials claiming — without evidence — that MMS can cure everything from Alzheimer's to malaria.

Australia's TGA said it had fined the church because it was "concerned about the harmful effects that can be caused by the ingestion of MMS".

Flynn case boosts Trump's bid to undo Russia probe narrative

AP ■ WASHINGTON

When Michael Flynn was forced from the White House, Vice President Mike Pence said he was disappointed the national security adviser had misled him about his talks with the Russian ambassador. President Donald Trump called the deception unacceptable.

Now Pence says he'd be happy to see Flynn back in the administration, calling him a "patriot" as Trump pronounces him exonerated.

What a difference three years makes. The Justice Department's move to dismiss the criminal case against Flynn marks another step in his transformation, in the eyes of Trump and his allies, from rogue adviser to victim of runaway law enforcement.

The dismissal rewrites the narrative of the case that Trump's own Justice Department had advanced for the last three years in a way that former law enforcement officials say downplays the legitimate national security concerns they believe Flynn posed and the consequences of the lies he pleaded guilty to telling.

Despite virus, Pompeo talks West Bank annexation in Israel

AP ■ JERUSALEM

US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo met Wednesday with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to discuss the country's plans to annex parts of the West Bank, as Israeli troops shot and killed a Palestinian teen in a clash with stone-throwers in the occupied territory.

Pompeo's brief visit to Israel came at a tense time, as Israeli troops searched for the killers of a soldier killed a day earlier by a rock dropped from a rooftop during an army raid of a West Bank village.

With President Donald Trump facing election in November, Netanyahu and his nationalist base are eager to move ahead quickly with annexing portions of the West Bank. Annexation is expected to appeal to Trump's pro-Israel evangelical supporters, but is also bound to trigger widespread international condemnation. It would crush already faint Palestinian hopes of establishing a viable state alongside Israel, on lands Israel captured in the 1967 Mideast war.

Pompeo landed in Tel Aviv early Wednesday, donning a red, white and blue face mask, and headed directly to Jerusalem, receiving an exemption from Israel's mandatory two-week quarantine for arrivals due to the coronavirus outbreak. He is the first for-

eign official to visit Israel since January, before the country largely shut its borders to curb the pandemic.

Standing alongside Pompeo, Netanyahu said the eight-hour visit is a "testament to the strength of our alliance."

The two said their talks would focus on shared concerns about Iran, the battle against the coronavirus and Israel's incoming Government.

Iran trying to 'foment terror' during pandemic: US Secy

AFP ■ JERUSALEM

US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo accused Iran on Wednesday of using its resources to "foment terror" even as its people face the Middle East's deadliest coronavirus outbreak.

"Even during this pandemic the Iranians are using the ayatollah regime's resources to foment terror across the world, even when the people of Iran are struggling so mightily," Pompeo said.

"It tells you a lot about the soul of those people who lead that country," he added.

Ocasio-Cortez among top Dems promoting Biden-Sanders unity

AP ■ WASHINGTON

Joe Biden and the last rival he bested to become the presumptive Democratic presidential nominee, Bernie Sanders, on Wednesday announced the members of joint task forces their campaigns will use to promote party unity by hammering out consensus on six top policy issues.

They include New York Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, who will provide input on combating climate change and potentially become a key conduit between strong progressives who supported Sanders and backers of the more centrist Biden.

Each committee has eight members and will be focused on health care, immigration, education, criminal justice reform, climate change and the economy, which has taken a sharp downturn amid shutdowns to slow the spread of the coronavirus.

Trend Blazer

Social media has its pros too: Pankaj

Actor **PANKAJ TRIPATHI**, who remained elusive on social media for the longest time, says during the lockdown he realised the medium has its pros, too.

“It’s difficult to not get taken in by the hustle-bustle of social media. But during the lockdown, I realised it has its pros too. I was always wary that being too active on social media will occupy too much of my mind and I will start focusing on things that don’t add value to my craft as an actor,” Pankaj said.

Pankaj has always believed that learning is boundless.

On the acting front, he will next be seen in Kabir Khan’s *83*.

‘I kind of like the fact that not only there are very well-done versions of the character (Batman) which seem pretty definitive, but I wondered that there are multiple definitive playings of the character, too. You’ve seen this sort of lighter, jaded or animalistic version. But where’s my opening? It’s a legacy part, right? I like that.’

—Robert Pattinson

Actor **MANISHA KOIRALA** tweeted that the COVID-19 pandemic has changed her sleep pattern and that she finds herself wide awake even after midnight.

“It’s almost like a child who is unwilling to go to sleep,” she tweeted.

Reacting to her tweet, netizens offered her a few suggestions. One user requested her to explain the same to his mom because he gets scolded for getting up late every day. Manisha responded saying that she also gets scolded by her mom for waking up late.

Reese returns to rom-com genre

Actor **REESE WITHERSPOON** is all set to return to the romance genre with *Your Place or Mine* and *The Cactus* on Netflix.

Along with starring in the films, she will also produce the projects through her banner, Hello Sunshine company.

Witherspoon has starred in several romantic hits throughout her career, including *Sweet Home Alabama*, *This Means War*, *Pleasantville* and *Home Again*.

Your Place or Mine is about a couple of long-distance best friends who change each other’s lives when one decides to pursue a lifelong dream. The other friend comes forward to help by looking after her teenage son.

GIVE ART A CHANCE

Online performances have been leading the way in elevating humans from feeling hemmed in during this time. By Suman Doonga



