

OPINION 6
HEARTLESS
REFORMS**WORLD 8**
CHINA SAYS IT WILL NOT
ACCEPT US LAWSUIT ON COVID**SPORT 12**
COMPARISONS WITH HARDIK
WON'T HELP ME: SHANKAR

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AIRFARES CAPPED

Set in 7 bands as per flight duration; only web check-in

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A day after announcing the resumption of domestic passenger flights from May 25, the Ministry of Civil Aviation on Thursday capped the maximum fare for three months and made it mandatory for passengers to reach the airport two hours in advance for thermal screening. On the busiest route like Delhi-Mumbai sector, pricing will be in the range of ₹3,500 to ₹10,000.

Announcing the new fare structures, Union Civil Aviation Minister Hardeep Singh Puri said on Thursday that to check that airlines are not selling tickets at higher price, 40 per cent of the tickets will have to be sold below the mean average of upper and lower fare range.

Earlier, the Ministry issued standard operating procedures (SoPs) for airlines, airports passengers and other stakeholders. As per SoPs, passengers are required to reach the airport two hours in advance for thermal screening.

Explaining the new fare



Preparations underway at the Chennai airport for a calibrated resumption of flights from May 25, as announced by the Civil Aviation Minister Hardeep Singh Puri PTI

structures, the Minister said that flight durations have been divided in 7 categories — 0-30 minutes, 30-60 minutes, 60-90 minutes, 90-120 minutes, 120-150 minutes, 150-180 minutes, and 180-210 minutes.

"For a journey between 90-120 minutes the minimum fare will be ₹3,500 and maximum would be ₹10,000. The fare band is split into different fare buckets. 40 per cent of the seats have to be sold at a fare less than the midpoint of the

band," Puri said, adding that airlines will have to follow ticket price guidelines issued by it when they restart some domestic flights.

The Minister further explained that for example, midpoint of ₹3,500 and ₹10,000 is ₹6,700. So 40 per cent of the seats have to be sold at a price less than ₹6,700.

This is how we're ensuring that fares don't go out of control. The fares will be regulated and will be within a fixed

range", Puri added.

In addition, the capping is applicable only to base fares. Taxes, such as user development fee, GST (Goods and Services Tax) will be charged additionally. Puri also said that there will be no need to keep middle seats vacant.

He said only one-third of the approved 2020 summer schedule list will be allowed from metro to metro and metro to non-metro cities.

"For operation from metro to metro cities, 1/3rd capacity of approved summer schedule 2020, which is more than 33.33 per cent, will be allowed. For operation from metro to non-metro cities and vice-versa, where weekly departures are greater than 100, 1/3rd capacity of approved summer schedule 2020, will be allowed," the Minister said.

Puri said passengers will have to provide their medical details through the Aarogya Setu app or by filling up a self-declaration form. They will have to go for web-check-in as physical check-in counters in airports will not operate.

Continued on Page 2

72 killed in Bengal in fiercest cyclone

PNS ■ KOLKATA

Super Cyclone Amphan devastated at least four West Bengal districts killing 72 people, 15 in State Capital Kolkata, some crushed under the uprooted trees, others getting electrocuted and yet others coming under collapsed parts of buildings. The fiercest cyclone to hit West Bengal in 100 years also wreaked havoc in Odisha.

Residents recalled "living through hell" for six hours as the winds howled incessantly. Windows buckled from the pressure of the storm, cars floated on water logged roads, bumping against each other. Parts of air conditioners were flying around like missiles. Buses and taxis crashed against each other, small fishing boats turned turtle and grounded planes shook at the inundated Kolkata airport.

Last time Bengal witnessed a natural calamity as dreadfully ruinous as Amphan was two years before Nadir Shah attacked Delhi and 20 years before Robert Clive humbled



Mangled remains of a bus after a tree fell on it during Cyclone Amphan in Kolkata on Thursday PTI

Nawab of Bengal Siraj ud Daulah at Plassey in 1757.

Reacting to the magnitude of the devastation, Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee said, "I have never witnessed such a fierce cyclone and destruction in my life. I would

request Prime Minister Narendra Modi to visit Amphan-affected areas. There is nothing left. No infrastructure, no power, no telephone connection. I will visit the affected areas very soon. A large part of North and South

Mamata invites PM to witness Amphan's dance of destruction, demands aid

Related report on P5

Unremitting Maha arouses anxiety

2,345 positive cases, 64 deaths in Maha; country total 1,18,222

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Maharashtra on Thursday clocked 2,345 fresh Covid-19 positive cases and reported 64 deaths, taking the total count of infected persons to 41,642 and deaths to 1,454. Maharashtra's tally of positive cases led to a total of 1,18,222 positive cases and 3,584 deaths across the country.

Of the total casualties of 64 in Maharashtra, Mumbai alone accounted for 41 deaths. As many 1,392 persons were tested positive in Mumbai where the total count of those afflicted with the disease jumped to 24,118 cases.

Tamil Nadu added 776 new cases stretching the tally of corona positive cases in the State to 13,967. The State also

witnessed seven new deaths due to the viral disease where a total of 95 persons have succumbed due to the pandemic. The State has 7,590 active cases where 6,282, including 400 on Thursday, have recovered from the infection.

Delhi followed Tamil Nadu with 571 fresh cases being tested during the last 24 hours, spiralling up the tally to 11,659. The national Capital registered 18 deaths on Thursday where a total of 194 persons have died due to the disease. Delhi has 5,898 active cases with the rest having been relieved of the infection after medical treatment.

Gujarat tested 371 new Covid-19 positive cases, taking the tally to 12,910 where 24 deaths occurred due to the dis-

Covid-19
TOTAL CASES: 1,18,222
DEATHS: 3,584
RECOVERED: 48,540

STATES	TOTAL CASES	DEATHS	RECOVERED
Maharashtra	41,642	1,454	11,726
Tamil Nadu	13,967	95	6,282
Gujarat	12,910	773	5,488
Delhi	11,659	194	5,567
Rajasthan	6,154	150	3,421
Madhya Pradesh	5,981	271	2,844
Uttar Pradesh	5,515	138	3,204
West Bengal	3,197	259	1,153
Andhra Pradesh	2,605	54	1,705
Punjab	2,028	39	1,819

ease on Thursday. Till now, a total of 773 persons have died due to the coronavirus in Gujarat. There are 6,649 active cases with 5,488 recovering from the viral infection including 269 on Thursday. Rajasthan reported 139

new cases where 6,154 persons have been afflicted by Covid-19 so far. A total of 150 persons have died in the State due to the disease. Rajasthan has 2,583 active cases and 3,421 have recovered including 17 on Thursday.

Among the States witnessing a surge in the infection due to influx of migrants, Madhya Pradesh recorded the most number of fresh cases with 246 people testing positive raising the total infected to 5,981.

Continued on Page 2

Paramilitary forces record remarkable recoveries

RAKESH K SINGH ■ NEW DELHI

Central Paramilitary forces like BSF, CRPF and ITBP personnel hit by Covid-19 have recorded significant improvement in recoveries. While the BSF has a tally of 274 recoveries and 87 active cases out of a total of 363 patients, the CRPF has shown recovery of 212 personnel hit by coronavirus besides 121 active cases out of total 335 personnel suffering from the pandemic.

However, the CRPF on Thursday recorded death of a personnel due to Covid-19. Out of the 363 Covid-19 patients in the Border Security Force (BSF), two personnel had succumbed to the disease.

Continued on Page 2

CRPF man dies of Covid in Delhi, jail official tests +ve

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Cases of coronavirus are not showing signs of abetting as on Thursday Delhi saw 571 fresh cases with death toll reaching 94, with a 50-year-old Assistant Sub-Inspector of the Central Reserve Police Force succumbing to the virus.

Also, Mandoli Jail Deputy Superintendent tested Covid-19 positive. "The jail officer was on leave since May 11 as he had fever. He got himself tested for Covid-19 at Ganga Ram Hospital and the report came positive on Wednesday," a senior jail official said.

The coronavirus death toll in Delhi has climbed to 194, while 571 fresh cases of infection were reported on Thursday, the highest single-day spike here, taking the total



in the city to 11,659, authorities said.

The previous highest spike in fresh cases — 534 — was recorded on May 20. On May 19, 500 fresh cases were reported.

This is the third consecutive day, when 500 or more fresh cases have been reported in a day in Delhi.

On Wednesday, the total number of cases stood at 11,088, including 176 deaths.

CAPSULE

PAK CONTINUES TO BE A PRIORITY, SAYS CHINA

Beijing: China said on Thursday that it will continue to accord priority to Pakistan in its neighbourhood diplomacy and reinforce "iron-clad" ties as the all-weather allies celebrated the 69th year of the establishment of their diplomatic relations.

INDIA WORLD'S SECOND LARGEST MAKER OF PPE

New Delhi: India has become the world's second largest manufacturer of PPE body coveralls within a short time span of two months, the Government said on Thursday.

DELHI RIOTS: POLICE SLAP UAPA ON JAMIA STUDENT

New Delhi: The Special Cell of Delhi Police has booked Jamia Millia Islamia student Asif Iqbal Tanha under the stringent Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act for allegedly being part of a larger conspiracy behind the communal riots in Delhi.

PH-II OF VANDE BHARAT TO CONTINUE TILL JUNE 13

New Delhi: The Government on Thursday said its mega mission to evacuate stranded Indians from abroad will continue till June 13 and the extended phase will cover 47 countries.

China hindering Army's regular patrolling: India

New Delhi slams Beijing for lies

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A day after China blamed India for flaring up tension on the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in Sikkim and Ladakh, New Delhi on Thursday said it was the other way round.

"In fact, it is Chinese side which has undertaken activity creating hindrance in regular patrolling by the Indian Army," Ministry of External Affairs said. This strong rebuttal came amid continuing tension on the LAC in Eastern Ladakh where a likely flashpoint was developing in the Galwan River. The Chinese Army has pitched about 80 to 90 tents there with additional troops and the Indian side has also reinforced its troop strength.

China claimed India was building a road close to the LAC and disrupting Chinese activities while India has refuted it.

Any suggestion that Indian troops had undertaken activity across the LAC in the Western Sector (Ladakh) or the Sikkim sector is not accurate. Indian troops are fully familiar with the alignment of the LAC in the India-China border areas and abide by it scrupulously, External Affairs Ministry Spokesperson Anurag Srivastava said here.

All Indian activities are entirely on the Indian side of



the LAC. In fact, it is Chinese side that has recently undertaken activity hindering India's normal patrolling patterns. Indian side has always taken a very responsible approach towards border management. At the same time, we are deeply committed to ensuring India's sovereignty and security, he said.

The Indian troops strictly follow the procedures laid down in various bilateral agreements and protocols to resolve any situations which may arise due to difference in perception of LAC. The two sides have established mechanisms to resolve such situations peacefully through dialogue. Both sides remain engaged with each other to address any

immediate issues, he said.

In accordance with the consensus reached in Chennai, Indian side remains firmly committed to work for the common objective of maintenance of peace and tranquility in border areas. This is an essential prerequisite to the further development of Indian-China bilateral relations, he reiterated.

This assertion came after the Chinese Foreign Ministry statement on Wednesday blamed the Indian Army for coming into its territory and "blocking" its patrols and "attempting to unilaterally change the status" on the LAC between the two countries in Sikkim and Ladakh.

Continued on Page 2

Last redoubts against virus fall with villagers' homecoming

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

After the return of tens of thousands of migrant workers to their villages, coronavirus is rapidly moving into rural areas. A huge number of cases are being reported from the rural belts of Bihar, Jharkhand, West Bengal, Odisha, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh, which were until now largely free from covid-19 cases.

Take the case of Uttar Pradesh, a majority of the recent cases are being reported from districts with a large



rural population, including Sant Kabir Nagar, Basti, Banda, Bahraich, Barabanki, Hapur, Jalaun, Sidharth Nagar, Ghazipur, Sitapur,

More trains soon; counter bookings from Friday: Goyal

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Railway Minister Piyush Goyal on Thursday said booking of train tickets will resume at around 1.7 lakh common service centres across the country from Friday, making the service accessible to those in remote locations where the availability of computers and internet is negligible or absent.

The Minister said bookings will also resume at counters at specific railway stations over the next two to three days but need to ensure that there is no crowding at railway stations.

We will also soon announce the resumption of more trains, he said.

Remains of Ram temple unearthed at same site

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The authorities have found rare artifacts of archaeological importance, including Shivaling pillars, kalash and other items reported to be the remains of the ancient Ram temple, during leveling of the area and removal of debris at the Ram Janmabhoomi land meant for the construction of Ram temple as permitted by the Supreme Court.

"While leveling the ground labourers found pillars in debris of the structure having carvings. They also found a Shivaling," said Champat Rai,



general secretary, Sri Ram Janmabhoomi Tirth Kshetra Trust on Thursday.

He said that these items were discovered during removal of debris during land leveling at Ram Janmabhoomi during the past 10 days.

Among the items discovered during the work are 5 feet tall Shivaling with carving on it, seven black stone pillars, 6 red stone pillars along with several broken idols of different Gods and Goddesses.

Rai said that all the items discovered were of archaeological importance and these items would be kept in the museum to be constructed along with the Ram temple.

Meanwhile, the work of leveling of the ground was underway in a slow pace during the lockdown under strict social distancing.

Continued on Page 2

TO BOOST TRADE

India, B'desh add more water routes

Dhaka/Agartala: To boost trade, economic activity and connectivity, India and Bangladesh have added five more "ports of call" on either side and increased the protocol (water) routes from 8 to 10. "These additions to the protocol will facilitate bilateral trade with improved reliability and cost effectiveness for the business community and the people of both the countries," an official release said.

The release issued after signing of the Second Addendum to the Protocol on Inland Water Transit and Trade, in Dhaka on Wednesday, said the extension of protocol routes, inclusion of new routes and declaration of new "ports of call" would facilitate trade.

The Second Addendum was signed by Indian High Commissioner in Bangladesh Riva Ganguly Das and Bangladesh Shipping Ministry Secretary Mohammed Mezbah Uddin Chowdhury.

There are six "ports of call" each in India and Bangladesh. The new five "ports of call" on the Indian side are Dhulian, Maia, Kolaghat, Sonamura and Jogigopha and on the Bangladesh side Rajshahi, Sultanganj, Chilmari, Daudkandi and Bahadurabad.

Two more extended 'ports of call' -- Tribeli (Bandel) and Badarpur in India and Ghorasal and Muktarpur in Bangladesh -- have been added.

According to the release, connectivity provided by the existing and the new protocol routes is all the more pertinent in the Covid-19 scenario. They will provide economical, faster, safer and greener mode of transport for trade and business.

The new agreement will help improve movement of cargo vessels in an organised manner on the protocol routes. The Indian transit cargo is mainly coal, fly-ash, POL and heavy machineries for power projects in the northeast. The other likely cargo is fertilizers,

cement, grain, farm products and containers.

The export cargo from India to Bangladesh is mainly fly-ash (around 30 lakh tonnes per annum). Around 638 inland vessels (including 600 Bangladeshi flag vessels) do 4,000 loaded voyages annually.

Both the countries have also agreed to introduce trade between Chilmari (Bangladesh) and Dhubri (Assam, India) through the use of shallow draft mechanised vessels.

It will allow export of stone chips and other Bhutanese and northeast cargo and easy access for traders to the hinterland of Bangladesh, enhancing the local economy in Bangladesh and the lower Assam region.

Inclusion of Jogigopha (India) and Bahadurabad (Bangladesh) as new "port of call" will provide connectivity to Meghalaya, Assam and Bhutan. Jogigopha (in western Assam) also becomes important as a multi-modal logistics park is on cards there. **IANS**

India can be self-reliant, global supplier in 12 sectors: Goyal

New Delhi: The Government has identified 12 sectors, including auto components, textiles, industrial machinery and furniture, where focus would be given with a view to make India a self-reliant country and a global supplier, Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal said on Thursday.

He said a self-reliant India will ensure production of quality products on a large scale, fulfil India's requirements and boost export of surplus production.

"There are a number of sectors that have been identified in which India's competitive and comparative advantage over

the other countries is seen. We have identified 12 sectors in which not only will India be "Aatmanirbhar" (self-reliant) but can also lead the global supply chain," he said in a conversation with BJP leader Sambit Patra on steps being taken by the ministry to combat the COVID-19 crisis.

In these 12 sectors — food processing; organic farming; iron; aluminium and copper; agro chemicals; electronics; industrial machinery; furniture; leather and shoes; auto parts; textiles; and coveralls, masks, sanitisers and ventilators — India can become a global supplier, the minister said. **PTI**

Linking of extra borrowing by States with reforms to help in medium-term debt management: NK Singh

New Delhi: The linking of additional borrowing of states with reforms will help in medium-term debt management and the difficult job before the Government is to return to a sustainable debt trajectory, 15th Finance Commission Chairman NK Singh said on Thursday.

Stating that additional 2

per cent borrowing by states is a "symmetric" treatment of the Centre and states, he said that the move augurs well for strengthening fiscal architecture.