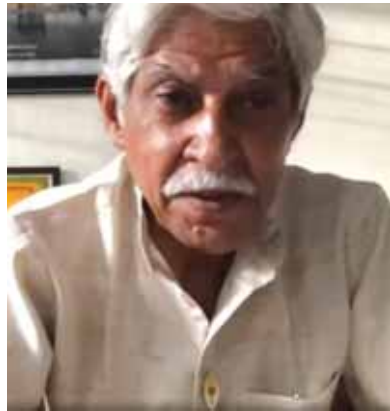
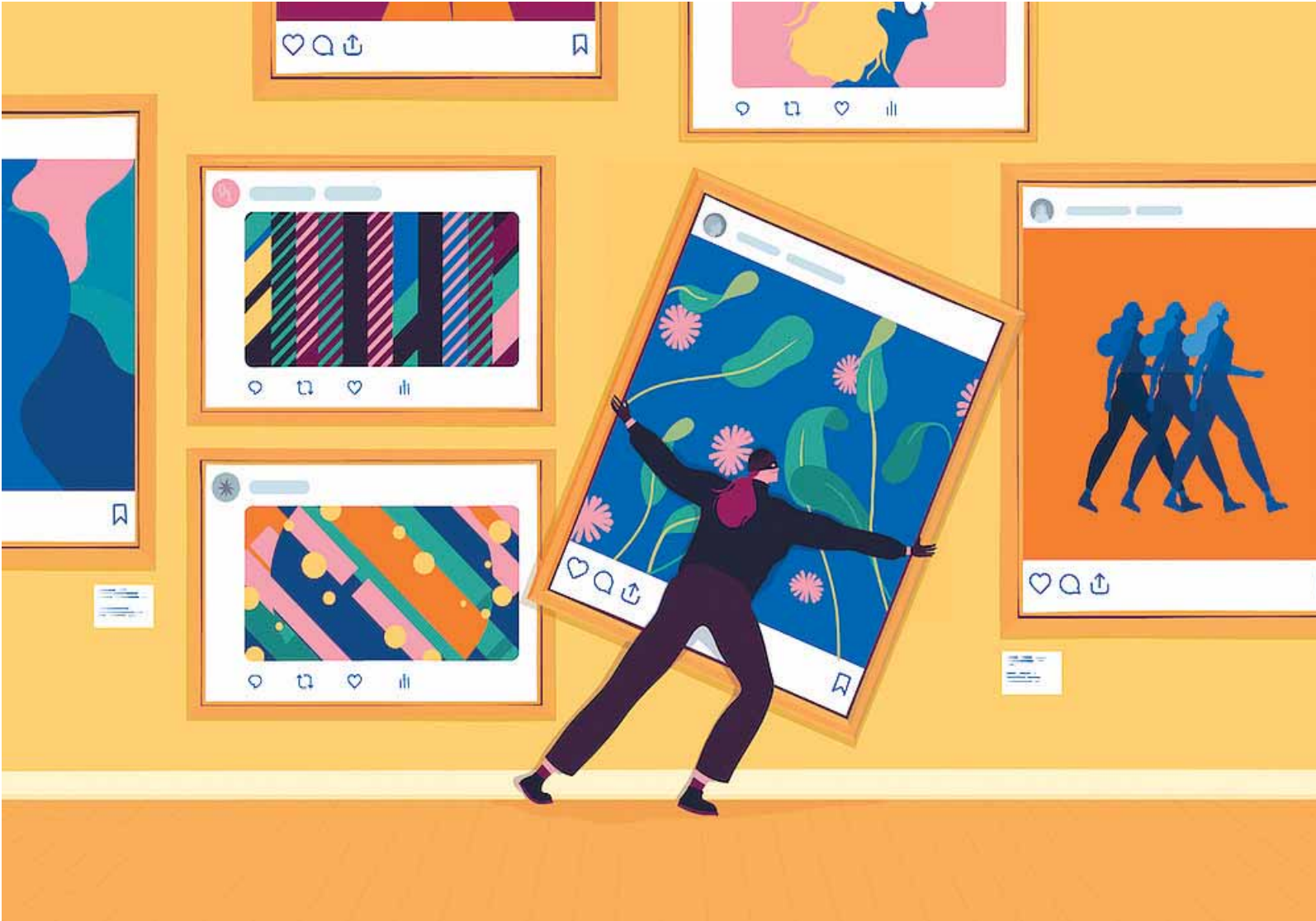
It seems like the collective fight against COVID-19 is here to stay for a while now. We need to be more patient within the comfort of our homes to flatten the curve of the spread. With most of us spending so much time online, as we follow the lockdown rules, one can’t miss the trend of art presentation and appreciation on the digital platform. There is more of new music presentations, dance performances, painting works, poetry renditions, storytelling, memes, comics, graphic works, animation skits, photo stories and short documentaries prepared to create awareness on health and wellness.

The majority of us across the world are trying to add positivity to our lives by occupying our minds with new interests, experiencing sharing and new learnings along with the much-needed daily dose of yoga and meditation sessions. To add an element of leisure, many artists are coming online from all over the world and streaming their live performances for the audience globally while overcoming technological and aesthetic issues.

In these times of social distancing, Spic Macay (Society for Promotion of Indian Classical Music And Culture Among Youth) has launched the Spic Macay Rendezvous Series for all age groups to interact online with some of the greatest exponents of Indian classical music, dance, arts and crafts, cinema and yoga.

The society has already hosted online sessions with *bansuri* guru, Pt Hari Prasad Chourasia, Indian classical vocalist, Pt Jasraj, Mohiniattam dancer, Dr Neena Prasad, carnatic vocalist, Sudha Raghunathan, cinema and theatre actress-producer, Nandita Das and MK Raina, as well as an interaction with social activist Vandana Shiva on the Earth Day theme. Spic Macay has been posting announcements of the forthcoming online programmes under the series via its website, Facebook, Instagram and Twitter handles along with WhatsApp alerts for inviting more people to get inspired and appreciate the experiences.

This lockdown has brought back clean air to our metro cities, granted us



the freedom to re-imagine our lives and engage with our personal interests. However ironic as it may sound, it has provided us the freedom to rediscover relationships that were almost forgotten. It has given us the freedom to pause and rewind so that we can be human again. Everything appears more organised. Stars seem more visible at night. An unplanned grand experiment has changed earth.

One of the oldest and well-known Sankat-Mochan festivals of Indian classical music, which, over the years has been inviting some eminent artistes of India to Varanasi, is now streaming digitally for the first time

We have taken up an initiative calling to ‘Save the Artist’ with digital social networking. Artistes from Indian classical music, dance and folk arts are uploading their videos that share their perspectives on how they think we can save various art forms. In unique ways, one can also support young artistes in this difficult time of deadly pandemic. The time is now to encourage people to use this period for their personal development.

One of the oldest and well-known Sankat-Mochan festivals of Indian classical music, which, over the years has been inviting some eminent artistes of India to Varanasi, is now streaming digitally for the first time.

Indian classical dancers abroad are taking online classes to beat lockdown blues. Arunima, a trained Kuchipudi dancer from UK, plans to take performances online too, under her banner ‘Dance Karona’. While entertaining people all over the world with their digital and online concerts, artistes are also raising funds to support frontline health workers. The initiative is to supply them with masks, hand sanitisers and PPE

kits.

Another encouraging story comes from the Hyderabad Art Society, lead by artist Ramana Reddy, which has launched a new initiative to paint their perspective on ongoing COVID-19, a positive step to motivate youngsters to express their thoughts. He shares, “As an activity, arts give strength where they can reveal their inner feelings and respond to the current situation.”

Globally, many popular museums are inviting people to explore their shows and exhibits virtually. Administrations and governments are also announcing support to the artistes’ community. The Rajasthan state government has announced support to the folk artists with the ‘Chief Minister’s Folk Artist Encouragement Scheme’. The scheme intends to encourage the solo folk artistes living in rural areas of the state to shoot a 15-20 minutes video performance at their homes and send the same to the government, so that it can be appreciated through the digital social media platforms.

(The writer is the Director, Media, of Spic Macay.)

Playing it out

Movie-related products still hit stores despite film delays

Hollywood pressed pause on releasing most major films in theatres to combat the Coronavirus outbreak but that hasn’t necessarily been the case for toys and merchandise related to those films.

Despite film delays, toy production and gaming companies are often staying on schedule, releasing a variety of products tied to major titles from *Black Widow* to *Minions: The Rise of Gru* in hopes of weathering through the pandemic. Most products are already in retail stores, appearing on shelves and being sold online several months to a year ahead of the film’s new release date.

Some believe toy-makers made the right choice to sell products now rather than later. Especially, since many of the products have already been manufactured and packaged for sale.

“The train had already started moving on these toys and there was no way to stop it,” said James Zahn, senior editor at *The Toy Insider*. He doesn’t expect those products to sell as quickly when there’s no film to support them, but he believes putting them on sale now is possibly the best option instead of being stored away in a warehouse, which he thinks is the worst-case scenario.

Zahn said quickly selling the toys and merchandise on clearance could be another option.

“It can become very cost-



ly,” he said. “You’re basically paying rent, monthly rent to a warehouse. You need to turn that product quickly. Everything is on schedule. Now, that schedule is out of sync. It’s not just toys. It’s a full marketing program that has multiple moving pieces between different licensing partnerships.”

Cinemas across the world have been closed since mid-March with many film releases postponed for a later date. Some states are looking to soon reopen theatres.

With most theatres closed, studios opted to funnel their new or recently released films on home viewing platforms. That happened with Pixar’s *Onward*, which played in theatres for weeks before it was forced onto a digital platform, making more sense for toy companies to continue to release their product to coincide with the animated film.

Marvel’s *Black Widow* has been postponed until November, but products related to the film including toys and books along with characters from the film highlighted on a free-to-play mobile game. A collection of dolls are at retail stores for the live-action remake

of the animated classic *Mulan*, which was delayed until July 24.

Mattel said products for *Top Gun: Maverick*, which had an original July release, will begin rolling out this summer and continue to launch throughout the fall leading up to the new release date on December 23.

Films such as *Minions: The Rise of Gru* and *F9* from the *Fast and Furious* saga have been postponed for a full year, and *Ghostbusters: Afterlife* was delayed by several months. But products for those films can be found online.

LEGO has a particular plan in place for next year’s *Minions* movie. “We recently launched two LEGO Minions building sets that are inspired by the property and characters, but we are holding back the rest of the collection that is directly linked to the upcoming film to coincide with the new premiere date,” said Mike Ilacqua, head of marketing for LEGO Group.

Zahn said the early release of products could be damaging for *F9* and *Minions*. He also said there’s a risk that the emotional connection could be harmed for the child or adult if they are unable to see the actual film. He

calls the film “a commercial for the product,” especially for characters being introduced in the new films such as Taskmaster and Red Guardian in *Black Widow*.

In many cases, viewers of the film may want to act out what they’ve seen. “Certain characters may become peg warmers, as they call it, where kids are buying the *Black Widow*, but they’re not buying the other characters that they’re just not familiar with on a collector standpoint,” he said.

Teiko Duplessis, a mother of two, agrees to a certain extent. “If you grew up watching Marvel films, it’s a win-win to purchase the merchandise, especially if you can’t see the film,” said Duplessis, an Illinois resident who bought a Scooby Doo T-shirt while store shopping for her daughter. The shirt was tied to the Warner Bros. film ‘Scoob!’ which will go straight to digital on May 15.

Duplessis said she’s grateful for her purchase, and thinking about buying more. “My kids are familiar with Scooby Doo,” she said. “The film is a bonus. Whether they have it out or not, it’s not a deal breaker for them.” —AP

Know mental repercussions of COVID-19

A global team led University of New South Wales (UNSW), Sydney aims to track the long-term impacts of COVID-19 on the mental health of thousands of people from the womb to old age. The team will explore for the first time what they describe as this pandemic’s toxic combination of two extreme psychological stressors: existential threat and social isolation.

They are hoping to recruit around 3,000 people from Australia, the UK and US to evaluate their mood before and after the onset of the pandemic and to track their cognitive function and social networks over the coming months. It has a special focus on two subgroups thought to be, especially vulnerable to the shock of enforced isolation: adolescents and pregnant women.

“The COVID-19 pandemic has changed people’s lives so drastically that it is difficult to know how protracted the effects may be,” said study’s chief investigator Dr Susanne Schweizer from UNSW’s School of Psychology.

“We’re particularly interested in younger people because they are at a time of social reorientation away from the family towards their peers, which is all of a sudden being disrupted by social distancing,” Schweizer added.

The research team are concerned that the long-term effects of social isolation in this group may come at a cost to their cognitive development due to schools being

closed as they are in the US and the UK or drastically changed as in the case of Australia.

According to the researchers, initially, participants will be asked to complete an hour-long survey online in a laptop or smartphone browser to assess mood before and after the pandemic. They will be asked to evaluate their connections to people in their social network and will also be invited to complete tasks that assess working memory — the ability to store information in memory for short amounts of time.

After three months — and then again after six — participants will again be asked to fill in a shorter survey to track progress in mood, cognitive function and social network.

“We hope that by the end of the study, we will have reliable and accurate data so that we can qualify the long-term effects of this pandemic. By working together with other research teams at the universities of Oxford and Cambridge in the UK and Oregon and Pittsburgh in the US, we are able to ask these questions across different populations,” Schweizer said.

“By investigating the impact of the pandemic on mental health and what happens when the protection of a social support network suddenly disappears, we will be much better positioned to respond to the future health care needs of our national and global populations,” she noted.

—IANS



BE THE CHANGE

Dr AJAY MURDIA, founder, Indira IVF Group of Fertility Clinics, talks about his idea behind opening the centre, its four pillars and ninth foundation day

IVF man of India Dr Ajay Murdia established Indira IVF group of fertility Clinics on May 2, 2011. Through his facebook post he shared that IVF won't celebrate its ninth foundation day this year. He also requested his Indira IVF family to be a part of candle of hope activity at 7 pm on May 2 to send out a positive message across.

Talking about Spanish flu and plague, he said that with patience and strength we will get over the Coronavirus. He also talked about how this is an emotional moment for couples without children and can bring harmonal disbalance.