As part of the economic package, the Centre on May 17 raised the borrowing limit of states from 3 per cent of gross state domestic product (GSDP)

Possibility of US sanctions on India remain on table: top diplomat

Washington: The possibility of US sanctions on India for buying the multi-billion dollar S-400 missile system from Russia remains on the table, a top American diplomat has said, asserting that New Delhi will have to make a strategic commitment to technologies and platforms.

In October 2018, India signed a \$5 bn deal with Russia to buy five units of the S-400 air defence missile systems, notwithstanding warning from America that going ahead with the contract may invite US sanctions under the Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA). **PTI**

India needs to adopt market-friendly approach in post-virus world: Alice Wells

Washington: Underlining that India has not been able to crack trade deals, a senior US diplomat on Wednesday said it needs to bring economic reforms to grab the opportunity provided by the coronavirus crisis.

Alice Wells, the outgoing Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs, said the US wants a trade pact but India has not been able to do so.

Companies want to diversify their supply chains post-COVID 19, this really represents "a golden opportunity for India", which we think it should seize with market-friendly approaches instead of protectionist impulses, she said observing that the US really wants to work with India to improve the business environment.

"I would point out that we're a country that makes trade deals. As rough and tumble as these discussions are, we make deals. We have not seen India be able to make these trade deals yet," Alice Wells told a Washington DC-based think tank.

"So, this is not just a US issue. It's an issue that India

faces and its relations with the EU, Australia, other countries," Wells told former US Ambassador to India, Richard Verma, during a virtual discussion organised by the Atlantic Council.

She said there's a real opportunity for diversification as countries are looking to de-risk from China.

"India could make sense if the right policies are put in place and the right commitments to infrastructure," she said.

The United States, she said certainly wants to see that happen and facilitate that kind of growth in its partnership with India. "But there are tough issues and this administration is committed to doing what is necessary to make progress," the American diplomat said.

India and the United States, are working on a trade deal for the past two years. Last September, President Donald Trump had announced that it was likely to be signed soon.

It was later expected to be inked during his visit to India this February. However, sharp differences remain between the two countries. **PTI**

90.2% teachers taking e-classes for first time

Chandigarh: Out of the total 82.1 per cent respondents having no previous experience of online teaching, 90.2 per cent teachers said that they are taking online classes for the first time, while 9.8 per cent teachers mentioned that they were not taking online classes during lockdown amid Covid-19.

This was revealed during an online survey comprising a total sample size of 3,550 teachers from different Government, Recognised Private and Government Aided Private Schools of UT Chandigarh and Punjab. The sample survey consisted of 38.6% were Primary Teachers (PTs), 33.9% Trained Graduate Teachers (TGTs) and 27.5% Post Graduate Teachers (PGTs). The online survey was conducted by Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC) of Dev Samaj College of Education, Chandigarh.

IMD prediction on Amphan accurate

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) used all the latest information available to give an accurate prediction on cyclone Amphan. After Foni, this is the second time that IMD predicted accurate on cyclone Amphan.

The IMD's predictions on the cyclone's trajectory, wind speed as well as its character in sea and impact were "to the point" and "accurate" which helped the states in making required preparation to face the calamity. IMD Director General Mrutunjay Mohapatra said on Thursday the IMD gave accurate forecast on the cyclone's track, its intensity, storm surge, land-fall time and weather associated with it. The extremely severe cyclonic storm weakened and moved to Bangladesh at 11:30 p.m. on Wednesday, he added.

China hindering Army's regular patrolling: India

From Page 1

The official statement about the recent stand-offs in Naku La in Sikkim which saw exchange of blows said the "the Indian Army has crossed the line across the western section of the Sino-Indian border and the Sikkim section to enter Chinese territory".

The statement also said the Chinese side had taken up the matter with India, asking the Indian side to "immediately withdraw the personnel across the line, restore the status quo of the relevant areas, strictly restrict the frontline troops, observe the important consensus reached by the leaders of the two countries and the agreements signed by the two sides, and jointly maintain peace and stability in the border areas".

AIRFARES...

From Page 1

The rules included no meals on board, mandatory temperature checks for all passengers and allowing only one check-in bag for each passenger. People who were tested positive for Covid-19 will not be allowed to travel. All the passengers will have to wear masks while entering the airports and thereafter. No newspapers and magazines will be offered.

In a set of detailed guidelines, the Ministry advised the vulnerable people like the elderly, pregnant women and passengers battling health issues to avoid air travel till the coronavirus pandemic abates. People residing in the containment zone will not be allowed to travel. Only one check-in bag would be allowed and airlines will not provide any meal services in flights, the Ministry said. Boarding for a flight will commence 60 minutes before departure and boarding gate will be closed 20 minutes before departure, it said.

The Ministry also allowed resumption of services by all food and beverages (F&B) outlets on the condition that they must follow all Covid-19 precautions. "Take-away, digital payments, self-ordering booths at F&B and retail outlets to be encouraged to prevent crowding of people, it said.

Paramilitary forces record remarkable...

From Page 1

The BSF has not tested any positive case for the last two days.

The CRPF has now two fatalities from the total count of 335 infected personnel. The CRPF reported nine fresh cases of Covid infection from the national Capital and all of them have been admitted to AIIMS, Hajjar and Haryana.

An Assistant Sub Inspector succumbed to Covid due to co-morbidity of liver cancer, officials said. Earlier, another ASI had died due to the infection.

In the Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) which had a total of 186 Covid-infected personnel, as many as 67 patients have recovered and still has an active case count of 119.

All the infection cases in ITBP are from Delhi and the condition of those under treatment is stable, a spokesperson said.

The ITBP has not recorded any fresh positive case for the last four days in a row. The CISF had earlier recorded three deaths due to the viral disease and with two casualties each in the BSF and CRPF, the tally of fatalities in the paramilitary forces has reached seven.

Remains of Ram...

From Page 1

Three JCBs, one crane, two tractor trolley along with 10 labourers were working on the site since May 11 to clear the debris along with leveling the ground.

In its historic ruling, the

Unremitting Maha...

From Page 1

Four deaths occurred due to the disease in MP on Thursday. A total of 271 deaths have been recorded in the State due to the virus.

Uttar Pradesh followed Madhya Pradesh with 181 new cases where a total of 5,356 positive cases are there. As many as 127 persons have died in UP without any casualty on Thursday. The State has 2,130 active cases where 3,099 patients have recovered including 33 recoveries on Thursday.

Uttar Pradesh was followed by Bihar which added 124 new cases on Thursday where a total count of 1,900 infected persons have been reported. The State has so far wit-

nessed just nine deaths due to the disease.

Odisha, another State facing migrant influx post-Covid-19, registered 51 new cases during the last 24 hours, taking the total count to 1,103.

The State has witnessed seven deaths due to the disease including one on Thursday.

Jharkhand, on the other hand, reported just nine new cases on Thursday where a total of 299 persons have tested positive for Covid-19.

Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh are among the States which have presently more number of recoveries than the active cases.

INDIAN RAILWAYS PARTIALLY RESTORES TRAIN SERVICES

INDIAN RAILWAYS TO RUN 200 MAIL/EXPRESS TRAINS W.E.F. 1st JUNE, 2020

Indian Railways have decided to Partially restore the train services earlier suspended due to Covid-19 Lockdown. For the convenience of passengers Indian Railways have planned to run a total of 200 mail/express trains on Indian Railway network.

Out of Total 200 trains following trains will be operated by Northern Railway from the dates shown against each:

LIST OF MAIL/EXPRESS TRAINS				
Train No.	Train Name	From	To	Date of Commencement
02419	Gomti Express	Lucknow	New Delhi	01.06.2020
02420	Gomti Express	New Delhi	Lucknow	02.06.2020
02229	Lucknow Mail	Lucknow	New Delhi	01.06.2020
02230	Lucknow Mail	New Delhi	Lucknow	02.06.2020
02407	Karmabhoomi Superfast	New Jalpaiguri	Amritsar Jn.	10.06.2020
02408	Karmabhoomi Superfast	Amritsar Jn.	New Jalpaiguri	05.06.2020
04009	Champaran Satyagrah Exp.	Bapudham Motihari	Anand Vihar (T)	07.06.2020
04010	Champaran Satyagrah Exp.	Anand Vihar (T)	Bapudham Motihari	06.06.2020
02217	Mahamana Express	Varanasi	New Delhi	02.06.2020
02218	Mahamana Express	New Delhi	Varanasi	01.06.2020
02219	Suhaildev Express	Ghaziपुर	Anand Vihar (T)	03.06.2020
02220	Suhaildev Express	Anand Vihar (T)	Ghaziपुर	02.06.2020
02233	Ghaziपुर-Anand Vihar (T) Exp.	Ghaziपुर	Anand Vihar (T)	02.06.2020
02234	Anand Vihar (T)-Ghaziपुर Exp.	Anand Vihar (T)	Ghaziपुर	01.06.2020
04673	Shaheed Express	Jaynagar	Amritsar Jn.	03.06.2020
04674	Shaheed Express	Amritsar Jn.	Jaynagar	02.06.2020
04649	Saryu Yamuna Express	Jaynagar	Amritsar Jn.	05.06.2020
04650	Saryu Yamuna Express	Amritsar Jn.	Jaynagar	01.06.2020
02283	Duronto Express	Ernakulam Jn.	H. Nizamuddin	09.06.2020
02284	Duronto Express	H. Nizamuddin	Ernakulam Jn.	06.06.2020
02053	Jan Shatabdi Express	Haridwar Jn.	Amritsar Jn.	01.06.2020
02054	Jan Shatabdi Express	Amritsar Jn.	Haridwar Jn.	01.06.2020
02055	Jan Shatabdi Express	New Delhi	Dehradun	02.06.2020
02056	Jan Shatabdi Express	Dehradun	New Delhi	01.06.2020
02057	Jan Shatabdi Express	New Delhi	Una Himachal	01.06.2020
02058	Jan Shatabdi Express	Una Himachal	New Delhi	02.06.2020

Note : Reservation/Booking in the above special trains may be done from any PRS counter, IRCTC, through Authorised Rail Travel Agents or Common Service Centres etc as was being done before the Lockdown period.

Note:- For any kind of information passengers are requested to contact Railway Enquiry No. 139 or visit Indian Railways website www.enquiry.indianrail.gov.in.

Integrated Helpline No. 139 and Security Helpline No. 182

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Last redoubts...

From Page 1

According to a data by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, of the 5175 confirmed cases in the State, 1330 cases were reported from these districts. The data says Sant Kabir Nagar has reported (46), Basti (104), Banda (21), Gonda (36), Bahraich (63), Barabanki (79), Hapur (87), Jalaun (41), Siddharth Nagar (51), Ghazipur (49), Sitapur (37), Farrukhabad (20), Hardoi (20), Jhansi (30), Bijnor (58), Sambhal (57), Pratapgarh (56), Lakhimpur Kheri (40), Deoria (25) Chandauli (15), Auraiya (20), Mainpuri (24), Ballia (13), Unnao (11), Kushi Nagar (7), Sonbhadra (3) and Hathras (20) cases.

In Maharahstra's Yavatmal district, 13 new cases have been reported from rural areas such as Digras (4), Isapur (3), Rui Talav (1), Pusad (4) and Malkini village in Mahagaon (1). All those tested positive are Mumbai returnees.

Resumption of inter-State public transport has heightened concerns that migrants returning to their native places could potentially be carriers of coronavirus. Interestingly, people who are coming back to their State from other parts of the country are facing social boy-

cott in villages.

In last few days, up to 65-70 percent of the positive cases reported in Bihar were in rural and semi-urban areas. Until the first week of May, about 410 of the 1607 cases were reported from rural and suburban areas. Those who had returned from Delhi and other States were found to have the maximum positive cases. As per data, Sitamarhi, Begusarai, Nawada, Siwan, Gopalganj, Munger, Bhagalpur, Aurangabad, Jehanabad, Muzaffarpur, Darbhanga, Madhubani, Saharsa, Supaul, Sheikhpura, Samastipur, Katihar, Madhepura, Araria and Sheohar were coronavirus free till April 25. Now several villages in these districts have become the coronavirus hotspot.

Two villages in Saharsa district have reported two each coronavirus cases. The cases were reported from Nariyari and Kahra village, both falling under Kahra Block in the district.

In Odisha, 51 new coronavirus case were detected from 11 different districts which include 11 cases each from Kalahandi and Nayagarh district, 9 were in Cuttack, 5 in Jajpur, 4 in Ganjam, 3 in Mauryabhanj, 2 each in Angul and Jagatsinghpur, one each from Sambalpur, Malkangiri

and Puri districts.

In Madhya Pradesh, eight new districts have reported positive cases after May 1, these include Neemuch (50 cases), Morena (49), Jhabua (11) Anuppur (3), Satna (10), Bhind (38), Guna (1), Jhabua (2), Panna (1) and Sehore (5), Seoni (1), Mandla (1) and Sidhi (5), all predominantly rural districts. In the Neemuch district that borders Rajasthan, the worst of the lot, the first case was reported on May 3.

In Rajasthan, Covid-19 infections have spread to two more rural districts-Jalore and Sirohi in recent days. The highest number of positive cases among migrants has come in from Pali district with 217 positive cases reported. Rajasmand has the second highest number of cases (73), Sirohi with 70, Jalore with 108, Churu with 52 cases.

In Jharkhand, about 75% of positive cases in recent days emerged from rural belts. Six positive cases from Govindpur village area of Gadra Tribal block has worried the administration. The six infected persons at Govindpur are of the same family including husband, wife, daughter, son, daughter-in-law and 3-year-old kid. The girl along with her parents had arrived from Delhi via Rajdhani Express on May 10.

After the local residents protested, the girl and her parents were admitted to MGM hospital on May 14 and sample was collected. After the reports of the three came positive on May 20 they were shifted to TMH Hospital. The other three members of the family were also admitted to TMH and their samples were taken for test.

Late on Wednesday night the other three members of the family including

a three-year-old child also tested positive. Govindpur area has been turned into containment and buffer zone which is the first in Jamshehpur and the second in East Singhbhum district after Chakulia, also a tribal belt.

Administration is looking for the persons who came in contact with the family and their samples will be taken. Govindpur area is being sealed and sanitized

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, in his meeting with Chief Ministers, had also flagged the issue saying "now the effort should be to stop the spread of the Covid-19 to rural areas."

PUBLIC NOTICE

NOTICE is hereby given that Mrs. Titixa Tomar and Kishore Kumar Rajora "Mortgagor" who are in the process to avail the credit facility against Flat No. E-304, on Third Floor, Rafi Ahmed Kidwai CGHS Ltd., Plot No. 12A, Sector-7, Dwarka. New Delhi-75 have agreed to create mortgage of the said Property in favour of HDFC Bank Ltd. According to them they are the absolute owners of the said Property on the basis of:-

1. Sale Deed dated 04.12.2008. executed by Mrs. Kaushalya Singh in favour of Mrs. Titixa Tomar.

2. Gift Deed dated 25.01.2020. executed by Mrs. Titixa Tomar in favour of Mr. Kishor Kumar Rajora.

Whereas as per them IDBI (earlier loan was running with IDBI) Have lost all the previous chain of docs including Sale Deed dated 4/12/2008 in respect of the aforesaid property in lieu of that IDBI / SHCIL Also lodged an FIR On dated 19/12/2017. All persons having any claim against or in respect of the said Property, or any part thereof, by way of sale, exchange, mortgage (equitable/registered or otherwise), gift, trust, inheritance, family arrangement, maintenance, bequest, partnership, possession, lease, sublease, tenancy, license, lien, charge, pledge, easement or otherwise whatsoever, are hereby requested to notify the same in writing to us with supporting documentary evidence at the address mentioned below within 7 days from the date hereof, failing which the claim or claims, if any, of such person or persons will be considered to have been waived and/or abandoned and our client shall proceed with the disbursement of loan for purchase of the said Property and subsequent creation of mortgage in respect thereof.

Kamal Kant Gupta (Advocate)
Shop No. 5 & 6, Pkt-E, CSC, Mayur Vihar-II, Delhi-91 011-43052822, 09810063351

HIGHEST SINGLE-DAY SPIKE IN CITY

571 new cases in a day, total 11,659

City records 48% recovery rate

SAPNA SINGH ■ NEW DELHI

Recording the highest single-day spike of 571 fresh cases in the last 24 hours, the total number of Covid-19 cases in the national Capital rose to 11,659. This is the third consecutive day where the city has recorded more than 500 new cases. Delhi also reported 194 fatalities in this period.

On the other hand, the city recorded a recovery rate of 48 per cent.

As per experts, the recovery rate is likely to increase by two per cent in next two days.

Lauding the efforts of medical staff and increase in corona patients' recovery rate, Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal tweeted, "Am so proud of our team of doctors and nurses who have provided the best possible treatment to our Covid patients. Delhi will soon have more recovered patients than



the number of active cases."