Dr Ajay also thanked his team, which includes 200 IVF specialists, more than 135 embryologist and staffs more than 2,000. "It is the collective effort of all of us, we should celebrate it together," said he.

The group ensures the parents that since infertility has challenged you, we are here to change all that for you and you are going to come out stronger from it. It is equipped with updated technology and state-of-the-art infrastructure, which caters for a host of infertility treatments like IVF (In vitro fertilization), Laser Assisted Hatching, Cryopreservation, ICSI, IUI, Blastocyst culture and transfer, Laparoscopy, Hysteroscopy including donor programs. It is armed with the state-of-the-art infrastructure, advanced equipment and a pool of renowned physicians.

How well is Indian market treating the IVF treatment? Dr Ajay says, "Fertility or IVF treatment in India has undergone a sea of change since the first baby was born by this technology in India back in 1986. Even after almost 42 years after the world's



first test tube i. e Louise Brown born by IVF technique still the accessibility, affordability for acquiring IVF treatment still remains an issue to address. Almost 1 in every 8 couple have infertility issue. Changing lifestyle & Co morbidities associated with it other than medical conditions has increased the incidence in infertility. Despite this the percentage of infertile couple seeking the treatment is very low. Fertility clinics in India still have to penetrate the 2 tier & 3 tiers cities let alone the Metro cities properly. Affordability & lack of awareness about the available treatment options for infertility is a major cause for couple seeking IVF by treatment. While in rural areas infertility is still considered a social stig-

ma other than conservative & religious concerns."

How did he come up with the idea of opening a fertility centre? "Amidst social taboos, male dominance and stigmatisation, there was a time in the year 1988, when people were concerned about anything but women and infertility. All who were blamed for the misfortune and infertility were women regardless of the reality of both can equally be the reason of the same and always punished the women by remarrying, isolating and even considering them ill-fated. A time when everything was biased, I let go of the perks of a comfortable government job and unlike any other man of that time, named my two room clinic

after my wife Indira," said Dr Ajay.

The group works on four pillars:

AFFORDABILITY

The group has been working to bring down the cost of IVF treatment for the masses. The cost of IVF cycle has been brought down significantly. It has made the treatment affordable for various sections of the society.

AWARENESS

The group has been actively spreading awareness using scientific methods to deal with infertility. Under the banner *Nisantanta Bharat Chodo*, they have organised many infertility checkups and free awareness camps throughout the nation.

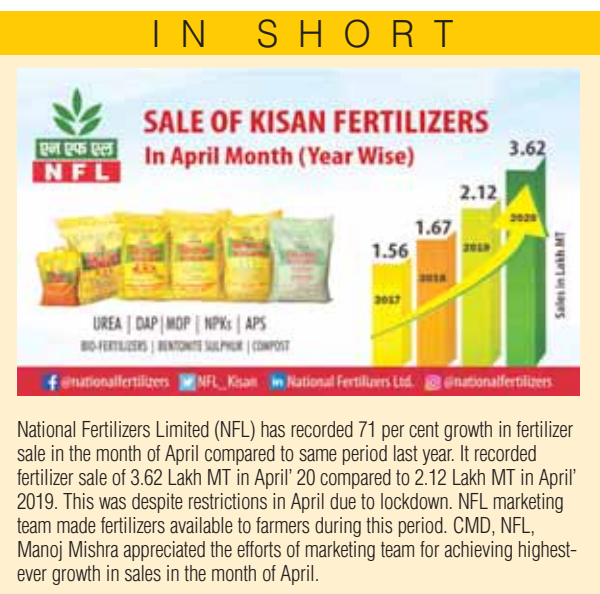
ASSURANCE

To provide advanced fertility set up across India, they have established many IVF centres throughout the nation. With an aim to make infertility treatment available, it plans to provide its services within walking distance from their home.

ACCESSIBILITY

The success rates speak for themselves. The group is equipped with the latest technology and a hardworking team, who are dedicated to bringing happiness in the lives of every couple at different Indira IVF centers.

On a daily basis, they see almost 60 success stories across 20 states, with the number growing with its presence pan India.



IP University organises online FDP

University School of Management Studies (USMS), IP University organises FDP for a week on *Global Economy in COVID-19: Opportunities and Challenges* from May 11 to 15. The Vice Chancellor of the university, Professor Mahesh Verma inaugurated it online on the first day.

According to the Dean-USMS Professor Neena Sinha, the FDP is designed to enhance the participants' understanding of the theme by bringing academia, industry and researchers from diverse backgrounds together. It will explore the strategies for managing the emerging opportunities and challenges and the recent developments in the light of the pandemic.

Experts like Professor Himanshu Rai, Director-IIM, Indore; Atul Gupta, President-ICAI; Dr Narayan Pendse, Principal Consultant-Strategy & Operations at Kings Hospital, Sri Lanka; Professor Wayne Visser, AMS, Belgium; Professor Kiran Momaya, IIT Mumbai; Professor Madu Vij, FMS Delhi; Dr John Mendy,

University of UK; Professor Deepak Tandon, IMI Delhi; Professor K K Aggarwal, Chairman-NBA & founder VC of IP University connect online as a mentor or resource person for this week long FDP.

The FDP deliberates upon topics like Global economy and the Corona crisis: Towards protectionism or integration? Adapting HRM in the time of Corona, remote work during this crisis, performance management, building mental well being and resiliency, corporate response, role of ICT, digitalisation, digitalisation in higher education, industry 4.0, mathematical modelling, sustainable development, managing technology and innovation, CSR, media view, impact of entrepreneurship, managing global recession, final markets and institutes: the road ahead, safeguarding investments, PPP, anti-virus drugs, marketing strategies, digital marketing, social media, urban planning, etc.

The FDP is open to research scholars & faculty members of any college or university.



Tips for productive work from home

As the world gears up to battle the COVID-19 pandemic, businesses galore are grappling to stay afloat and continue the momentum. Amidst the chaos, most of the employees have been given strict mandates of working from home. Many are still processing, adapting and to the new normative while stepping out only when absolutely essential.

Most of us are dealing with this situation with mixed feelings about working from home. Not being able to see your work buddies or even suddenly craving that instant coffee from the office cafeteria can let many of us down. Some of us, on the other hand, relish these special moments of being able to just work in our jammies with a hot cup of freshly brewed tea at home.

For those struggling to concentrate or those reveling the peaceful quite of their home workstation, here are five tricks to ensure a productive WFH:

Set-up a specified workspace: While it's fun and quite relaxing to work from your bed or working up a cool presentation as you laze about on that laid-back couch, studies have validated that working from a set area has a positive impact on an individuals' productivity. A desk not only allows us to differentiate between work and family time in this period of self-isolation, but also encourages and adds to better efficiency, minimal distractions and reduced fatigue.