According to State Health Department, this was the second single-day spike in Covid-19 cases reported in the national Capital.

On Wednesday, the health department said that 534 new cases of Covid-19 were reported in 24 hours — the highest single-day spike — while the figure was 500 for new infections on Tuesday.

More than 5,500 people, 5,567 to be precise, have recovered from coronavirus in Delhi or have been discharged from hospitals. The State health department has done the cumulative testing of 154,385 people so far while 2739 have been

advised for home quarantine.

If corona data is compared with last week, the number of Coronapositive cases increased but recovery rate has improved considerably.

The database of health department implied that in previous week, the number of positive cases per day fluctuated between 400-472 however this week, per day cases have been reported above 500.

While on one side, cases increased but the containment zones have decreased.

According to Home department, on Sunday, the number of containment zone was 76, however, the number has reduced to 64.

DSGMC providing daily langar to migrant labourers

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Sikh Gurdwara Management Committee (DSGMC) is providing daily langar to 'Central Postal Ladies Organization' (CPLO) for its distribution among 2,000 migrant labourers moving on foot on Noida- Lucknow expressway.

Manjinder Singh Sirsa, president of DSGMC said that CPLO is a national organisation of women officers and employees working in department of post and wives of the employees and officers of the department of post has partnered with DSGMC for providing nutritious and fresh food to the migrants labourers on way back to their homes.



Mayor said that we have distributed food packets and health kits to more than 300 needy people. "Food packets have essential items such as flour, pulses, cooking oil etc. and health kit includes sanitary napkins and other necessary items," he said.

Tiwari, Avtar give health kits to needy

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi BJP president Manoj Tiwari and North Delhi Mayor Avtar Singh distributed food packets and other relief material including health kits to needy people on Thursday.

Tiwari appreciated the efforts of Mayor for providing dry ration to needy persons. He said that in this pandemic situation corporation is providing every possible service to the citizens of Delhi.

The BJP president also appreciated the efforts of Mayor for making 50000 masks by using turban cloth for students studying in corporation schools.

AAP, BJP turn blind eye to workers' plight: Cong

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Accusing the BJP- ruled Acentre and AAP Government in Delhi for 'failing' to tackle Covid-19 pandemic effectively, Delhi Congress on Thursday said that both the Governments have not only failed to act but also turned a blind eye towards the plight of migrant labourers.

Delhi Congress vice- president Jaikishan said that due to apathetic attitude of the government, people are forced to spend nights in open that too without food and water. "The Congress workers have been helping people besides providing them with masks, sanitizers, pads, food and water on daily basis," he said.

The party is also arranging transport toffery migrants back to their home states, he said. Party senior leaders including president Anil Chaudhary, Mudrit Agarwal, Abhishek Dutt and Sishmita



Youth Congressworkers donate blood on the death anniversary of former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi at IYC headquarters in New Delhi on Thursday

Ranjan Dimri | Pioneer

Dev offered floral tributes to former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi on his 29th martyrdom day at the DPCC office.

Meanwhile, the Indian Youth Congress launched "NYAY" campaign on the 29th martyrdom day of Rajeev Gandhi. "It will be distributing

direct cash to underprivileged people across the country as a symbolic NYAY for one day. We will also demand the Central government to provide NYAY to the underprivileged people for six months, said youth Congress president Srinivas BV.

Learn about Happiness Curriculum on Wikipedia, says Deputy CM Sisodia

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

If one wants to learn what is 'Happiness Curriculum', he or she can google it from Thursday and get all history and origin of the course from Wikipedia.

Announcing formally about the Happiness Curriculum - a course which is being taught in government school from two years, the Education Minister Manish Sisodia tweeted," Happiness Curriculum introduced in Delhi govt schools two years back is on Wikipedia now. A truly unique curriculum designed to reimagine education now has a permanent address to reach a larger audience."

The Happiness Curriculum got global attention after US First Lady Melania Trump visited a Delhi government school to take part in a happiness class in February this year.

Delhi government had



introduced the course keeping mental health of children in priority.

The course has various stress release activities like Yoga.

Sisodia in his tweet also shared the web link of Happiness Curriculum which is - https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Happiness_Curriculum.

The course was launched in 2018 with n aim to transform school education in Delhi government schools shifting focus from only fierce competition and marks oriented teaching.

Students during the course learn language and other art-based activities.

by about 500 participants from India and abroad.

NEED TO MAKE ONLINE TEACHING FUN-FILLED

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Amid the switch to online Aclasses in the educational institutions due to the Covid-19 pandemic, there is a need to make the teaching sessions more fun-filled in order to unbурden the students from the stress of virtual classrooms, insisted Assistant Professor at Gargi College, Delhi University, Dr Poonam Phogat. The responsibility for this lies with the school management, teachers and parents to ensure e-learning is not stress-

ful and instead it is driven by the mantra of learning through fun.

This can be ensured by incorporating exciting graphical elements in the teaching content to help the students easily grasp the topics.

Real-time virtual discussions will further encourage students to clear their doubts regarding the taught subject. Interactive quiz session and activity-based assignments can potentially aid ease of learning through online sessions, she added.

minimizing requirement of visit to Government offices and innovative use of technology.

Baijal has advised DDA to use planning tools to stimulate the business environment by attracting investments and focusing on sectoral revival.

DDA being the development authority has a crucial role to play in Delhi. L-G has also urged DDA to plan lasting structural improvements for the benefit of residents of Delhi, their businesses and city infrastructure, through innovative policies and incentives.

"As most sections of society are facing challenge of cash flow management, which makes it difficult to pay installment, allotment money, EMDs, lease rent, license fee, etc, Lieutenant Governor advised DDA to explore measures for moratorium on payments so that EMD is not forfeited and allotment is not cancelled in this time of distress," according to a state-

ment issued by L-G office.

Baijal further advised Vice Chairman of DDA that all ongoing pending processes such as execution of lease, conveyance deed, issuance of no objection certificates, layout, and completion plans etc., should be expeditiously completed. "To instill confidence in public, all ongoing and pending public projects of DDA may be given impetus and maximum public services should be made available 'on line," he said.

L-G also suggested that Dwarka, Narela and Rohini sub-cities can be revamped with focus on attracting investment in commercial, IT, ITES, educational sectors through meticulous planning with special focus on vacant land pieces as low hanging fruits.

Baijal has urged DDA to galvanize implementation of PM-UDAY, In-situ slum redevelopment, land pooling policy and transit oriented development.

Further, L-G directed

home department to take steps to explore the possibility of automatic extension of term, renewal of licenses of various categories such as hotels, restaurants, guest houses, swimming pools, etc. which stand expired after March 1 this year.

He further advised local bodies that ongoing pending processes related to property tax, conversion charges for allowing commercial activities on mixed land use, parking, mutation, etc. should be expeditiously completed.

"While doing day-to-day activities relating to sanitation, de-silting of drains and containment of vector-borne diseases, etc ULBs will strictly abide by all health advisories and guidelines of Government of India," he said.

L-G reiterated that while undertaking all these measures, all government departments should strictly abide by all health advisories and guidelines of Government of India.

Govt sent 1.32L migrants home via special trains, claims Sisodia

New Delhi: The Delhi Government has sent 1.32 lakh migrants, including 1.2 lakh from Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, to their home towns through Shramik Special trains, Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia said on Thursday.

He said over 4 lakh migrants have so far registered on the Delhi Government's website to go back to their native places in different states.

"So far, around 1.32 lakh people have been sent through Shramik Special trains under the special arrangements by the Delhi government. These

include 1.20 lakh from Bihar and eastern UP districts," Sisodia said in a tweet.

The deputy CM has also written to the railway ministry, requesting for 262 trains for sending the remaining migrants stranded in the national capital to their native states, in the next four days.

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal had also requested the Centre to increase the number of trains from Delhi to send maximum migrants back to their native states.

Among the 4 lakh registrations made on the city gov-

ernment's portal, around 1.95 lakh migrants belong to Bihar followed by 1.84 lakh from Uttar Pradesh.

"We are also seeking permission from other states to send the migrants back to their home towns. As soon as we get the permit, we will sanction trains for those states," Sisodia had said.

An order had been issued by the Delhi government directing for publicising the web link epass.Jantasamavad.Org among the stranded migrants for registering on the Government portal. **PTI**



Morning walkers exercise at an open gymnasium in a park during the ongoing lockdown in New Delhi on Thursday

PTI

RPF to identify, act against touts

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Railway Protection Force (RPF) has started concerted nationwide efforts to identify and act against touts after receiving complaints regarding e-tickets are being used using multiple personal IDs and cornering reserved berths in special trains run by the Indian Railways to ferry migrants back to their home.

It was also apprehended that once the reservation for the 100 pairs of trains start on May 21, the activities of these touts



will escalate adversely affecting the availability of confirmed train reservations to the common man.

"The drive has been launched on May 20 and despite

the impact of AMPHAN in eastern part of the country; RPF has been able to arrest 14 touts including eight IRCTC agents and recovered tickets worth ₹6,36,727 wherein the journey is yet to be performed," he said.

The IRCTC agents were using personal IDs to corner tickets and then sell them unauthorizedly at a premium, it said, adding that action has been initiated to get them blacklisted.

"One of the touts was found using auto fill software called Super Tatkal Pro," it added.

GARGI COLLEGE

Int'l webinar discusses ways to beat virus blues

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

With the Covid-19 pandemic inducing psychological issues in people across the globe, an international web seminar organised by the Gargi College here dwelt on beating the symptoms and inculcate happiness amid the continuing lockdown and hovering threats to livelihood.

Prof Issac Prilleltensky of University of Miami, USA, who addressed the webinar on the topic of Helping People Matter: Strategies for Improving Wellbeing in the Covid-19 Era, asserted there is a need to realise meaning in life by engaging in physical activities and developing empathy for others.

Community Psychologist Prilleltensky is an expert on wellbeing and stressed on need to handle multiple aspects of well being — Interpersonal, Physical, Occupational and Psychological among others — for the generation of feel good factor during the stressful times forced upon by the pandemic.

He emphasised that for developing meaning in life, there is a need to think beyond economic wellbeing based solely on GDP factor but to generate inner happiness by spending on others who may not be that fortunate to handle the problems arising due to the viral outbreak across the globe.

The professor also dished

out seven drivers of well being--behaviour, emotions, thoughts, interactions, context awareness, next steps and setting a goal.

Creating positive habits by nurturing relationships and a sense of gratitude, managing negative emotions by practicing self-compassion and challenging negative assumptions about oneself can be fruitful to negating the impact of the situation forced by the coronavirus, he said.

Focusing on strengths, recognising others achievements and assessment of one's reactions to stress can help in better controlling them.

The webinar, a brainchild of Gargi College Principal Dr Promila Kumar, was attended

Top cop inaugurates web seminar series

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

In wake of coronavirus outbreak, SN Shrivastava, the Delhi Commissioner of Police, inaugurated a new initiative of webinars called "PHQ Wellness Series". Police said the first series of the webinar was based on Yoga and Pranayam which was held on Thursday.

"The webinar was addressed by Dr. Surakshit Goswami, an eminent Yoga expert. Nearly 1000 police personnel participated in the webinar. A large number of police personnel already practicing Yoga got another opportunity



for learning and improving upon their techniques," said Anil Mittal, the Additional Public Relation (APRO), Delhi Police.

"Delhi Police has been encouraging all police personnel to practice yoga in different Districts and Units being imparted through trained yoga teachers from police establishment and those qualified from

Yoga Institutes," said Mittal.

"Further, it has been decided that this webinar series will be done on weekly basis to address ongoing issues pertaining to police personnel and their overall capacity building," Mittal added.

According to police, it is squarely meeting the twin challenges of deployment at sensitive locations and implementation of pre and post lockdown 4.0, and consistently improving upon preventive steps to fine tune a robust containment strategy for overall preparedness of the entire Delhi Police personnel.

Co-morbid patients constitute 73% Covid deaths



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

At least, 73 per cent of the total Covid-19 deaths in India is of those with underlying co-morbidities like cardiovascular disease, stroke or diabetes. And at 64 per cent, men continue to be the main target of the virulent virus with females making up for the rest.

Also, half of the total deaths is of those above 60 years of age, probably because of weak immunity and underlying poor health condition, as per the Health Ministry data issued on Thursday.

The analysis further indicated that, in terms of age distribution, 0.5 per cent deaths are reported in less than 15 years of age group, 2.5 per cent in 15-30 years age group, 11.4 per cent in 30-45 years age group, 35.1 per cent in 45-60 years age group and 50.5 per cent in people above 60 years of age.

According to the Union Health Ministry data, at least 3,435 individuals so far have

lost their lives due to COVID-19 in India.

The Health Ministry stated that the case mortality rate in India is 3.06 per cent, as against the global average of 6.65 per cent. The ministry attributed the outcome to its efforts towards timely case identification and proper clinical management of the cases.

India currently has 63,624 cases under active medical supervision. Of these, approximately 2.94 per cent cases are in the ICU, said the Health Ministry.

According to the Union Health Ministry data, at least 3,435 individuals so far have lost their lives due to COVID-19 in India

In addition, it advised that

Birth dose vaccination at health facilities to continue but with social distancing

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In its bid to ensure that non-Covid-19 medical services do not get hampered amid the pandemic, the Government on Thursday said that birth dose vaccination at health facilities would continue irrespective of the categorisation of zones but implementing social distancing protocols.

According to the "Guidance note for immunisation services during and post Covid-19" outbreak released by Union Health Ministry, an area exiting a containment or a buffer zone category can start facility-based and outreach immunisation activities only after a minimum gap of 14 days.

The document said that in alignment with the area categorisation, immunisation services will be classified under two heads—immunisation in containment and buffer zone and

immunisation in areas beyond the buffer and green zone.

However, the State and District administration should make a local assessment of COVID-19 risk before starting the outreach or health facility-based immunisation with mobilisation of beneficiaries. Similarly, an area enlisted as a 'containment/buffer zone' should stop health facility-based sessions and outreach sessions.

As a standard practice, immunisation services are delivered through the modes of birth dose vaccinations at delivery points in health facilities, health facility based sessions, and outreach sessions as part of urban/village health sanitation and nutrition days services, it said.

Guidelines from the Union Ministry of Home Affairs and the Health ministry pertaining to Covid-19 updates will be the primary reference points and no

State should violate any Covid-19 guidance, it said.

Practices of social distancing, hand washing, and respiratory hygiene need to be maintained at all immunization sessions irrespective of zones or district categorisation by all (i.e. beneficiaries and service providers) in all sessions, the guidance document said.

According to reports, in March during the stringent lockdown period at least 100,000 children did not receive their BCG vaccination, (protection against tuberculosis (TB)), and another 200,000 missed each dose of the pentavalent vaccine, which provides some protection against meningitis, pneumonia, whooping cough, tetanus, hepatitis B and diphtheria, and the rotavirus vaccine, which prevents diarrhoea-causing rotavirus infections, in March, suggests the analysis.

For every positive Covid-19 case, over 20 confirm negative in tests: ICMR

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

For every positive Covid-19 test, more than 20 negative tests have been done, the Indian Council Medical Research (ICMR) has said, asserting that there has been a 1,000-fold increase in the quantum of tests per day in the last two months.

A total of 26,15,920 samples had been tested till now, and the testing capacity has been scaled up to 1 lakh tests per day which was less than 100 Covid-19 test per day just two months ago, it said in a statement here.

A 1,000-fold increase in just 60 days has been made

possible by researchers from various institutions, medical colleges, testing laboratories, ministries, airlines and postal services working together, said the ICMR.

In January, India had only one laboratory testing for COVID-19, at the ICMR's National Institute of Virology, Pune.

"Today there are 555 laboratories (391 in the government sector and 164 private labs) across the country, performing molecular tests for diagnosis of COVID-19 - an unparalleled achievement in the history of the Indian health system," said the apex health research body.

As the epidemic evolved, India's testing strategy underwent iterative calibration to keep pace with the changing epidemiology and extent of infection. This ensured that access to tests was assured for risk groups that needed it the most; wasteful, unnecessary testing was avoided; and testing infrastructure was optimally scaled up without taking away resources from other key public health interventions," the ICMR said.

This is evidenced by the fact that for every positive test more than 20 negative tests have been done throughout the course of the epidemic, it said.

States told to ensure strict compliance of corona curbs

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Pointing out that violation of the nationwide lockdown has been noticed in various places, the Union Home Ministry on Thursday asked the States to ensure strict implementation of the curbs. In a communication to all states and Union Territories,

Union Home Secretary Ajay Bhalla also said there should be strict compliance of the order issued for night curfew or prohibition of all non-essential activities between 7 pm and 7 am. The Home Secretary said that it was brought to the notice of the Ministry of Home Affairs, through media reports and others sources, that there

are violations at various places in the implementation of MHA guidelines issued to check the spread of coronavirus across the country. "I would like to emphasise that the MHA guidelines should be strictly implemented, and all authorities in states and UTs should take necessary steps to ensure the same," he said.

Rajnath urges MSME to be self-reliant

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Admitting that defence manufacturing industry was adversely affected due to the lockdown, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Thursday urged the Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) to be self-reliant and said Prime Minister Narendra Modi's call to be "atmanirbhar" will create scores of jobs within the country.

Appreciating the role played by the MSMEs in the ongoing national effort to fight coronavirus pandemic, Singh said the manufacturing sector has been affected the most due to lockdown and disruption in existing supply chains and the defence sector is no exception to this. "Rather, it can be said that the defence sector is more aggravated than other sectors as the only buyer of defence products is the government," he said while addressing a conclave here.

Keeping MSMEs strong is one of the priorities of the government, he said adding there are more than 8,000 MSMEs which are partners of ordnance factories, DPSUs and service organisations. They contribute more than 20 per cent of the total production of these organisations.

Efforts on to cut burgeoning pension bill: Defence Secy

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Expressing concern over reduced budget for capital procurement over the years, Defence Secretary Ajay Kumar said here on Thursday the allocation has come down from 40% in 2010-11 to 33% and efforts are on to reduce the burgeoning pension bill. He also said the Indian Ocean is becoming a "threat" after the South China Sea, in an apparent reference to growing Chinese maritime prowess and its fast expanding naval presence in the Indian Ocean in the last one decade or so.

Addressing a webinar here, Kumar said the reduction in allocation for capital procurement was "systemic problem" with three factors - growing pension bill, non revenue expenditure and dependence on imports.

On Blue economy in the region, Kumar stated China

Citing the example of United States where domestic defence industry developed within a short span of two years

has been a leader in deep water fishing while the Indian fishermen are not even equipped to cover the entire Indian Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). Observing that India does not have the infrastructure to support them, Kumar said it needs to be seen how it can be put in place.

Stressing on indigenous technology development, Kumar said it is an open secret that current model of technology transfer drives up cost of platforms from 30% to 60% compared to direct imports. Other measures being pursued to reduce expenditure are outsourcing, leasing, automation in various organisations under the ministry and monetisation of some defence lands. Process is also underway for closing down military farms. Giving examples, he said the Border Roads Organisation (BRO) is outsourcing all work worth upto ₹300 crore.

during the World War-II, Chief of Defence Staff General Bipin Rawat said India should have its own defence industry.

Students can undertake SWAYAM courses, avail credits: Pokhriyal

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

HRD Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal 'Nishank' on Thursday announced that the students enrolled in Universities and affiliated colleges may undertake SWAYAM courses and avail credits by completing these courses as per University Grants Commission (UGC)'s present regulations on credit framework for online learning courses.

Now with the UGC giving its nod to a proposal in this regard, students will soon be able to pursue two degree courses simultaneously in same or different streams. However, one of the two degrees will have to be pursued through regular mode and the other has to be through online distance learning (ODL).

"The proposal was approved in the recent commission meeting for simultaneous dual degrees for students in India, allowing students to complete courses in the same or different streams at the same time. One of the two degrees, however, has to be through regular mode and the other has to be through online distance learning," UGC Secretary Rajnish Jain said.

Pokhriyal further informed that UGC has shared a list of 82 Under Graduate and 42 Post

Graduate Non-Engineering MOOCs courses with University Vice Chancellors and College Principals, which will be offered in July Semester 2020. He added that these courses cover subject areas such as Biochemistry/Biotechnology/Biological Sciences & Bioengineering, Education, Law, Computer Science and Engineering, Commerce, Management, Pharmacy, Mathematics, History, Hindi, Sanskrit, etc.

The Minister further said that in the prevailing COVID-19 pandemic scenario, Students, Teachers, Life-long learners, Senior Citizens and Homemakers may enrol and avail the benefits of SWAYAM courses to widen their horizon of learning. SWAYAM (Study Webs of Active-Learning for Young Aspiring Minds) is a programme initiated by Government of India and designed to achieve the three cardinal principles of Education Policy viz., access, equity and quality.

Jain said that "an official notification will be issued soon in this regard". The UGC had last year set up a panel headed by its Vice Chairman, Bhushan Patwardhan, to examine the issue of pursuing two degree programmes simul-

taneously from the same university or different universities either through distance mode, online mode or part-time mode.

However, this is not the first time the commission was examining the issue. The UGC had set up a committee in 2012 as well and consultations were held on the same but ultimately the idea was junked.

The 2012 committee headed by then Vice Chancellor of the Hyderabad University, Furqan Qamar, had recommended that a student enrolled in a degree programme under regular mode may be allowed to pursue a maximum of one additional degree programme simultaneously under open or distance mode from the same or a different university.

"However, two degree programmes under regular mode may not be allowed simultaneously as it may create logistic, administrative and academic problems. A student pursuing a degree programme under regular mode may be allowed to pursue a maximum of one certificate, diploma, advanced diploma, PG diploma programme simultaneously either in regular or open and distance mode in the same university or from other institutions," the panel report had then said.

Govt left people with disabilities in lurch during lockdown: Survey

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India's people with disabilities (PwDs) are not only locked down but also feeling left out because of Government's failure to ensure even basic services to them amid Coronavirus outbreak, according to a survey by the National Centre for Promotion of Employment for Disabled People (NCPDEP).

The Delhi-based NGO, said that many of the challenges confronting persons with disabilities during lockdown could have been addressed had the Government duly enforced its own directives.

The report, "Locked Down and Left Behind" focuses on the status of persons with disabilities in India during the Covid-19 crisis. It includes data from a survey of 1,067 people (73% male and the rest female) with disabilities. The figures showed that over 73% of those interviewed were facing severe challenges on account of the lock-

down.

Interviews with a sub-sample of 201 persons with disabilities showed that 67 per cent had no access to doorstep delivery of essentials, and only 22 per cent confirmed that they have access to essentials. As many as 48 per cent had no access to a government helpline, and 63% had not received any financial assistance.

Many survey respondents living in remote areas said they did not receive any relief announced by the government. "The government grassroots workers do not want to come to such a remote area. Pradeep, one of the respondents, was unable to get medical necessities such as urobag, catheter and CIC pipes, and when he dialled the emergency number 112, he was told to ask his neighbour for help," the report said.

Similarly, Moyn had no access to medical treatment where he lived, and had to travel 40km to Ahmedabad to get his ear treated, the report stated, adding these and other

similar issues could have been taken care of if the "Comprehensive Disability Inclusive Guidelines" issued by the Central government's Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (DEPwD) had been uniformly enforced across India.

The DEPwD guidelines provide for ensuring that persons with disabilities are given access to food, water, medicine, preferably at their residence or place where they have been quarantined.

According to the guidelines, caregivers should be allowed to reach persons with disabilities by exempting them from restrictions during lockdown or providing passes in a simplified manner on priority. Continuation of support services for persons with disabilities with minimum human contact should also be ensured.

The report, however, praised states such as Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Nagaland for doing a commendable job for the PwDs.

2 bn in low income nations lack facilities, at risk

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

Hand sanitisers and masks are just temporary fixes to keep the Covid-19 at bay. But without access to soap and clean water, more than 2 billion people in low and middle-income nations including India, which are home to quarter of the world's population, have a greater likelihood of acquiring and transmitting the coronavirus than those in wealthy countries, according to a global study.

"Handwashing is one of the key measures to prevent COVID transmission, yet it is distressing that access is unavailable in many countries that also have limited health care capacity," said Dr Michael Brauer, professor at Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation at the University of Washington's School of Medicine, which currently has one of the world's leading models of the coronavirus of the pandemic.

The study published in the recent journal 'Environmental Health Perspectives' noted that in 46 countries, more than



half of people lacked access to soap and clean water. In Nigeria, China, Ethiopia, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Bangladesh, Pakistan, India, and Indonesia, more than 50 million persons in each were estimated to be without handwashing access, it added.

"Temporary fixes, such as hand sanitizer or water trucks, are just that - temporary fixes," Brauer said. "But implementing long-term solutions is needed to protect against COVID and the more than 700,000 deaths

each year due to poor handwashing access," Brauer said. Even with 25 per cent of the world's population lacking access to effective handwashing facilities, there have been "substantial improvements in many countries" between 1990 and 2019, Brauer said. Those countries include Saudi Arabia, Morocco, Nepal, and Tanzania, which have improved their nations' sanitation.

Earlier this month, the World Health Organization predicted 190,000 people in Africa could die of Covid-19 in

the first year of the pandemic, and that upward of 44 million of the continent's 1.3 billion people could be infected with the Coronavirus.

For India's homeless and urban poor too who live in thousands of slums across cities like Dharavi slums in Mumbai which is now hub of Covid19 cases, maintaining good hygiene can be nearly impossible.

According to a study by WaterAid, a global advocacy group on water and sanitation, published in 2018, more than 163 million people in India do not have access to clean water, the highest in the world. Climate change is likely to add several challenges on water resources front.

The Government on its part has launched Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM) that aims to provide piped water to every household in urban areas while Swajal scheme in around 115 rural districts in India to provide clean drinking water.

Experts assert that keeping hands clean is one of the easiest and best ways to prevent transmission of the new coronavirus, in addition to social distancing.

Zydus Cadila supplies first batch of 30K Covid Kavach ELISA tests

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India's efforts to ramp up its antibody tests for surveillance and understanding the proportion of population exposed to Covid-19 got a major boost on Thursday with Healthcare firm Zydus Cadila supplying the first batch of 30,000 Covid Kavach ELISA tests free of cost to Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR).

The kit will be used for antibody detection of Covid-19, a disease caused by the coronavirus infection.

Just a few days ago India had to cancel the order of rapid anti-body test kits that were imported from China as they were found to have poor accuracy rate and the tests showing false positive and negative results with multiple instances of failure of tests.

Come Bengal, see yourself: Didi to PM

AMPHAN DEVASTATION

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Last time Bengal witnessed a natural calamity as dreadfully ruinous as Amphan was two years before Nadir Shah attacked Delhi and 20 years before Robert Clive humbled Nawab of Bengal Siraj ud Daulah at Plassey in 1757.

That is how a senior bureaucrat at the centuries’ old Writers’ Buildings — the old state secretariat— painted the ferocity of super cyclone Amphan which devastated the State as no other twister did before.

Miles away at Nabanna — the new secretariat— Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Thursday summed it as “the biggest calamity I have ever seen in my life. Even the district administrations have no complete information of the extent of the losses as they have not been able to reach the far flung areas... there is nothing left. No infrastructure, no power, no

telephone connection. Nothing.”

It will be at least a week till the State Government manages to prepare a detailed report of the losses suffered after reaching relief and absorbing the initial shock, she said appealing Prime Minister Narendra Modi to visit the State to see for himself the extent of the disaster.

“I request the Prime Minister too, to come and visit the places to gather a personal impression of what has happened to the State,” Banerjee said adding she had talks with Home Minister Amit Shah too who had assured her all help.

“I will also like to go for an aerial survey but cannot do that now as my chopper cannot find a place to land, as most open areas are inundated,” she said.

“The Home Minister too called me up. I told him about the devastation. I have appealed to him for helping the State

during these hours of crisis. I do not know what help they will make or whether any help will come at all because hardly any help has come to handle the corona crisis. The State has exhausted all its ₹ 2 0 0 crore fund earmarked for corona endemic but is yet to receive funds from the Centre to fight the disease,” Banerjee maintained.

While on Wednesday night she came out with a ballpark figure of “₹1 lakh crore” to tackle the crisis on Thursday she was silent about that saying the Government will estimate the extent of the destruction before preparing any report.

“Now after this cyclone we do not know how to go about it and how to conduct the relief work together with fighting the pandemic. Nothing is left. Agriculture is totally gone. Districts after districts are inundated, river embankments are breached and the administration is working overtime to repair them as monsoon seasons are coming. The power

infrastructure is thoroughly damaged, so are the internet link and road connection,” she said adding thousands of houses have been literally raised to the ground.

True, the devastation in four districts of Bengal is complete. At least 72 people died, out of who 15 in State Capital Kolkata — some crushed under the uprooted trees, others getting electrocuted and yet others coming under collapsed parts of buildings. The Chief Minister announced ₹2.5 lakh for the kin of those who died due to the cyclone.

“There is a house right in front of mine part of which was literally torn off and hanging... and the in adjacent houses the greels and doors were twisted,” Banerjee said in a meeting with her Cabinet colleagues and the senior bureaucrats.

While there was no exact estimate of the losses the impact of the cyclone was such that Kolkata withdrew into an un-imposed lockdown with

people having no way to drive around as more than a thousand bid trees lay blocking the city’s busiest thoroughfares. At least 47 trees had fallen within a mile between Ballygunge and Kasba.

So much so that the Chief Minister’s convoy itself had to wind its way through by-lanes to reach the desired spots for inspection. The news that would come on Wednesday night came in the Thursday morning reporting how electric short circuits sparked fires at various places and how traffic signals were lay helpless on the roads. With television connection snapped almost in the entire part of the five-six south Bengal districts.

“If Kolkata has more than a thousand trees uprooted what might it be in the districts. I think the number of uprooted trees may go up to a lakh or more,” said a Minister adding the Chief Minister had directed the Cabinet to take up immediate plantation programmes.

776 more infections, TN tally at 13,967

State sees 7 more deaths, toll reach 94

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

A record number of 776 persons were tested positive for coronavirus on Thursday in Tamil Nadu as the number of persons tested positive till date rose to 13,967 in the State.

A medical bulletin released by the Directorate of Health and Preventive Medicine on Thursday said the 776 who tested positive included 86 persons returned to the State from foreign countries and other States in India like Maharashtra and Kerala. Death toll due to the pandemic reached 94 in Tamil Nadu with seven more succumbing to the dreaded disease on Thursday.

The State saw 400 persons getting discharged from hospitals on Thursday making the total number of persons getting cured and discharged reaching 6,282. This makes the active cases on date 7, 588. The bulletin said that with two more

laboratories beginning to test the samples in the State on Thursday, there are 66 laboratories working round-the-clock to test samples. A total of 3,72, 532 samples were tested on Thursday, said the bulletin.

Out of the 776 positive cases on Thursday, Chennai contributed 567 positive samples which took the number of covid-19 patients in Greater Chennai Corporation to 8,795. Dr K Kulandaiwamy, advisor to Tamil Nadu Government who was the director of public health and preventive medicine told *The Pioneer* that there was no need to panic over the ever increasing number of coronavirus patients in the State.

“This is one phase of the pandemic. The important thing is that how many persons in the 60 Plus age group got afflicted with the coronavirus. If the number of persons who tested positive for covid is above the age group ,then we have to be careful. This is because they are the vulnerable section and we have to give maximum protection to them,” said Dr

Kulandaiwamy.

Dr Kulandaiwamy, an authority on preventive medicine pointed out that testing, isolation and containment are the only option available to save the vulnerable sections. “What we should focus is on the age of people who are afflicted with corona virus. The lockdown is meant for those in the 60+ age group,” he said.

The neighbouring State of Kerala saw 24 persons testing positive on Thursday. Out of this, 13 were those who reached the State from West Asian countries and one from Malaysia while the remaining 10 were from other States in India who reached the State by train and road.

A press release by the Kerala government said that there were 177 persons in hospitals in the State who are being treated for covid-19. It further stated that 78,096 persons returned to Kerala by air (5,495), sea (1,621), road (68,884) and by rail (2,136). On Thursday, 153 persons have been hospitalised.

Min abusing woman video viral

KESTUR VASUKI ■ BENGALURU

Karnataka law and minor irrigation Minister JC Madhuswamy caught on a video which went viral verbally abusing a woman farmer when she confronted the Minister over lake encroachment at Kolar on Wednesday. The Minister had gone to inspect a lake in Kolar and the woman came up to him alleging encroachment around the lake.

According to the video which was aired in local channels, the Minister is heard saying, “Aye, muccho bayi rascal (Aye, shut your mouth, rascal) in Kannada “ to the woman. The woman was asking the Minister to clear the encroachments around the lake when the minister apparently lost his cool and abused the woman. Then, a police officer is seen pushing the woman away and shouting at her, while she was presenting the demands of the locals.

As the issue has been embroiled in a major controversy Chief Minister BS Yediyurappa chided the Minister and asked him to apologise to the woman. In a press conference in Bengaluru on Thursday Yediyurappa publicly warned Law Minister JC Madhuswamy for yelling at a woman farmer in Kolar, an incident

that attracted widespread criticism.

“What he (Madhuswamy) said is not right. I have warned him. None can forgive such an explicit manner of talking with a woman. That, too, behaving like that being a minister doesn’t bode well. I will talk to that woman also and I’ll ensure this doesn’t happen again,” Yediyurappa told reporters.

On his part, Madhuswamy said he felt intimidated. “If I have hurt the feelings of any woman, I will certainly apologise,” he said. “But citizens should realise, we go to their villages to ask about their problems. If they start abusing us publicly, how can we work? My secretary and I heard her for five minutes and then told her that we know our responsibility. We asked her to close the issue. She didn’t stop and I lost my cool,” the minister said.