Skill building: While stepping out of the house is not be an option, doing an online course could help you build on

your expertise and up-skill, or even allow for a fun change of pace. Courses ranging from digital marketing, art courses, disaster management (especially in these times), music, business management etc. could help you keep busy and entertained.

Family time: A lot of times working from home results in 12-14 hours of working. When you are in your comfortable space the work timings are bound to go beyond the normal 9-6. In a stressful time like this allow multiple 15 minute designated breaks to yourself, to move around and spend time with your family.

Wellness and happiness: Social isolation, while a demanding period, could be a period of healing and learning. Find something you have always wanted to do but couldn't because you didn't have the time, or something that you haven't touched in a long time. This time can be utilized to focus on individual wellness, happiness and overall mental and spiritual growth.

Safe distance: Social distance is the go to phrase these days but screen-distance has been taught to several of us since our childhoods. The ideal distance of your screen from your face is about the length of your arm, so sit at a relaxed state and stretch out your arm. If your finger lightly touches your screen, it's at the perfect distance and will help reduce the strain on your eyes. So distance it out and play safe. Enjoy while you work at home.

(This is an authored article by Chulamas Jitpatima, Director, MQDC India.)

The team of next-tech lab of SRM University, Andhra Pradesh, has brought laurels to the institution by winning three hackathons in a row.

During the lockdown, while some devoted their time to newfound hobbies, the young researchers successfully developed a fresh multiplayer virtual reality game called 'Whack A Mole' and a cloud-based multiplayer FPS in Virtual Reality called 'Desert Shooter'. The three-member team has successfully bagged the second prize in the International / Professional Award at SKYHacks2020; Best echoAR Hack at Silicon Valley Hacks; and Best AR/VR hack at HackNow, organised by Cal Hacks, a non-profit organisation at the University of Berkeley, California.

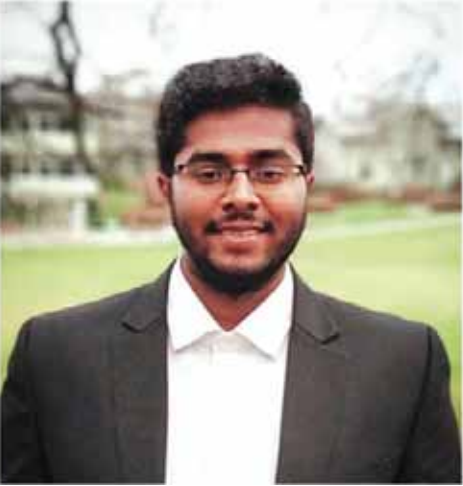
When asked how the idea of making such a game crossed their minds, Epperla Karthik, a second year student of Computer Science and Engineering, said, "My family loves attending tradeshows. Every time we attend any, my father and I challenge each other to win a game of Whack A Mole. But due to the strict

Scaling new heights



quarantine that we are following, it's been a while now that we exchanged such challenges. My teammates and I, being gaming and virtual reality enthusiasts, decided to develop a VR version of the game."

'Whack A Mole' is a multiplayer virtual reality game that allows users to play



against the computer or their families or both. One can use it both on iOS and Android. It is built on Unity3D, on top of Photon PUN and GoogleVR SDK. It is also integrated with Google Firebase. "This is the first time we have worked on developing virtual reality



games and networking. As we had to run the game on our phone to record the gameplay, the output video on YouTube is a bit blurry," explained Khushboo Sharma, another member of the team and a second year student of Computer Science and Engineering. "We completed



the development of the game in approximately 20 hours, beginning from the scratch. We developed a few of our own UI elements and game assets. I feel the User-Interface of the app and the effects are pretty cool. VR development is real fun. Moreover, there are a lot of API and SDK that

unity supports," exclaimed Koushik Bhargav, a third year student of Computer Science and Engineering and the third member of the team.

The team has plans to make this game to be a cross-platform game. Therefore, their next plan of action is to develop its web version and give the users an immersive experience.

'Desert Shooter' is another multiplayer virtual reality game developed by the team that allows users to play against the computer or their families or both. You can connect with your friends and play together. The game consists of a swarm of robot ships moving towards you and you have to protect yourself from them. "The interesting part is that all of this happens in mixed reality, which makes the game immersive. We built it on Unity3D, on top of Photon PUN and GoogleVR SDK, Echoar. It is also integrated with Google Firebase and the assets are stored in echoar cloud. This project won the best AR/VR hack at 'Hack: Now' which is organised by the University of Berkeley, California," said Epperla.

PILLARS OF STRENGTH

To deal with the COVID-19 pandemic, the government of India is undertaking strict measures of social distancing and quarantine. People suspected of been exposed to the infection are isolated and the rest have been asked to practice social distancing. Although these measures are in the benefit of the community at large, the psychological effects of lockdown on children cannot be ignored. With restricted mobility and social distancing, children will experience social isolation and loss of connectedness with peers leading to subjective alienation. As children have limited resources to understand the complexities of social situation, their incapability to understand the present scenario during the pandemic and the necessity of measures like social distancing, lockdown and quarantine may lead to frustration and outburst of temper tantrums.

The pandemic has also led to children missing out their school and classes which will directly affect



their physical as well as mental health. Disrupted daily routine with no sense of structure and environmental stimulation may make them feel anxious, depressed and lonely. Moreover, with the change in their regular routine, children may become clingier, learn to seek negative attention and become increasingly dependent on their parents. During this period of lockdown, children are physically less active, have longer exposure to screen time, irregular sleep patterns and unhealthy diets which in turn can lead to unhealthy weight gain and poor cardiorespiratory fitness.

In this scenario, children need special attention. During the formative years

of life, the role of parents is very crucial. Any disruption during this phase can have long term effects on the perceived attachment of the child. However, this does not discount the significant role of parents throughout the life. Conflict and poor attachment with the primary caregivers can make a child more vulnerable and can pose a threat to their mental health. Children exposed to negative emotions are at a higher risk of developing acute stress disorder, adjustment disorder and feelings of sadness and grief. In times of stress, poor parenting can have long-term adverse effects on the mental health of children making them more vulnerable to devel-

op mood disorders, psychosis and suicide in adulthood.

With the ongoing period of uncertainty, parents act as significant protective factors. Therefore, it becomes increasingly important for all parents to practice 'Attuned Parenting.' Attunement refers to state of awareness where parents pay attention to the feelings of the child and become responsive. In times of stress, especially due to the ongoing pandemic, children may find it difficult to express verbally and their underlying feelings may manifest itself physically, behaviourally and/or cognitively in the form of anger outburst, defiance, sleep problems and psycho-somatic complaints. Thus the parents' role is to observe for sign of distress and related feelings. With the help of few activities parents can address negative feeling of the child and foster positivity and a sense of well being.