Former chief minister and Leader of the Opposition Siddaramaiah find this a political opportunity and targeted the BS Yediyurappa-led BJP Government over the video and has demanded sacking of JC Madhuswamy from the Cabinet. He also demanded that the Minister issue an apology to the woman for his behaviour. Several social media users have also criticised the Minister for this incident.

Desi system keeps virus away from some TN dists

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

If the daily medical bulletins released by the Directorate of Public Health and Preventive Medicine, Government of Tamil Nadu, are any yardsticks, they are an endorsement of the Indian system of medicine in fighting the coronavirus.

While districts like Chennai, Cuddalore, Ariyalur, Kanchipuram, Thiruvallur , Villupuram and Dindigul lead the list with highest number of covid-19 patients, there are districts like Dharmapuri (5 patients), Krishnagiri (20), Nilgiris (14), Pudukottai (7) and Sivagangai (26) which have succeeded in containing the pandemic to a great extent. Districts like Pudukottai and Dharmapuri stand out because of the desi system of prevention adopted by them to check coronavirus.

This newspaper had reported on March 29 that Pudukottai would remain inaccessible to coronavirus because of the caution shown by the local population and their belief in Indian system

of medicine. Persons entering villages/homes have to wash their hands and legs with water boiled with turmeric.

Members of village protection committee would spray water boiled with turmeric and neem leaves on the tyres of all passenger vehicles and two wheelers including bicycles.

“The strategy paid good dividends and we were never in doubt about the efficacy of this preventive measures. Roads laden with neem trees also guarded us from the pandemic,” Dr Arjun Kumar Viswanathan, deputy director (health services) , Pudukottai district told *The Pioneer*.

Dr Viswanathan is worried over the arrival of coronavirus afflicted persons from Maharashtra. “On Thursday morning we had persons tested for covid-19 from Maharashtra reaching the district. Though it is worrisome, we will overcome that challenge too,” he said. Till date, Pudukottai has screened and tested 5,000 persons, according to the DD(HS). He said the combination

of turmeric, neem and other herbal plants helped the health department in Pudukottai checking the spread of the pandemic.

S Malarvizhi, district collector, Dharmapuri, could be described as the frontline warrior who fights coronavirus tooth and nail. Dharmapuri, though a backward district because of its rural landscape, is the most vulnerable spot in Tamil Nadu because of its location and topography. Agricultural labourers and 1.65 lakh construction workers are potential carriers of the virus but Malarvizhi chose a multi-pronged strategy to contain the pandemic.

Starting from the panchayat ward members to district panchayath members, all were designated as covid warriors and an effective surveillance system was put into operation. “As on Thursday we do not have even a single coronavirus positive case in the district. The persons who tested positive were from Maharashtra , Koyambedu and Bangalore. But all of them have been discharged and Dharmapuri has become a

green zone district,” said Malarvizhi.

In addition to this, Malarvizhi and her team of fighters ensured that all people in the district were fed Kapa Surnam (a powder to fight cough) and Nilavempu (a medicine made of herbs and plants) to increase the immunity power of the population.

“This substantiates our findings that the Indian system of medicine is the best protocol to cure the coronavirus pandemic,” said Dr C V Krishnaswamy, Tamil Nadu’s leading physician and a strong supporter of the holistic properties of Indian system of knowledge. Dr C K Krishnan Nair, molecular biologist of international repute who has nearly four decades of research experience in Bhabha Atomic Research Centre of the Department of Atomic Energy said this was evidence based research findings for which the world was waiting. “The vaccine may take months to reach the drug store but we have this medicine which can neutralise the virus causing covid-19,” said Dr Nair.

Raj school students to study via TV from June 1

Jaipur: The Government school students in Rajasthan will get to learn course study via television from June 1 as the Information and Broadcasting (I&B) Ministry has allotted it a slot on Doordarshan to ensure regular education during the lockdown.

Rajasthan Education Minister Govind Singh Dotasara said, here on Wednesday, the students without access to smart phones and high-speed internet were being deprived of education. “Now they will be able to study via Doordarshan from June 1,” he said.

“The Education Department gets one more success. After radio, we have got a slot on Doordarshan,” he tweeted. **IANS**

Head constable martyred in Pulwama action against ultras

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

Shortly after senior officers of Jammu & Kashmir Police attended a function commemorating the National Anti-terrorism day in Srinagar, a group of ‘unidentified’ terrorists targeted a joint ‘naka’ party of police and CRPF at Prichoo in South Kashmir’s Pulwama district in which one head constable of JKP laid down his life while another sustained injuries on Thursday.

This is the second back to back terror strike on security forces in Kashmir valley after the killing of Junaid Ashraf Sehrai , a Hizbul Mujahideen Commander and son of Hurriyat Chairman in an encounter in downtown area of Srinagar on Tuesday.

On Wednesday, two jawans of Border Security Force were also killed by terrorists in a ‘hit and run’ attack in Ganderbal district.



Police spokesman in Srinagar said, ‘Terrorists fired upon joint naka party of police and CRPF at Prichoo, Pulwama on Thursday. 02 police personnel got injured in the incident, however one of the injured succumbed to his injuries and attained martyrdom.’

The martyred policeman was identified as Head

Constable Anoop Singh.

Meanwhile, three newly recruited local terrorists were apprehended live by the joint teams of security forces from thickly forested area of Gungbugh in Kupwara district on Thursday. The trio, were reportedly in touch with their handlers across the Pakistan Occupied Kashmir via social media and they had

motivated them to join the ranks of a terror outfit.

According to police spokesman, “On Thursday, a picture went viral on social media with three youths holding AK-47 rifles ,who claimed to have joined the terror ranks. The trio were identified as Aabid Hussain Wani son of Gulzar Ahmad resident of Lalpora, Zakir Rafiq Bhat son of Abdul Rashid resident of Lalpora and Javid Ahmad Dar son of Ghulam Qadir resident of Thayan Kalaroos.”

Police spokesman claimed, “Prompt contact tracing revealed their presence in the forest area of Gungbugh area of Lolab.

Accordingly Kupwara Police along with 28RR and 162Bn CRPF launched a cordon and search operation in the area. During the search operation they started firing on the search party.

However, repeated

announcements were made to persuade them to surrender and after a brief shootout all the three were apprehended alive during the operation. Incriminating materials including arms and ammunition were recovered from their possession. “Case FIR No. 54/2020 under relevant sections of law registered at PS Sogam and investigation set into motion,police spokesman added.

In Pulwama, before handing over the martyrs’ body to the next of kins for last rites a wreath lying ceremony was organised in District Police Lines Awantipora where floral tributes were paid to the martyr.

Civil & Police Officers led by IGP Kashmir Zone Vijay Kumar, IGP CRPF Rajash Kumar, DC Pulwama Raghav Langar laid floral wreaths on the mortal remains and paid rich tributes to the martyr.

47 new cases in Dharavi, total mounts to 1,425

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

The total number of Covid-19 infected cases in Mumbai’s Dharavi slum shot up to 1,425 on Thursday, as 47 more persons tested positive for the pandemic. What is worrying the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) is that there has absolutely no let up in the number of infected cases in Dharavi, where there have so far been 56 deaths.

Of the fresh infected cases, Matunga Labour Camp — which has become a hotspot within Dharavi — accounted for six new positive cases, while Mukund Nagar locality reported five cases.

There have been four new positive cases in Shastri Nagar, while three infected cases each have been reported Rajiv Gadi

Nagar and Shahu Nagar.

Matunga Labour Camp recorded has been the worst-affected locality within Dharavi in the last few weeks. On Wednesday, as many as seven positive cases were reported from this locality, while eight positive cases had been recorded in this area on Tuesday.

Earlier, six infected cases had been reported from Matunga Labour Camp on Monday, while this area had registered six positive cases.

Even in the previous week, there have on an average been half a dozen cases reported from this locality every day.

Spread over 240 hectare area, Dharavi is home to more than 4 lakh people. It has been a hotbed for coronavirus, ever since the first couple deaths and infected cases were reported from this slum in the first

week of April.

Less than 12 hours after taking over the new Municipal Commissioner, Iqbal Singh Chahal had visited Dharavi on May 9 and taken stock of the situation and devise ways to arrest the rapid spread of pandemic in this slum

Apart from going around in worst-affected localities of Mukund Nagar and Shastri Nagar, a containment zone near Tata colony and interacting with the affected residents, the new Municipal Commissioner had laid stress on the police enforcing the strict lockdown and BMC medical staff intensifying the tracing of Covid-19 “contacts” in the densely populated slum and putting them in an institutional quarantine in a big way to prevent the rapid spread of the Covid-19 in the area.

Mohan Lal turns 60, wishes pour in from cultural world

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

Despite the lockdown caused by the coronavirus pandemic, Keralaites all over India and across the world celebrated on Thursday the 60th birthday of Mohan Lal, Malayalam cinema’s evergreen hero.

This is the first time Malayalam film industry and the cultural field came together to celebrate the birthday of an actor. Besides his friends in film industry, Kathakali artists and poets joined hands and wished birthday greetings, health and prosperity in years to come to Lal, popularly described as Natana Vismayam (the acting wonder) of South India.

“It is my great fortune to live in this era and get enthralled by an artist like Mohan Lal. While watching his movies, I’ve never felt Lal was acting. He is known for living the characters given to him with elan by the director,” said Kalamandalam Gopi, the octogenarian Kathakali maestro, who taught the dance form to Lal for his role in Vanaprastham.

Gopi said he cannot believe that Lal turned 60. “We are confident that he would give us more and more immortal characters in years to come,” said Gopi while wishing the actor who has been honoured with Padma Bhushan in 2019 and has won many national and international awards for some of the roles essayed by him during his four-decades long acting life.

Janam TV, a popular Malayalam news channel, sprang a surprise on the actor’s birthday by making him anchoring the Sanskrit bulletin. Lal is well versed in Sanskrit which he perfected for acting in a Sanskrit play and a short film.

59 more test +ve, J&K tally 1,449

PNS ■ JAMMU

With two more deaths reported from Kashmir valley, the death toll due to Covid-19 touched 20 while 59 fresh cases were detected, taking the total tally of coronavirus cases to 1,449 cases in the Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir on Thursday.

8 new cases were reported from Jammu division and 51 from Kashmir division. The highest number of 21 samples of policemen posted in Kulgam tested positive while Anantnag reported 12 new positive cases including two pregnant women.

Two women, undergoing treatment at SMHS and CD hospital in Srinagar, died on Thursday .Both the patients had a long history of respiratory diseases and had tested positive during admission in the hospital.

According to the daily Media Bulletin on novel Coronavirus (Covid-19), out of 1449 positive cases, 745 are Active Positive, 684 have recovered and 20 have died; 02 in Jammu division and 18 in Kashmir division.

Moreover, 06 more COVID-19 patients have recovered and discharged from various hospitals, 03 from Jammu division and 03 from Kashmir Division.

The Bulletin further said that out of 107108 test results available, 105659 samples have been tested as negative till May 21, 2020.

64 deaths, 2,345 new cases in Maha

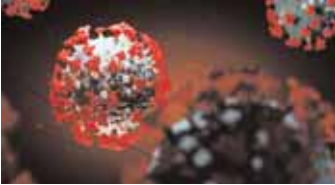
TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Maharashtra continued to be in the grip of severe coronavirus on Thursday, as 64 more persons died of Covid-19 and 2,345 others tested positive, taking the total deaths to 1,454 and infected cases to 41612 in the State.

Of the total deaths, Mumbai accounted for 41 deaths – as it did on Wednesday, while there were nine deaths in Malegaon, seven in Pune, three in Aurangabad city, two in Navi Mumbai and one each in Pimpri-Chinchwad and Solapur.

Of the dead, 36 were men while 28 were women. Thirty one of them aged over 60 years, 29 were from the age group 40 to 59 years and 4 were aged below 40 years. “Thirty eight out of 64 patients (59%) had high-risk co-morbidities such as diabetes, hypertension, heart disease,” a state health department bulletin said.

Such has been gravity of the Coronavirus situation in Maharashtra that there have been as many as 435 deaths during the last seven days. The death tally has been as follows: May 15- 49, May 16



-67, May 17 -63, May 18-51, May 19 -76, May 20 -65 and May 21 – 64.

With 41 fresh deaths and staggering 1382 infected cases reported on Thursday, the total number of deaths in Mumbai mounted to 882, while the total infected cases jumped to 24118.

Out of 3,19,710 laboratory samples, 2,78,068 tested negative while 41,642 samples tested positive for COVID-19 until Thursday.

There are 1949 active containment zones in the State currently. Total 15,894 surveillance squads worked across the state on Thursday and surveillance of 64.89 lakh population was done.

As many as 11,726 patients have been discharged till date after full recovery. Currently, 4,37,304 people are in home quarantine and 26,865 people are in institutional quarantine.

CRPF creates new VIP security wing

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Months after taking over the security of MIVVIPs like Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, Rahul Gandhi and other dignitaries, the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) has created a new VIP security wing, which will only look after security-related matters. The wing will function from Delhi and an Inspector General-level officer will handle this wing.

The CRPF had asked for a separate VIP sector headquarter and a range along with a training centre in its proposal.

The Ministry of Home Affairs in its order issued in November last year had withdrawn the SPG protection from Gandhi family and their security was given to the CRPF.

During initial days, CRPF, as well as some Gandhi family members, faced issues with each other, especially when an unauthorised car entered into the residence of Priyanka Gandhi Vadra. The matter was escalated and Home Minister Amit Shah had to give a statement in Parliament.

Another controversy erupted during Priyanka Gandhi’s Lucknow trip where she was found riding pillion on a scooter.

CRPF after this incident had said that

while travelling, the protectee used a civilian vehicle, which was non-bullet resistant. CRPF termed the act of Priyanka Gandhi as “violation.”

After these incidents, CRPF floated a proposal of having a separate Security Wing dedicated for VVIP security.

“In pursuance of the review meeting of Home Minister of India, a self-contained proposal for the creation of a separate VIP Security Sector HQ, VIP Security Range and VIP Security Training Centre (VSTC) for setting up of a permanent infrastructure was submitted to MHA.” CRPF DG office said in its letter.

“Keeping in view of the MHA’s direction, it is decided to start functioning an independent VIP Security Wing headed by IG Rank officer duly assisted by one DIG and other corresponding staff under the supervision of ADG (Hqrs and Ops) Directorate. Accordingly, VIP Security Wing is created in CRPF Directorate on an ad-hoc basis at RK Puram, New Delhi,” said the CRPF.

Prior to this, IG, Intelligence, was handling charge of VIP security. “One of the existing posts of IG will be converted into IG, VIP Security Wing. He will exercise all statutory and financial powers,” said the CRPF.

The dragon's grip

Nepal is clearly a pawn in China's design to stress India in the middle of the pandemic by reigniting old border disputes



Admittedly, India's relations with its immediate neighbours have in recent times been uneasy primarily because of two factors. One, the Chinese economic suzerainty in smaller nations through a colonising project of debt-trapping and infrastructure-building called the Belt and Road Initiative. Second, India's over-dependence on historical, spiritual and geographical connect as a leit-motif of diplomacy instead of nurturing bilateral relations on more favourable and equal terms or defusing anxieties that smaller nations are bound to feel. China's rapid engagement with the political leadership of each country around us has meant that each is now leveraging its strategic importance *vis-a-vis* India. And the economic largesse of China has meant that each nation, while paying lip service to historical ties with India, is working with Beijing for mutual benefit. This is one of the reasons why relations between India and Nepal have been sliding in recent times despite the latter's Hindu kingdom origins, something which was supposed to find resonance with the pro-Hindu tilt of the Narendra Modi regime. So it is no rocket science to understand why Nepal, which has always stayed within the broad framework of talks to settle border and trade issues, turned viciously aggressive overnight over an Indian road link that's intended to smoothen pilgrim flow to Kailash Mansarovar near the Lipulekh pass. Nepali Prime Minister KP Oli has not only claimed India overstepped territorial sovereignty but even outrageously accused it of exporting a far more deadlier strain of COVID-19 than the Wuhan variety. Though there is a long history of both nations making claims and counter-claims over this area, according to a 1954 treaty signed between them and China, Lipulekh pass is very much an Indian gateway. But overriding it, Nepal released a revised political and administrative map showing Limpiyadhura, Lipulekh and Kalapani under its territory, although India released a precise map of the area last year. Reportedly, Nepal is even planning a special resolution in Parliament demanding the return of Kalapani, Limpiyadhura and Lipulekh. Yet just a few days ago, Nepal Foreign Minister Pradeep Kumar Gyawali claimed that efforts were on to resolve the border issue with India through diplomatic initiatives. Besides, work on the road has been going on for a while and if Nepal had extreme reservations, it should have gone ballistic earlier, not now. Clearly, the timing of this shadow-boxing on China's behalf at a time when India is stretched by the COVID-19 pandemic at one end and the Chinese standoff in Ladakh at the other, smells of a larger pincer attack to compromise our bargaining power.

Given Nepal's increasing Chinese-inspired confidence, India should have seen this coming and worked the ground. Perhaps, it should have gone slow on the announcement of inaugurating the road in the middle of the pandemic. While India may have bet on Oli's weakening position within the Nepal Communist Party (NCP) recently, facing as he did a challenge from seniors and former Prime Ministers Pushpa Kamal Dahal "Prachanda" and Madhav Kumar, China swiftly stepped in to mediate between all three. The result, a re-energised Oli and India's failure to prop up the rivals. Further confirmation of China's diabolical plot came from the US administration, which lashed out at it for its "disturbing behaviour" in fomenting border tensions. Point is, a beleaguered China will try every trick in its playbook to re-establish its global dominance as even with companies moving out from there post-Wuhan, it will still have the world's largest factory floor. Its only Achilles' heel is the war of perception, one where nations around the world are seeking an independent inquiry into allegations that it hid information about the contagion and its source. China, which is also on an acquisition spree in COVID-distressed economies around the world, is upset with India for stopping aggressive takeovers of weakened domestic companies. It has already hit back at Australia for spearheading the neutral inquiry demand into the Wuhan contagion by imposing rude tariffs on barley. By using Nepal as a pawn, as it has Pakistan all this time, and hot-stepping in Ladakh, it is reigniting the Himalayan border in the middle of our critical fight against COVID-19 to compel us not to be part of an anti-China narrative. This despite India being fairly silent about China's complicity in the contagion and the sub-standard test kits it sent us. India rightly ought to be protectionist about building self-sufficiencies going forward. Meanwhile, it ought to invest itself politically and economically in Nepal, particularly because we share an open border and our labour forces contribute to each other's economy. China is no longer a hovering presence but a shroud enveloping Nepal. With over 90 per cent of foreign direct investment (FDI) from China, transportation and commercial links, the Nepalese youth are scenting newer opportunities. And Nepal's growing trade deficit with China means that it will have no option but to become an economic serf, listening to the dictates of the new master.

Finally, the takeoff

Partial route opening and limited flights will infuse some life into the aviation industry but flyer discipline must be paramount



As India slowly eases itself out of the lockdown that began on March 25, the Government has opened up various modes of transport like buses, taxis and trains with a strict set of guidelines to follow, considering that we are seeing a spike in Coronavirus cases each day. Now, the Government, which is keen to see the economy of the country back on track, has announced that it will be opening up domestic air travel, too, from May 25, exactly two months after the country shut itself down. This is good news for the domestic aviation industry that was already distressed before the lockdown began and has now reached the brink of extinction. But how much of a relief it turns out to be for the beleaguered airlines remains to be seen as it is not yet clear which routes will be operational with this key decision being left to individual State Governments. So, as with trains and opening up of inter-State borders for buses, we might see some States balk at the idea of opening up their skies amid a pandemic that does not show any sign of abating. Besides, most metropolitan cities continue to be in red zones. However, the Government is taking all precautions to ensure the safety of airport staff, airline employees and flyers alike as it has issued a string of detailed disinfecting codes on how we can travel.

But what of vital social distancing norms? It seems to be something of a paradox right now. Because on one side people will have to get on and off aircraft sequentially and in batches, so as to maintain social distancing, and waiting areas will have taped off or marked seats that cannot be used, but on the other side there are no plans to leave the middle seat vacant in the aircraft. Civil Aviation Minister Hardeep Puri says prices won't be "viable" and the Aarogya Setu app profiling would ensure that suspect passengers are anyway not on board. Perhaps we should follow the example of the US airlines that are spreading out their passengers by blocking the middle seat and capping the number of passengers. And when we are expected to maintain social distancing on buses and taxis then, why not on flights? As it is, with nearly all modes of travel opened up, the virus is bound to spread faster now, unless all movement out of red zones is banned. This is something that the Government has to consider seriously. Opening up the economy and the aviation sector is a good move but giving social distancing norms a go by in a closely-packed, compressed air cabin could be an invitation to trouble.

Heartless reforms

Changes in labour laws have been long overdue in our country. But in doing away with necessary protection for workers, State Governments are playing with their basic rights



AJOY KUMAR

These are difficult times for any human being as the entire world is suffering due to the pandemic. Millions of people are at risk and every time we think we have handled the situation, the virus one-ups us. It is a difficult time also because so many of our loved ones (especially the aged) are at grave risk. The virus has already claimed 3,27,000 lives across the world and this number is heavily on the conservative side. One such life that the virus claimed was of Willie Levi, one of the Atalissa boys who succumbed to the virus at the age of 73 in late April this year.

Levi did not create a large business that changed the world as we knew it. He was not an inventor nor an activist or a celebrity. Yet, his obituary was one that stayed with me. He was mentally challenged and started working for Henry's Turkey Service in 1974 along with other men with the same disorder. Their pay was meant to be \$750 a month but they received just \$65 for their entire course of employment that spanned for decades. The rest of the fund was taken by the employer for provisions like bed, board, clothes and medical care (though they received hardly any). Besides, they were never given an option to seek other forms of employment and were lodged in an old school that had been converted into a bunkhouse. This inhuman treatment meted out to them was made possible due to a cruel provision in the law, which allowed the employers to pay people with disabilities less than the minimum wage.

Ultimately after years of inaction Government agencies evacuated his bunkhouse in 2009. Levi was found with a broken knee cap and a debilitating depression. In 2013, in a lawsuit filed by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, Levi, along with other claimants, emerged victorious. The courts finally ruled in favour of proper pay and working conditions for people with disabilities. It is fitting to come across the story of Levi when back home, some State Governments have decided to make some shocking changes to the labour laws.

The BJP-ruled State of Uttar Pradesh has proposed an ordinance that will exempt businesses from the purview of almost all labour laws for the next three years. The Gujarat Government, too, has announced that it intends to follow Uttar Pradesh's stride by allowing 1,200-day labour law exemptions for new industrial investments. Madhya Pradesh, too,



has sought to significantly dilute the labour laws although the Shivraj Singh Chouhan Government has tried to adopt a slightly more nuanced approach.

The changes in the labour laws are oppressive and without any basis as to what they seek to achieve: Attract investments into their States. An example of this oppressiveness is how Uttar Pradesh's ordinance retains only the "safety and security" provisions of the Factories Act and excludes the chapter relating to "health" as well as the provisions relating to "hazardous processes." These provisions mandate an employer to *inter alia* provide adequate ventilation to the employees, prevent overcrowding, ensure a clean working environment and sufficient accommodation for latrine and urinal. Are we comfortable with having our labourers work in an environment that does not even provide basic amenities to them?

Labour is one of the four typically cited factors of production. The other three are land, entrepreneurship and capital. When we say each of these factors of production out loud, certain mental images are formed in our minds. We do not have the same image for all of them. While the other factors of production are theoretical constructs, labour, by definition, is human. However, such a move reduces human

“NO ORGANISATION WISHES TO TREAT ITS LABOURERS POORLY BECAUSE OWNERS KNOW THAT SUCH TREATMENT IS NOT CONDUCTIVE TO THEIR BUSINESS. INSTEAD, WHAT IS NEEDED IS A STRONG INFRASTRUCTURE, A SKILLED WORKFORCE AND A HEALTHIER ENVIRONMENT FOR BUSINESSES TO FLOURISH. THESE WOULD BENEFIT THEM GREATLY”

labour to a mere number or a largely theoretical construct.

We must realise that unlike the other factors of production that are unidimensional ie, a means to further production, labour involves individuals who are closely interlinked with other human lives. When a father has no opportunity to spend time with his family or dies due to poor working conditions, it is not merely a factor of production that is extinguished but the entire life of a family is upended.

The Government cannot allow this to happen. There is no debating the fact that India's labour laws need a revamp. The country's regulatory environment, too, needs to be eased so that businesses and entrepreneurship can flourish. But will doing away with basic labour protections achieve that objective? Stalwarts of Indian business like Azim Premji and Kiran Mazumdar Shaw certainly do not think so.

No organisation wishes to treat its labourers poorly because owners know that such treatment is not conducive to their business. Instead, what is needed is strong infrastructure, a skilled workforce and a healthier environment for businesses to flourish. Instead of addressing these substantive concerns that would require respective State Governments to work hard by instituting real change, many have taken the easy way

out by taking on our labourers.

The role of the Government is encapsulated in the Constitution. A bare examination of the Articles on fundamental rights or the Directive Principles on State Policy clearly shows that the Government must advocate for its citizens. Businesses like Henry's (Levi's employer) are known to take advantage of the labourers whenever they get a chance and there are many such employers.

All they care about is their top line. This is why we have democratically-elected Governments in place. It is the duty of the Government to ensure that businesses do not treat humans like other factors of production. There is a basic dignity and protection that the Constitution guarantees to the citizens. Governments have a moral, ethical and legal responsibility to protect these values.

If we fail to do this and accept these changes, we are being hypocritical. Ask yourself: Would we allow our children to work in such conditions? Then what gives us the right to allow any worker to not have adequate ventilation or access to proper toilets? There is no economic benefit to such a move and even if there was, the price of human dignity cannot be reduced to mere numbers on a balance sheet.

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

SOUND BITE

It's going to take some practice (to not apply saliva). But I think, if we all have to co-exist, which is the DNA of the human race, we will have to try and adapt.

Indian spinner
—Ravichandran Ashwin

Whatever it takes for the industry to get together and start working, I think, I am up for it. I would do whatever collectively we decide to do.

Actor
—Kartik Aaryan

Spokesman speaks stupidly on behalf of China, trying desperately to deflect the pain and carnage that their country spread throughout the world. It all comes from the top.

US President
—Donald Trump

I do not know why the first lockdown needed to be announced with four hours notice. That's what caused a lot of the immediate crisis for many migrant workers.

Former CII president
—Naushad Forbes

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Celebrate diversity

Sir — Bees and other pollinators like butterflies, bats and hummingbirds are increasingly under threat from human activities. Pollination is fundamental to the survival of ecosystems across the globe. Nearly 90 per cent of the world's wild flowering plants, more than 75 per cent of the world's food crops and 35 per cent of global agricultural needs are dependent, entirely or in part, on animal pollination. Not only do pollinators contribute directly to food security but they are also key to conserving biodiversity.

The aim of celebrating World Biological Diversity is to raise awareness about the importance of pollinators, the threats they face and their contribution to sustainable development. Measures to protect bees and other pollinators could go some way towards solving problems related to the global food supply and eliminating hunger in developing countries. Since human beings need pollinators for their survival, it is crucial that we take steps to check their steady decline.

Ibn Hafiz Mazahiree
Hyderabad

Loans cannot fight poverty

A stunning pun on the just-announced ₹20 lakh crore financial package to make India self-reliant that is doing the rounds in the social media is: "20 lakh crore me *terah* (13) zeroes hai." A thoughtful articulation of the intent in too few words. For now, it is better that the mystery of the "two and the 13 zeros" in the ₹20 lakh crore booster package is left unsaid. Yet, its unmissable character is the colossal "credit" content. The collateral-free offering of ₹3 lakh crore as loans to the Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), the proposal of subordinate loans of ₹20,000 crore to them, credit-linked subsidy scheme of ₹70,000 crore under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana, Kisan Credit Card special drive to benefit farmers with institutional "credit" of an aggregate amount of ₹2 lakh crore and special "credit" facility of ₹5,000 crore to the street vendors accounted for almost the package. Indians — the small unit owners, shopkeepers, street vendors, farmers and the salaried middle class — have been asked to become self-reliant using the lavish "credit" lined up for disbursement. During crisis times, when incomes fall and demand crashes, ordinary indebtedness begins to turn to over-indebtedness.

Public Sector Banks (PSBs) act as the organised loan lenders of the Government. It was in 1969 when the Indira

Wasted opportunity

Sir — The Government's decision to allocate an additional ₹40,000 crore for MGNREGA



Gandhi Government nationalised 14 private commercial banks. In 1980, six more private banks were brought under the public sector. Commercial banks were nationalised pursuant to the "important economic decision" of the then Government and grew exponentially to become the source of debt fund of the current ruling dispensation. The mammoth package to fight the virus aims to appropriate the funds of the PSBs. Here, the augmentation of the budgetary surplus is a necessity to foster both production and consumption. Loan offerings are welcome appendages but not the right resource to fight the twin killers: Pandemic and poverty.

Haridasan Rajan
Kozhikode

funds is a welcome step that will help generate employment in rural areas and address the distress caused to the migrant workers due to COVID-19. Given the rising spread of the

disease as well as the return of migrants to their home States, it is unlikely that migrant farm labour will return for the coming Kharif season. Keeping in mind the current labour shortage, the

scheme's work calendar must be adjusted to local conditions. To manage peak agricultural labour demand, input operations like sowing and harvesting of crops must be allowed. This will not only reduce farm input cost but also enhance man-days and encourage the migrants to return, especially to States like Punjab, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh where farm operations can increase man-days significantly.

Harvinder Singh Chugh
Jalandhar

Change lifestyle

Sir — Ever since the first lockdown was imposed on March 25, there have been a series of curfews till date. The fact is that a complete nationwide lockdown has only helped us to slow the rate of spread of the Coronavirus. The virus has come to stay for long. People should change their lifestyle to minimise its impact and get accustomed to living with it.

Manisha
Via email

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

FIRST COLUMN

Beware the bugs of war

It is time countries start paying attention to bio-security needs to protect their people and economies from potential risks



SURAVI SHARMA

Genetic engineering is the frontier science of the 21st century and China has been one of the leaders of the game. We already know of genetically-modified babies born in Macao, China. We also know of an US engineer Juan Carlos claiming that he had created the world's first human-monkey hybrid embryo in a lab in China, because it was impossible to carry out such pioneering research in his home country due to legal regulations. China is fast becoming the world's capital for controversial science, with marked ethical lapses in medical research, including genetic modification of life forms. The same wealth of knowledge has been applied on microorganisms as well, to enable better therapeutic drugs and other proteins for treatment modalities as well as for capacity-building in the field of potential biological warfare.

How zoonotic viruses infect humans has been a major focus of modern virology. We know that SARS and MERS came from bats but that doesn't convince one that the COVID-19 is of similar origin. US Intelligence says the Coronavirus is not "genetically modified" nor did an organism escape the lab. Professor Shan-Lu Liu at the Ohio State University says there is no "credible" evidence of gene tweaking. The virus' genome sequence is available and had it been altered, we would have seen signs of gene alteration, insertion, deletion, or changes at the nucleotide bases. He added that the salient points in the sequence that differ from bat viruses appear natural, as the genes at those sites are scattered randomly like they would be, in nature. However, scientists say they cannot rule out genetic work by a proficient team of bio-technologists taking appropriate measures to cover up. Also, outcomes of such research to diagnose genomic intervention cannot be arrived at quickly as they would be very elaborate.

It has been observed that genetic changes to a virus usually result in attenuation, which had earlier led to the belief that the risks of viral bio-attacks were low. Most suspected agents for bio-terrorism have been toxin-releasing bacteria like Anthrax. But scientists have now identified certain viruses as potential candidates for bio-terrorism like the Pox virus, Dengue virus, Ebola virus, Lassa fever virus and a few more.

A report in October 2003 said that a US Government-funded project had created an extremely virulent form of mousepox that kills all mice even if they have been on anti-viral drugs or vaccinated. The research brings forth the prospect of pox viruses being turned into lethal organisms even for people who have been vaccinated. Scientists say such research is risky as pox viruses have been known to cross species. But further work has not stopped as scientists say their work is necessary to explore what bio-terrorists might do.

Research found many of the modified viruses were not contagious and if they escaped from a lab they could not cause ecological chaos by wiping out a species. However, such discovery also meant that bio-terrorists might attempt to use the same trick to modify a virus with the motive of using it only on targeted person/s and not rebounding on the attackers, hence meeting the main criterion of a bio-weapon.

With the availability of complete genetic sequences of various organisms, there's increasing concern about abuse of such data. The possibilities of mixing and matching traits from different organisms and combining these with insights drawn from human genomics to target some ethnic groups are very real. It is known that certain ethnic groups are more susceptible to some pathogens than others and genetic variations in some people manifest as varied disease susceptibility to microorganisms and even their response to medicines.

DNA shuffling, yet another technology with potential for bio-weapon development was used by scientist Stemmer to develop a new strain of E.coli that had reduced sensitivity to the antibiotic Cefotaxime. Such a scenario has the potential of leaving a patient resistant to treatment.

The genetic modification of life forms has been a controversial practice. There should be stringent regulations in place for genetic research work where permissions are granted only when the positives outweigh the negatives. The current pandemic is a stark reminder of the threat bio-weaponised micro-organisms can pose and the possibility of misuse of research laboratories, with instances of human survival threats breaking upon us. There is dire need for biotechnology regulations to be firmed up and an international regulatory body being formed with stringent ethical mandates. The current pandemic brings to light the necessity to revisit the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) formed in 1975 and reset the rules according to the current context. It is time countries start paying attention to bio-security needs to protect their people and economies from potential risks. There should be due strength-weakness analysis of our animal and public health systems and appropriate bio-security protocols must be put in place. This is an area that has been overlooked for decades and must now be revived for the health and survival of our nation's and species.