(This is an authored article by Psychologist Gunjan Joshi.)

K Vinayak Rao takes over as finance member at AAI

K Vinayak Rao, Indian Railways Accounts Service (IRAS) officer of 1987 batch has taken over the charge of Member (Finance) from May 13 on the Board of the Airports Authority of India. Prior to this appointment, Rao was serving as Member (Finance) in Delhi Development Authority (DDA).

As Member (Finance) of AAI, Rao will be the overall in-charge of finance, accounts and financial operation of the organisation. He will also be responsible for evolving, formulating policies and strategies related to entire gamut of finance operation, including resource mobilisation and statutory compliances. He will also play a leadership role and provide effective support in achieving sustained growth of the organisation's business.

During his tenure in Indian Railways, he has served in various capacities in zonal railways, construction projects, and production units. He has worked as Executive Director (Finance Expenditure) in Railway Board (Ministry of Railways) from 2009 to 2014. He was also on the Board of Pipavay Railway Corporation Limited (PRCL) and Railway Energy Management Company (REMC) Ltd.

Apart from this, he also has a wide experience in power sector as



he has served as Member (Finance) in the erstwhile Maharashtra State Electricity Board and Director (Finance) in the four restructured companies from 2003- 2009. He played an instrumental role in restructuring of Maharashtra State Electricity Board (MSEB).

Babar takes lead role

Azam replaces Sarfaraz as Pak white ball captain; Azhar remains Test in-charge

PTI ■ KARACHI

Star batsman Babar Azam on Wednesday took over the reins of Pakistan's white-ball cricket after being appointed as the ODI skipper. Azhar Ali will continue to lead in Tests, the Pakistan Cricket Board announced.

Babar, who was one of the world's leading batsmen across formats last year and already the T20 skipper, replaced wicket-keeper batsman Sarfaraz Ahmed as the ODI captain for the 2020-21 season. Pakistan is scheduled to play six ODIs and 20 T20Is, besides the Asia Cup and the T20 World Cup this season.

"I want to congratulate Azhar Ali and Babar Azam for getting captaincy extensions," chief selector and head coach Misbah-ul-Haq said in a PCB statement.

"This is absolutely the right decision as they also require certainty and clarity on their future roles. I am sure they will now start looking to the future and start planning so that they can build sides that can perform at the expected levels."

"We have kept in mind who can serve us in the long run. We have kept the 2023 World Cup in mind while picking Babar as ODI captain. He is the captain of T20 side, he is a top-class performer and this is the right time to

groom him," Misbah said.

"He is taking the challenge head on. Since he became our T20 captain his Test performance has also improved. So why not, if he can take responsibility," said the former Pakistan captain.

Pakistan are scheduled to play two T20Is in Ireland in July and after that they are slated to travel to England to play three Tests and as many T20Is.

However, a decision on the England tour will be made by mid-June amid the ongoing coronavirus pandemic, PCB chief executive Wasim Khan has said.

The officials of both the PCB and England and Wales Cricket Board will be having an online meeting on Friday.

Pakistan also announced an 18-player men's central contract list for the 2020-21 season, which will come into effect from July 1. Hasan Ali, Mohammad Amir and Wahab Riaz missed out, while Imam-ul-Haq, Sarfaraz Ahmed and Yasir Shah slipped one category each.

"The selectors have made the tough decisions to leave out Amir, Hasan and Wahab but considering Hasan missed most of the season due to an injury and Amir and Wahab decided to focus on white-ball cricket, this was the right move," Misbah said.

"However, Amir and Wahab



Babar Azam raises his bat after he scored hundred against New Zealand during 2019 WC AP

are senior and experienced bowlers and they remain in contention as we believe they can still contribute to the Pakistan men's

cricket team and also mentor our young battery of fast bowlers."

On former skipper Sarfaraz, Misbah said: "I feel Sarfaraz can

"We have kept in mind who can serve us in the long run. We have kept the 2023 World Cup in mind while picking Babar as ODI captain. He is the captain of T20 side, he is a top-class performer and this is the right time to groom him."

— MISBAH UL HAQ

"I feel Sarfaraz can play all three formats. He is not captain so he has been demoted. But he is very much in our plans. Mohammad Rizwan is there but he will be considered. He is still a valuable player."

— MISBAH UL HAQ (on Sarfaraz' future)

play all three formats. He has been valued. He is not captain so he has been demoted. But he is very much in our plans. Mohammad Rizwan is there but he will be considered. He is still a valuable player."

Naseem Shah and Iftikhar Ahmad are the two new faces in the contract list.

The 17-year-old Naseem had become the youngest Test bowler to take a five wicket haul and a hat-trick in consecutive Tests against Sri Lanka and Bangladesh in Karachi and Rawalpindi, respectively, while Iftikhar had played two Tests, two ODIs and seven T20Is in the 2019-20 season.

Shaheen Shah Afridi, who took 18 Test and two T20I wickets for Pakistan in the 2019-20 season, moved up in Category A.

Abid Ali, Mohammad Rizwan and Shan Masood have been awarded Category B.

PCB also created a new Emerging Players' Category and included Haider Ali and pacers Haris Rauf and Mohammad Hasnain as initial inductees.

"I am thankful to the PCB Chairman for supporting our recommendation to give emerging player contracts to Haider, Haris and Hasnain. This is part of our forward-looking strategy and investing in the future, while also encouraging potential future national team players," Misbah said.

PCB CENTRAL CONTRACT LIST

Category A: Azhar Ali, Babar Azam, Shaheen Shah Afridi.

Category B: Abid Ali, Asad Shafiq, Haris Sohail, Mohammad Abbas, Mohammad Rizwan, Sarfaraz Ahmed, Shadab Khan, Shan Masood, Yasir Shah.

Category C: Fakhar Zaman, Iftikhar Ahmed, Imad Wasim, Imam-ul-Haq, Naseem Shah, Usman Shinwari.

Emerging Players' Category: Haider Ali, Haris Rauf, Mohammad Hasnain.



'Need to develop mental toughness of Australians'

NEW DELHI: The Indian women's cricket team needs to develop the mental toughness that the mighty Australians possess to end its drought of winning a world title, feels veteran pacer Jhulan Goswami.

Like the men's team, Indian women have been consistently reaching the knock-out stages of ICC events of late but have failed to lay their hands on the trophy. In fact, they are yet to win a world title.