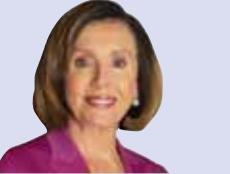
(The writer is an author and a doctor by profession)

Farming has never been profitable for a large majority of cultivators in India. As a result, they are more than willing to sell their land for development projects like airports, highways and so on, if they get good money for it. One of the biggest worries of Indian planners today is how to control the fragmentation of agricultural land due to population pressure as the number of small and marginal farmers (owning less than two hectares of land) is increasing. Though such growers account for 86.2 per cent of all farmers in India, they own just



VK BAHUGUNA

(NANCY) PELOSI IS A VERY SICK WOMAN. SHE'S GOT A LOT OF PROBLEMS. A LOT OF MENTAL PROBLEMS. —US PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP



HE (TRUMP) COMES IN WITH DOGGY DOO ON HIS SHOES AND EVERYBODY WHO WORKS WITH HIM HAS THAT ON THEIR SHOES, TOO, FOR A VERY LONG TIME. —SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES NANCY PELOSI



INDRA SHEKHAR SINGH

There is no better day than the International Biological Diversity Day to remember that we are a part of nature, not separate from it. Ancient seers of India described this relationship as *Vasudeva Kutumbhakam* (one universal family) that supports and sustains each other, right from the humble earthworm to the mighty elephant. We learnt over our 10,000-year civilisational history, lessons from planetary consciousness and celebrated the inter-dependence of all life and our role as stewards and children of Mother Nature.

Our ancestors toiled for centuries so that we could be the beneficiaries of diverse, climate-resilient and nutritious seeds. As a result, India today has the largest diversity of plants and foods and the country alone accounted for over 2,00,000 varieties of rice. We honoured seeds, right from barley to millet, with sacred rituals, for filling our stomachs and bestowing upon us health. We pray to nine goddesses during *Navratri* and offer them each a sacred seed. From birth to death, our biodiversity is conserved in our rituals.

In many communities in India, brides still carry to their husband's home the gifts of native seeds and sacred spices like turmeric and so on. All communities across India, but more particularly tribals, have forms of biodiversity entwined with their daily lives and sacred rituals. In fact, sugarcane in Sanskrit is "*ikshu*" and the dynasty of the mythological King Ram was Ikshvaku. Isn't this an uncanny coincidence?

The animal family was not left out either, we sanctified them as companions or steeds of gods and goddesses. Even the most hated pest, the rat, is associated with Lord Ganesh. The sub-continental civilisation saw beyond the anthropocentric myopia and valued each being as sacred, for each one of them contributed to the larger wheel of life. But sadly, these were just "pagan rituals or superstitions" for the officers of the East India Company. With the mighty gunboat and lust for gold, the colonist birthed a class of compradors, who focussed on the reversal of our ancient ways of life.

They infected us with a virus — the conquest of nature, which was contradictory not just to the Indian way of life but to all civilisations across the world (including the pagan traditions of Europe, which were repressed during the Great Inquisition in medieval Europe).

Right from the native tribes of the Americas to the Chinese, all affirmed that human life is a sub-part of nature. And with the age of imperialism began the great fall from Eden into desperate hell of pillaging, looting and rape of the Earth and all her living beings for the profit of the great pirate overlords.

But is the conquest of nature over? No, the conquest has evolved. Instead of the East India Company, we have India Inc. and larger behemoth agri-giants that survive on the plunder of the Earth and on bio-piracy. India, the land of abundance and diversity, is losing its true wealth — our connection with our biodiversity, our seeds, our medicinal plants and the genetic diversity of our animals.

“ WE NEED TO EMBRACE OUR VASUDEVA KUTUMBHAKAM AND BRING BACK BIODIVERSITY AND SACREDNESS INTO OUR LIVES. WE NEED TO DISPEL WAR-MONGERING AGAINST NATURE FOR PROFIT AND EMBRACE THE ABUNDANCE SHE PROVIDES. WE OUGHT TO CHANGE OUR BEHAVIOUR AND OUR LANGUAGE (WHICH TREATS NATURE AS DEAD AND AN OBJECT). WE NEED TO REMOVE THE 'IT' TO DENOTE NATURE AND REPLACE IT WITH 'HER' AS THE GODDESS SHE TRULY IS ”



For instance, from the Gir to Ongal cows, we have destroyed our cattle wealth with artificial insemination and sacrificed the Nandi bull to the tractor. We have made oxen redundant in our system of agriculture.

The diversity of the *thali*, too, has shrivelled to a handful of crops and sub-varieties of fruits, cereals and vegetables. Millets and local varieties have disappeared from our diet and have been replaced by commercial varieties, while our fields have become a eulogy to monoculture cropping. It had taken thousands of years to evolve each variety and crop and yet in little less than 50 years, we have destroyed generations of breeding.

But at the national level, there are greater threats. Indian Plant Genetic Resources (PGR), rated among the highest in the world, are being pirated abroad. Sometimes due to laxity of enforcers and other times illegally. Nevertheless treaties like The International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (ITPGRFA) and International Union for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants (UPOV) are trying to bully India into surrendering all our PGR for corporate exploitation, while receiving minimal remuneration and benefits for the communities that have co-evolved these plants and seeds. There is also an attempt to subvert our Biodiversity Act and undermine the National Biodiversity Authority.

International seed companies, including Chinese ones, are controlling 100 per cent subsidiaries in India, accessing strategic PGR and exporting parent lines of our varieties to their nations. Meanwhile Indian companies can't even own firms in China, Thailand and so on, forget exporting parent lines of varieties.

We need to have a more nationalistic Foreign Direct Investment policy especially dealing with our PGR as it is a treasure trove that will prepare us to face challenges such as climate change.

The next policy step to conserve diversity is to have a strong protection of farmers' rights to breed and co-evolve newer varieties. As the theme "Our Solutions are in Nature", suggests, we must also harness the wild varieties and land races for meeting newer challenges. But this should be done sustainably, involving local communities and farmers instead of patented technological alternatives, which are expensive and promote profiteering.

MS Swaminathan, father of the Green Revolution in India, many times stressed on how the country's biodiversity has the potential to meet all of our needs, we don't need gene modifications or other genome editing interventions like CRISPR and so on. We must look towards nature and her abundance for solutions.

Each of us has to embrace biodiversity-based products in our lives. Not only will it be an economical option but also the healthier one. Starting from our plate, we can all include one millet meal or local varieties of rice/wheat apart from basmati, and trust me, there are hundreds of aromatic, medicinal and tasty varieties available in each city and village. This will increase the biodiversity of our gut and improve health.

We need to also bring back local native vegetables and prefer seasonal and locally-grown greens over cold storage ones. For processed foods, we again must buy as much as we can of biodiversity-based products and support native tribes. For our clothes, too, we need to end the hegemony of Bt Cotton. It is about time that Indians, like other more conscious citizens, choose cheaper alternate fabrics and support handloom and sustainable clothing collectives.

In dealing with other challenges, we must involve processes such as biomimicry and evolve technologies that work with the Earth and not against her. Circular and non-polluting economic policies are the need of the hour.

Finally, each thing we eat, touch, feel are all transformed nature so we need to reject the false separation from nature. The problems and solutions are both part of nature. What we understand as problems are so because they risk human survival but may not bother nature so much.

The true solution lies in awareness. We need to embrace our *Vasudeva Kutumbhakam* and bring back biodiversity and sacredness into our lives. We need to dispel war-mongering against nature for profit and embrace the abundance she provides. We ought to change our behaviour and our language (which treats nature as dead and an object). We need to remove the "it" to denote nature and replace it with "her" as the goddess she truly is.

(The writer is Director, Policy and Outreach, National Seed Association of India)

Seeds of success sown for the farm sector

The Finance Minister's recent announcement of an impetus to the agriculture sector will be reckoned as a watershed event in the history of farming in the country if it is implemented sincerely

47.3 per cent of the crop area, according to provisional numbers from the 10th agriculture census of 2015-16, which was released in 2018. The census showed a decline of 1.53 per cent of the total farmed area to 157.14 million hectare (ha) as compared to 159.59 million ha in 2010-11. In spite of all our attempts, the annual grain production (291.95 million tonnes) is far below the 500 million tonnes that China produces from the same spread of land. The plight of farmers can be gauged from the fact that the contribution of agriculture to the GDP is down to 15 per cent, despite the fact that 45 per cent of the people of the country are dependent on agriculture for their livelihood.

After Independence, except for a brief period of the Green Revolution in the 60s, the farmers never benefitted from true reforms and were prisoners of the consumer-oriented mentality of the Government and the control of the middlemen and *mandi* (wholesale

market) mafia. The Prime Minister's promise of doubling farm incomes by 2022 is a lofty dream. One of the reasons for this is the neglect of animal husbandry and fisheries, which contribute more than 30 per cent to the farmers' income and which has the potential to jump to around 45 per cent.

Now, the Corona crisis and the lockdown have made things worse for the already beleaguered agri sector. The Finance Minister's recent announcement of providing an impetus to the farm sector will be reckoned as a watershed event in the history of agriculture if it is implemented sincerely. Some of the demands were long-pending and till now the Government was buckling under pressure from various lobbies. Now, the reforms planned by the Government will reshape the future of the agriculture sector.

One of the biggest hurdles that farmers face in selling their produce freely are the *mandi samitis* which force growers to sell through them.

Till now, the foodgrain movement within States was restricted, which virtually stifled the farmers. Now, they will be able to sell their produce wherever they want and be free of the *mandi* mafia. This is the biggest reform in the agriculture sector and the Government must be lauded for this. The ₹1.6 lakh crore agriculture infrastructure fund will be used to create a support structure at the farmer's doorstep.

Of this ₹20,000 crore will be for fishermen, ₹15,000 crore for animal husbandry infrastructure development and ₹10,000 crore will be used to help micro-food units develop their global brands. The package will also support bee-keeping. The farmer producers' organisations and farmers' cooperative societies will benefit from this. It also gives an opportunity to young agriculture graduates to develop start-ups.

The Essential Commodities Act was one of the main hurdles in the farmers getting better prices for their produce as the Centre authorised

State Governments to impose stock limits on identified food items, issue licences to produce, sell and distribute under the Act. Now the Government will enact a Central law to ease these restrictions and help the farmers. This gives growers an opportunity to innovate and should also cover animal resources, bee-keeping, medicinal plants, bamboo production and so on, for which a special package has been announced. This will deregulate cereals, edible oils, oilseeds, pulses, onions and potatoes, giving farmers the choice of seeking better returns. However, the Government can still impose stock limits for meeting emergencies.

The Government has also announced a legal framework to enable farmers to tie up with retailers, exporters, agriculture fairs, food aggregators and processors and so on to promote investments. Contract farming may get a big boost with these reforms and it is the only viable solution to deal with

decreasing land holding. It will provide opportunities for investors to bring technology and finances into the sector to grow what they want. Besides, the farmers can produce more from the small land holding by joining hands with their comrades and investors.

However, the Government would do well to increase the animal husbandry package by ₹15,000 crore and also announce a separate package for bamboo development. The ₹6,000 crore CAMPA fund for afforestation should utilise at least ₹1,000 crore for creating infrastructure for the indigenous tribal/non-tribal healers and *vaid*s (country doctors) and another ₹3,000 for raising 10 to 15 select species of medicinal plants on forest land and on the land vested under the Forest Rights Act, 2006. The investment for herbal growth on agriculture land should only be done on organic farms, otherwise it will not produce the medicine-yielding compound.

So focus on organic farms and forest lands and the stretches adjoining them. However, the success of the package depends on how effectively and innovatively it is implemented.

The package has to be converged with the schemes of Rural Development, Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Medium and Small Enterprises, Ayush ministries so that it evolves into a model for holistic and integrated development of our land-based resources. In fact the National Rainfed Area Authority was created in 2007 by the then Prime Minister on the recommendations of a Planning Commission sub-committee to get the agriculture sector out of the stagnated growth of one to two per cent, with a focus on integrating all the resources on a piece of land. Now, the Prime Minister has the opportunity to not only achieve integration but to take it to the global level.

(The writer is a former civil servant)

China says it will not accept US lawsuit on Covid

Warns countermeasures

PTI ■ BEIJING

China on Thursday said it will not accept any “unwarranted lawsuit” or demand for compensation from the US over its handling of the coronavirus pandemic and warned countermeasures if America passes any legislation or legal cases blaming Beijing for the deadly virus.

Zhang Yesui, spokesperson for China’s Parliament - the National People’s Congress - in his media briefing ahead of Friday’s annual session also sought to deflect allegations

that the virus emerged in Wuhan, saying that the recent reports indicated coronavirus occurred earlier in different parts of the world.

Replying to questions about the lawsuit filed in the US to demand compensation as well as attempts by US politicians to bring a legislation blaming China for the coronavirus pandemic, Zhang said the accusation are completely baseless and run counter to the international law and basic norms governing intentional relations.

“We will strongly oppose them and we will watch how the bills proceed and firmly respond with counter measures accordingly,” he said.

“Trying to blame others in order to deflect attention from one’s own problems is not a responsible thing to do. It is not moral either. For China, we will not accept unwarranted lawsuit or demand for compensation,” he said.

Zhang said that since the start of the COVID-19, China effectively put the disease under control after an “extremely hard battle and enormous sacrifices”.

He also reiterated that China has acted with transparency and shared the necessary information like genome sequence with the World Health Organisation and a number of countries in a timely manner.

“These are facts and facts are facts. We will not accept any smear or attack whatsoever,” he said. In the backdrop of the World Health Association in Geneva passing a resolution to probe the origin of the virus after the pandemic subsided, Zhang said the recent reports indicated that COVID-19 occurred in the different parts of the world and early cases have been identified which kept shifting the timeline of the disease forward.

“I am sure in time things will get more and more clear. As to the origin of the virus, this is a serious scientific issue and should be left to scientists and medical experts to look into it and come up with sci-

ence based conclusions supported by facts and evidence”, he said.

Zhang also dismissed US President Donald Trump’s threat to move the global supply chains away from China post-Covid-19 saying that it cannot be done by a single country.

Global supply chain depends on the behaviour and choices of businesses across the world. “As such it cannot be changed by any single country.”

He said it is true that coronavirus has affected foreign business operating in China. “But there is no flight of foreign capital. China is still an attractive destination for foreign investment. Foreign investors remain optimistic about China...,” he

CHINA REPORTS 33 NEW CASES; SPIKE IN ASYMPTOMATIC INFECTIONS IN WUHAN

Beijing: China has reported 33 new coronavirus cases, including 31 asymptomatic ones, majority of them in Wuhan, the first epicentre of the Covid-19 where the city’s 11 million people are being tested in order to prevent a second wave of the deadly virus, health authorities said on Thursday.

According to China’s National Health Commission (NHC), two confirmed coronavirus cases, including one imported infection, was reported on Thursday in Guangdong province and a locally transmitted one in Shanghai on Wednesday.

But there was a spike in asymptomatic cases.

PTI

said. About the secrecy over China’s defence budget, Zhang denied China has any “hidden military spending”

China has been submitting reports on its military expen-

ditures to the United Nations every year since 2007, he said.

“From where the money comes from to how the money is used, everything is accounted for,” Zhang said.

CASES BREACH 5 MN GLOBALLY

Latin America accounted for around a third of the 91,000 cases reported earlier this week

Washington: Global coronavirus cases surpassed 5 million on Wednesday, with Latin America overtaking the United States and Europe in the past week to report the largest portion of new daily cases globally.

It represents a new phase in the virus’ spread, which initially peaked in China in February, before large-scale outbreaks followed in Europe and the United States.

Latin America accounted for around a third of the 91,000 cases reported earlier this week. Europe and the United States each accounted for just over 20 per cent.

A large number of those

new cases came from Brazil, which recently surpassed Germany, France and the United Kingdom to become the third-largest outbreak in the world, behind the United States and Russia.

Cases in Brazil are now rising at a daily pace second only to the United States.

The first 41 cases of coronavirus were confirmed in Wuhan, China, on Jan. 10 and it took the world until April 1 to reach its first million cases. Since then, about 1 million new cases are reported every two weeks, according to a Reuters tally.

At more than 5 million cases, the virus has infected

more people in under six months than the annual total of severe flu cases, which the World Health Organization estimates is around 3 million to 5 million globally.

The pandemic has claimed over 3,31,531 lives, though the true number is thought to be higher as testing is still limited and many countries do not include fatalities outside of hospitals. Over half of the total fatalities have been recorded in Europe.

Despite the continued increase in cases, many countries are opening schools and workplaces following weeks of lockdown that have stemmed the spread.