"Obviously, it is a mind issue but it doesn't mean the players don't have it in them go all the way. We have been playing well in the last three years, just not been able to win world titles. Australia are far ahead because they know how to win big games," Jhulan, the leading wicket-taker in women's ODIs, said.

India had beaten Australia in the league stage of both the tri-series and T20 World Cup but lost to them in the final on each occasion.

"You know you can come back after losing in the group stage but you can't in knock-outs. Mindset plays a big role in that scenario, more than the skill."

"It shows how mentally strong you are, how you control your nerves. If you can do that, you will be ahead of the other teams," said Jhulan.

"Not just the women's team, you see men's and U-19 team also losing finals recently," the 37-year-old said referring to India's loss in the men's U-19 World Cup final. The Indian men's team too has not won a global trophy since 2013.

Jhulan feels the Australian women owe their unmatched success to the women's Big Bash League, which has given their players exposure and stiff competition.

"The current women's Australian team is like the Australian men's team of the past (which won three ODIs World Cups from 1999-2007). There is a reason why they are such a superior side. Their set-up is much bigger and Big Bash has given them a lot of opportunities and exposure," said Jhulan.

She said Indian women's cricket too needs a T20 league to get better.

"You see how Indian men's cricket improved after the IPL (in 2008). Earlier there was a gap between an Indian cricketer and domestic player but it changed after the IPL. The youngsters look more confident and know how to handle the big stage."

"We don't have a competitive league at the moment. First-class structure is also important but leagues like WBBL and IPL prepare you for the big stage," Jhulan, who only plays 50-over cricket, reckoned.

Calls for a women's IPL have been growing but some argue that the local talent pool is not enough for a full-fledged event.

The women's team is in need of more power-hitters like Shafali Verma and world-class medium pacers like Jhulan and Shikha Pandey, especially in the T20 format.

Jhulan said it takes time to produce pacers and insisted that there is enough talent available.

"It is not the not that we don't have enough medium pacers in domestic cricket. It takes time to groom them. You can't produce them overnight. It is a process and we have all gone through that. Shikha is also not an overnight product," she said.

Dhoni most powerful batsman I have ever seen: Chappell

IAN S ■ SYDNEY

Former India coach Greg Chappell said that MS Dhoni is the most powerful batsman he has ever seen.

Chappell was coach of the Indian team for two controversial-riddled years between 2005 and 2007 in which he clashed with several senior members of the team, especially then-captain and current BCCI President Sourav Ganguly.

His time, however, was also known for the rise of several younger players in the squad including Dhoni and Suresh Raina.

"I vividly remember that I was left awestruck when I saw him batting for the first time. He was definitely the most exciting cricketer in India at that time. He used to hit the ball from the most unusual positions. He is the most powerful batsman I have ever seen," said Chappell during a chat session on the Facebook handle of the *Playwrite Foundation*.



Greg Chappell and MS Dhoni in a file picture

"I remember his knock of 183 against Sri Lanka and how he tore them apart. It was power hitting at its very best. The next match was in Pune. I asked MS, 'why don't you play along the ground more instead of trying to hit every ball

to the boundary'. We were chasing 260 odd and were in a good position and Dhoni was playing a contrasting innings to the one he had played just a couple of days before."

"We still needed 20 runs to win and Dhoni asked me, through 12th man RP Singh if he could hit sixes. I told him not until the target was in single digit. When we needed six runs to win, he finished the game with a six," he said.

In later years, Dhoni would become one of the most successful captains of all time, leading India to the 2007 T20 World Cup and 2011 World Cup titles. He would also become known for the efficiency with which he managed to successfully finish run-chases with his innings structured in the manner Chappell spoke about.

"I always used to challenge him if he could finish the game. There used to be a booming smile on his face, whenever he used to score the winning runs. He is definitely the best finisher the game has ever seen," said Chappell.

Split captaincy won't work for India: Hussain

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

An "imposing character" like Virat Kohli will not be comfortable sharing power and hence split captaincy is not something that will work in Indian cricket, feels former England skipper Nasser Hussain.

However, he does feel that the Indian team management often messes up selections as they did in that World Cup semi-final against New Zealand and split coaching might be a good idea.

Asked if split captaincy can work in India, like it did in England, Hussain didn't sound confident.

"It depends on the character, Virat (Kohli) is such an imposing character, all encompassing, it would be difficult for him to hand over, he wouldn't want to hand anything over. Whereas with (Eoin) Morgan and

(Joe) Root, two likeable, laid-back (characters)," Hussain said during a podcast on *Cricbuzz*.

However, split coaching is not a bad idea, said Hussain, a respected voice in world cricket. "...Coaches have so much to do, whether you should have a split coach, they have so much on their plate. Just to give you a fresh perspective like Trevor Bayliss for example."

"He cracked white ball for England, we didn't really crack Test match cricket. So maybe two different coaches would be the right way to go," he opined.

"One thing they don't do well is selection like they couldn't get a number 4 despite having so many great batsmen. Unlike New Zealand, who have only that many players to choose from, India have so much of talent, that after two failures, a new player comes in and then a next," he said.



Bumrah top contender for BCCI's Arjuna award nomination

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India's pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah is expected to be the BCCI nomination for the prestigious Arjuna Award this year after missing out on seniority to Ravindra Jadeja in 2019.

The BCCI office-bearers are expected to zero in on nominations for the men's and women's categories later this month but the Gujarat pacer's stupendous performance in the last four years makes him the most worthy candidate.

If BCCI decides to send multiple names in the men's category, senior opener Shikhar Dhawan could also be preferred as he missed out in 2018 despite the Board sending his nomination.

"Last year, we had sent three names in men's section — Bumrah, Ravindra Jadeja and Mohammed Shami," a BCCI source said.

Bumrah lost out as he had completed only two years in international cricket while the criteria of selection requires performance of at least three years at the highest level.

"That's why Bumrah, who completed three years of international cricket last year, missed out to Jadeja, who is senior as well as a consistent performer for many years," the source added.

The 26-year-old has 68 wickets from 14 Tests, 104 wickets from 64 ODIs and 59 wickets from 50 T20Is, making for a phenomenal four years in India colours.

"He certainly has the best credentials. He was ICC's No 1 ranked ODI bowler. He is the only Asian bowler to pick up five-wicket hauls in South Africa, England, Australia and West Indies," the source said. It is highly unlikely that BCCI will send Mohammed Shami's name this time around as the police case filed against him by his estranged wife alleging domestic violence and adultery means that he won't be eligible.

In case of Dhawan, his seniority is a factor as all his contemporaries (Virat Kohli, Ravichandran Ashwin, Rohit Sharma, Ajinkya Rahane, Cheteshwar Pujara and Jadeja) have got the award.

Dhawan was, however, out of action for a considerable period last year after sustaining multiple injuries. In the women's section, all-rounder Deepti Sharma, for her consistent show over the past four years including India's highest ODI score of 188, is one of the names along with pacer Shikha Pandey.



Klopp picks Messi over CR7



LIVERPOOL: Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp recently had his say on the age-old debate as to which footballer is better between Argentina maestro Lionel Messi and Portuguese superstar Cristiano Ronaldo.

Over the years, the two have broken multiple scoring records and set new ones

and have set unbelievable standards for others to follow.

Klopp, who has come up against these two many-a-times with Borussia Dortmund and Liverpool, stated he finds Messi a notch higher than Ronaldo.

"For me Messi, but I couldn't admire Ronaldo more than I do already. The explanation is the following. We've played against both already and both are almost impossible to defend. But Messi has much lower physical requirements from birth on," Klopp told *Freekickerz* in a video uploaded on their YouTube channel.

"If you could paint yourself a perfect player, it would have Ronaldo's height, he could jump and run as high or quick as Ronaldo can do."

"And what is then even added to that is his total attitude, it is absolutely perfect and professional, it couldn't be any better," the 2019-20 Champions League winning coach added.

"And on the other side there is the small Messi who makes everything look so simple. And therefore I like him maybe a little bit more as a player on the pitch," he added.

IAN S

Hodgson has no fears over PL return

AFF ■ LONDON

Crystal Palace manager Roy Hodgson is ready to take part in the Premier League's proposed restart during the coronavirus crisis despite being in the vulnerable age group.

Hodgson is the oldest manager in Premier League history at 72, potentially putting the former England coach in danger if he contracts the virus.

But Hodgson said he had no fears about getting back to work if the Premier League stick to their plan to let clubs start training next week.

Asked if he would be able to return, Hodgson told *beIN SPORTS*: "Yes. No concerns. Age is age. It's how you feel really. Your age doesn't necessarily relate to your fitness or how you're feeling, or your capacity to do a job."

Hodgson, whose long managerial career has included stints at Liverpool and



Inter Milan, said he had used the enforced break since to work on his fitness.

"So I have no qualms whatsoever," he said. "When I'm called back to work I shall be very happy to go back to work."

Several Premier League players have expressed concern about putting themselves and their families at risk.

Hodgson said he and Palace chairman Steve Parish

'Scrap promotion if C'ship season cannot finish'

NORWICH: Norwich City sporting director Stuart Webber has called for Championship sides to be not promoted to the Premier League if the football season is not completed in both divisions.

"In my opinion, it needs to be settled on the pitch, not off the pitch," he told *Sky Sports on The Football Show*. "What we could not accept is a situation where we play all our games and get relegated, but the Championship can't play, and they automatically promote

some teams who haven't finished the season," Webber said.

"For anyone who has got promoted from the Championship, it is a 46 or 49-game slog. It needs to be settled on the pitch, both coming up and going down."

Norwich are bottom of the Premier League table at the moment, six points from safety with nine games to play. In the Championship, which is England's second tier, Leeds and West Brom are in the automatic promotion places.

AFF

would not have a problem if any of his players did not want to return to work before they felt completely safe.

"This is going to be a matter for the individual and a matter for the club at the end of the day," Hodgson

said. "I would be very surprised, knowing my club and Steve Parish as I do, that he would not be sympathetic to a player that came and said: 'Look, I have serious reservations about playing,'"

SLC to decide fate of Ind, B'desh tour this week

COLOMBO: Sri Lanka Cricket on Wednesday said it will take a call on India and Bangladesh's upcoming tours to the island nation later this week.

"The two cricket boards (BCCI and BCB) wanted time till May 15 to assess the situation and we have given them that. We will arrive at a collective decision at the end of this

week," said SLC chief executive Ashley de Silva.

India was scheduled to tour Sri Lanka in June-July for three ODIs and as many T20Is while Bangladesh was due to visit in July-August for a three-Test series as part of the ICC World Test C'ship.

If the tours didn't materialise, it will be the

third home series of Sri Lanka to be cancelled in a row because of the Covid-19 pandemic.



England's tour to Sri Lanka for a three-Test series was cancelled in mid-March after the outbreak of the pandemic in the middle of the second warm up game of the tour.

PTI

Max rules out Ricciardo move to Ferrari

AFF ■ AMSTERDAM

Max Verstappen suggested on Tuesday that Carlos Sainz would replace Sebastian Vettel at Ferrari after saying he didn't think Daniel Ricciardo would move to the Italian Formula One outfit next season.

Ricciardo and Spaniard Sainz are the favourites to move to the *Scuderia* following Vettel's announcement on Tuesday that he would be leaving at the end of the 2020 campaign.

Italian-speaking, Australian-born Ricciardo is in the last of a lucrative two-year contract with Renault.

Asked by former F1 racer David Coulthard whether the seat would go to an Italian sounding name or a Spanish sounding name, in reference to Ricciardo and McLaren driver Sainz, Verstappen said: "I think it's not going to be the Italian sounding name."

"Let's see. At the end of the day, it's just a guess. We'll have to wait and see," he added during the *Instagram Q&A*.

Ricciardo, 30, has won seven Grand Prix during his F1 career, while 25-year-old Sainz is yet to win a single race.

Verstappen also ruled himself out of moving to Ferrari, saying that he "definitely" would not be leaving Red Bull at the end of a season whose start has been delayed until July.

"I'm at Red Bull. I saw some questions coming along if I was going to Ferrari, but I'm not," he said.

Serena eager to return

AFF ■ LOS ANGELES

US superstar Serena Williams says she's ready to play "real tennis" after the enforced rest of coronavirus quarantine.

"I really look forward to getting back on the court," the 23-time Grand Slam champion said in a chat with elder sister Venus during an *Instagram Live* workout on Tuesday.

"It's what I do best. I absolutely love playing." Tennis is on hiatus until at least mid-July thanks to the pandemic, with the French Open postponed until autumn and Wimbledon cancelled for the first time since World War II.

Serena said she'd come to see the break as "a necessary evil."

"I felt like my body needed it, even though I didn't want it," said the 38-year-old, who last won a Grand Slam title at the 2017 Australian Open. "And now I'm feeling better than ever. I'm feeling more relaxed, more fit. Now I can go out and play real tennis."

Elder sister Venus, a seven-time Grand Slam winner, began posting workouts on *Instagram* eight weeks ago and this week she invited Serena, "the greatest tennis player to ever exist — my little sister" to share a yoga-inspired stretching session.