Agency

AROUND THE WORLD IN PICTURES



Nursery teachers stage a protest in Rome on Thursday. Nurseries teachers and owners, facing a serious crisis following the country's lockdown due to the Covid-19, are asking authorities for financial help AP



A man visits a gravesite at Fort Sam Houston National Cemetery in San Antonio on Thursday AP



Cafe owner Francini Osorio sprays air sanitizer where he has installed an air purifier and 35 clear shower curtains, which will divide customers and tables, in the Francini Cafe De Colombia, in Worcester, England on Thursday AP

'US could have avoided 36K deaths if social distancing had been imposed a week earlier'

PTI ■ NEW YORK

The lives of about 36,000 people could have been saved if the US had begun imposing social distancing measures just a week earlier than it did in March to control the spread of the coronavirus, new estimates from Columbia University show.

“Counterfactual simulations indicate that, had these same control measures been implemented just 1-2 weeks earlier, a substantial number of cases and deaths could have been averted,” the University said in an analysis by Sen Pei, Sasikiran Kandula and Jeffrey Shaman.

A report in *The New York Times*, citing the analysis said that if the US had begun locking down cities and limiting social contact on March 1, two weeks earlier than when most people started staying indoors, about 83 per cent of the people who died so far from the virus could have been saved.

Under this scenario, about 54,000 fewer people would have died by early May.

UK EXTENDS RESIDENCY SCHEME TO ALL OVERSEAS HEALTHCARE VICTIMS

PTI ■ LONDON

The British Government has Extended a Covid-19 Bereavement Scheme, which grants permanent UK residency to the family members of overseas medics who die after contracting the coronavirus, to all healthcare staff and social care workers.

UK Home Secretary Priti Patel on Wednesday said the scheme will apply not only to the families and dependents of foreign doctors and nurses killed on the National Health Service (NHS) frontline during the pandemic, but also to lower-paid NHS support staff, including from India.

“Every death in this crisis is a tragedy, and sadly some NHS support staff and social care workers have made the ultimate sacrifice in the pursuit of saving the lives of others,” the Indian-origin Cabinet Minister said.

European plans to use apps in virus tracking face setbacks

London: Doubts were growing on Thursday over whether ambitious plans by European Governments to use contact-tracing apps to fight the spread of the coronavirus will be able to be implemented with any real effectiveness soon.

In contrast, there appeared to be some movement forward in the sprint to find a vaccine against Covid-19, bolstered by a USD 1 billion investment from the US vaccine agency.

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson pledged Wednesday to have a “test, track and trace” programme for Covid-19 in place by June

as part of a strategy to persuade the country that it’s safe to move on to the next stage of easing the lockdown and restarting the economy.

But the Government also appeared to back-track on an earlier pledge to make a smart phone app a pillar of that programme.

Security minister James Brokenshire told the BBC on Thursday that he remains “confident” that the tracing system will be in place by June 1, but acknowledged that an app intended to help track the virus was not ready.

AP

There were 46,909 excess deaths in March, April compared to what would have been expected: Italy

AP ■ ROME

A new Government report indicates there were 46,909 excess deaths in Italy in March and April compared to what would have been expected. The report says it would be accurate to attribute most of the deaths to the coronavirus.

Italy’s social security and welfare agency (INPS) concluded the official COVID-19

death toll reported by the civil protection department “isn’t very reliable” since it includes only those who tested positive for the virus, omitting those who died at home or in nursing homes without ever being tested.

By the end of April, Italy’s official Covid-19 death toll stood at 27,938. INPS said excess deaths at that point had reached 46,909 and said most

of the 18,971 deaths making up the difference could be attributed to the pandemic.

The agency reached that conclusion by noting that the five Lombardy provinces with the most excess deaths were the same five provinces hardest hit by the virus. In addition, most of the excess deaths were among the elderly men who account for most Covid victims.

Ties with Pak remains ‘firm as a rock’: China

PTI ■ BEIJING

China said on Thursday that its relationship with Pakistan stood the test of the changing international landscape and remained “firm as a rock” as the all-weather allies celebrated the 69th year of the establishment of their diplomatic relations.

Pakistan recognised China in 1951, a year after India established diplomatic ties with Beijing. India became the first non-Communist country in Asia in 1950 to establish diplomatic relations with China. Though a late entrant, Pakistan, an Islamic republic, has emerged as Communist China’s closest ally and the two countries in recent years firmed up their all-weather alliance with USD 60 billion China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, the biggest overseas investment by Beijing.

“Today marks the 69th anniversary of the diplomatic relationship between China and Pakistan. I offer congratulations,” Foreign Ministry

spokesman told a media briefing here on Thursday.

“We are all-weather strategic cooperative partners. In the past 69 years, this relationship has stood the test of the changing international landscape, and has remained firm as a rock,” he said.

Zhao, who was earlier China’s Deputy Ambassador to Islamabad, had a personal note of praise for his stint in Pakistan.

“I had the pleasure of working in Pakistan. Before leaving the country, I said that Pakistan stole my heart. I believe it shows the deep-rooted friendship between the two countries,” he said.

“In future, we have every confidence in the development of bilateral relations. We will continue to put Pakistan a priority in our neighbourhood diplomacy and work together for high-quality CPEC development,” Zhao said.

India had protested to China over the CPEC as it traversed through Pakistan-occupied Kashmir.

UK watchdog clears Johnson of criminal wrongdoing

London: British Prime Minister Boris Johnson will not face a criminal investigation into whether he offered special favours to an American businesswoman during his time as mayor of London.

The Independent Office for Police Conduct ruled against a criminal investigation into Johnson’s ties to tech entrepreneur Jennifer Arcuri. The independent office, which oversees police complaints in England, was asked to consider if there were grounds to investigate him for misconduct in public office. Johnson has vociferously denied wrongdoing.

The Greater London Authority immediately announced that its investigation into Johnson’s conduct would continue, even though a criminal investigation has now been ruled out. The case arose from a Sunday Times report saying Arcuri was given money and privileged access while on trade missions that Johnson led as mayor.

Iran is slowly pulling out of Syria: Israeli military

AP ■ JERUSALEM

Iran is slowly pulling out of Syria in response to Israeli strikes, as well as growing domestic discontent linked to the economy and its handling of the coronavirus pandemic, the Israeli military said Thursday.

Israel and Iran have for years been engaged in a shadow war that has recently been playing out in Syria, where Israel says Iran has been boosting its military presence along the frontier. Amid the chaos of the Syrian civil war, Israel has carried out repeated strikes aimed at pushing back Iranian forces and preventing the transfer of advanced weapons to Hezbollah, the Iran-backed Lebanese militant group that is also fighting in Syria.

The Israeli military described the withdrawal as “a backward movement from various locations to other locations that are further away and in reduced numbers.” It said the movement was “not massive, not overwhelming,” but that it was also “undeniable.” The military shared its findings in

a briefing with reporters and said they were based on classified intelligence, without elaborating.

The military partly attributed the pullback to growing discontent in Iran, where the economy has cratered under U.S. sanctions and authorities have struggled to contain the deadliest coronavirus outbreak in the Middle East.

Israel and Iran have tangled in the open on a number of occasions in recent years, with the latest incident in November, when Israeli fighter jets hit multiple targets belonging to Iran’s elite Quds force in Syria following rocket fire on the Israeli-controlled Golan Heights. Israel views Iranian entrenchment on its northern frontier as a red line, and it has repeatedly struck Iran-linked facilities and weapons convoys destined for Hezbollah.

Iran portrays its actions in Syria as support for an allied government battling terrorist groups, and says its support for Hezbollah is aimed at defending Lebanon from Israel, which occupied parts of southern Lebanon from 1982 until 2000.

PM embarrassing Israel: Opp leader

Tel Aviv: Israel’s new Opposition leader said Benjamin Netanyahu’s upcoming corruption trial is “embarrassing” the country and that he believes the only reason the long-time prime minister is still in office is because lawmakers never imagined a scenario in which an indicted premier would not have the decency to step down himself.

In his first English-language interview since assuming the post, Yair Lapid said he was uncomfortable addressing Netanyahu’s troubles before a foreign audience. Despite their rivalry, he said he takes no joy in watching a sitting prime minister walking into a courtroom defendant’s dock and said he felt bad that it would attract worldwide attention when the trial begins Sunday.

“It’s almost like I’m saying, I wish they would never notice this ... this shouldn’t happen,” Lapid said. “This is horrible for the spirit of the nation.” Together with former military chief Benny Gantz, Lapid led the centrist Blue and White party to a deadlock with Netanyahu’s Likud in three consecutive elections over the past year.

China considers Bill limiting Hong Kong Opp activity

AP ■ BEIJING

China’s ceremonial parliament will consider a bill that could limit opposition activity in Hong Kong, a spokesperson said Thursday, appearing to confirm speculation that China will sidestep the territory’s own lawmaking body in enacting legislation to crack down on activity Beijing considers subversive.

Zhang Yesui said the National People’s Congress will deliberate a bill on “establishing and improving the legal system and enforcement mechanisms for the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region to safeguard national security.”

Such a move has long been under consideration but was hastened by months of anti-government protests last year in the former British colony that was handed over to Chinese rule in 1997. Such legislation was last proposed in 2003 under Article 23 of the Basic

Most people in their advance age, especially among those who are infected by the novel coronavirus and are suffering from some underlying disease such as hypertension, diabetes, heart disease, and obesity, have lower rates of survival, even if they are put on ventilators, a study said. *The Washington Post* cited the study, published in the *Lancet* on Tuesday, saying that most elderly Covid-19 patients put on ventilators at two New York hospitals did not survive.

The head of a European health advisory body on infections on Thursday warned of a second wave of coronavirus cases, as countries across the continent ease tough lockdown measures. Andrea Ammon, director of the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control, said it was not a question of if there will be a renewed surge but “when and how big”. She told Britain’s *Guardian* newspaper that immunity statistics from around Europe were not encouraging and “85 percent to 90 percent” of people were still susceptible to COVID-19.

A day after threatening to withhold funds over Michigan’s mail-in ballot effort, President Donald Trump was set to visit the electoral battleground Thursday to learn how the medical breathing machines governors begged for during the height of the coronavirus pandemic are made. But hovering over his visit to a repurposed Ford Motor Co. Factory in Ypsilanti, outside of Detroit, is whether he will wear a face covering.

Cape Town has become the centre of the COVID-19 outbreak in South Africa and one of Africa’s hot spots. The popular tourist destination at the southern tip of Africa had more than 12,000 confirmed cases as of Thursday, representing 63% of South Africa’s 19,000 cases and about 10% of Africa’s 95,000 cases. Gauteng province containing Johannesburg, South Africa’s largest city, and the capital, Pretoria, had been expected to be the country’s epicentre with its population density and poverty levels, but Cape Town defied predictions with high levels of community transmission.

Scotland’s leader has presented a “route map” for easing coronavirus restrictions in the months ahead while observing social distancing guidelines. First Minister Nicola Sturgeon told Scottish lawmakers the lockdown will be loosened in three-week intervals, subject to progress in virus control. But, she added, the proposals “cannot be set in stone.”

Japanese Government lifted a state of emergency in Osaka, Kyoto and Hyogo prefectures as the number of COVID-19 infections has remained low. Prime Minister Shinzo Abe told reporters that the emergency measure may end in Tokyo and its three prefectural neighbours of Chiba, Saitama, and Kanagawa as well as the northernmost prefecture of Hokkaido as early as May 25 after a fresh review by a government panel of health experts.

MARKETS SCORE A HAT-TRICK

Eco reopening fuels recovery hopes

FMCG, AUTO STOCKS SPURT

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Equity indices ticked higher for the third session on the trot on Thursday as investors accumulated FMCG, auto and IT stocks amid gradual reopening of the economy.

After rallying over 370 points intra-day, the 30-share BSE Sensex settled 114.29 points or 0.37 per cent up at 30,932.90. Similarly, the broader NSE Nifty advanced 39.70 points, or 0.44 per cent, to 9,106.25.

Investors took heart from the gradual resumption of economic activities, including air

and rail travel, though the underlying sentiment remains cautious amid the coronavirus pandemic, traders said.

ITC was the top gainer in the Sensex pack, rallying 7.48 per cent, followed by Asian Paints, Hero MotoCorp, Maruti, Bajaj Auto, Sun Pharma, TCS and HCL Tech. On the other hand, IndusInd Bank, NTPC, Bajaj Finance, HDFC and L&T slipped up to 2.91 per cent.

Buying was seen in front-line stocks of sectors like auto, IT, metals and FMCG as traders took note of gradual opening of the economy, raising hopes of economic recovery, said Narendra Solanki, Head- Equity Research (Fundamental), Anand Rath. However, at the fag-end of the session, some selling was

witnessed as negative global cues continued for the second straight day and traders booked profits as weekly expiry neared, leading to indices losing majority of the gains, he added.

Concerns over the long-term impact of COVID-19 and worsening China-US relations too kept investors on the edge, traders said.

BSE auto, metal, FMCG, IT, teck, oil and gas, healthcare and energy indices ended up to 2.45 per cent higher, while power, capital goods, finance and bankex finished with losses.

The broader BSE midcap and smallcap indices spurted up to 0.76 per cent. World equities were on the backfoot as weak macroeconomic data and US-China tensions sapped risk appetite.

Bourses in Shanghai, Hong Kong and Tokyo ended in the red, while Seoul closed with gains.

Stock exchanges in Europe were trading with significant losses in early deals.

International oil benchmark Brent crude futures climbed 1.79 per cent to USD 36.39 per barrel.

On the currency front, the rupee appreciated 19 paise to provisionally close at 75.61 against the US dollar.

The number of COVID-19 cases in India spiked to over 1.12 lakh, while the death toll rose to 3,435.

According to the health ministry.

Globally, the number of cases linked to the disease has crossed 49.96 lakh and the death toll has topped 3.28 lakh.

For PM’s ‘Vocal for Local call’, industry keen to displace China’s monopoly

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Welcoming the measures taken by the Centre and Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s emphasis on ‘Vocal for Local’, the Trimex Sands Private Limited (TSPL) has termed it a testimony where he has challenged the crisis itself and turned it into an opportunity for Indian mining industry.

“We take this opportunity to also urge the PM to allow the indigenous beach sand mineral industry to flourish in a domain being monopolised by China.

Currently, China controls over 95 percent of world’s rare earth supply and its complete monopoly is quite undesirable for the world. At the same time, despite owning 70% of the world’s monazite reserves, India still imports 100% of its

needs of rare earth and rare-earth-based components. This must change now as we move towards a self-reliant India,” said Pradeep Koneru, Managing Director, TSPL.

He pointed out an oversight has caused stumbling blocks in the high-potential Beach Sand Mineral industry in India, which could otherwise yield nearly Rs 30,000 crore in annual turnover to the exchequer and provide jobs to thousands of persons.

“The Notification No. G.S.R. 134(E) dated 20th February 2019 issued by Ministry of Mines that reserves the mining of beach sand minerals for government companies only has led to huge job losses and brought billions of private sector investments to a grinding halt,” said Koneru. India’s GDP has grown

steadily since Independence because it is backed by robust growth in the production of minerals such as iron ore, coal, copper, zinc, aluminum, magnesium, limestone, etc. Indian has significant beach sand mineral resources of Ilmenite, Garnet, Sillimanite, Rutile, Zircon and Monazite containing Rare Earths, but these resources remain grossly under-utilized with the Production to Reserve Ratio (PRR) being a meager of 0.0018%, when compared to Global PRR of 0.01%. India is stuck in this paradox and must leverage its plentiful Resources to transform into a major global producer.

Appealing the Prime Minister to rescind the notification barring private sector from beach sand mineral mining.

Transporters need immediate rescue package: AIMTC

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Transporters are reeling under severe financial stress and if the Govt fails to intervene, they will be left with no other option than to stop running the vehicles, industry body AIMTC said on Thursday. The All India Motor Transport Congress is the apex body of transporters representing about 95 lakh truckers and entities.”The transport fraternity is in. Extreme financial turmoil and if Govt does not provide immediate help to the transport sector than the 30 per cent vehicles (on roads now) will be stopped as they will not be able to comply (with) the financial implications to run their vehicles or pay the EMIs,” AIMTC president Kultaran Singh Atwal said.

Only 15% of companies winning in pandemic-hit economy: Report

IANs ■ NEW DELHI

With the COVID-19 pandemic introducing numerous changes to the economy, only about 15 per cent of companies appear to be winning so far, said a new report.

While many parts of the economy will jump back to a normal State once the health crisis is under control, some companies may not and if just 20 per cent of companies do not recover quickly, it will have several ripple effects on our economy, warned the report from global business design and innovation strategy firm Board of Innovation.

“Based on our conversations with companies in every possible industry, just 15 per cent of companies seem to have seen a positive impact so far,” said the report titled “The

winners of the Low Touch Economy: How companies can recover and grow in the new normal’. Some examples of potential winners include platforms to connect with remote customers, tools to support e-commerce, healthy food delivered at home, safe at-home workouts, and those that provide alternatives for supply chain.

The report details what steps companies can take to emerge as winners in what Board of Innovation calls the “Low Touch Economy” which is characterised by low-touch interactions, health and safety measures, new human behaviors, and permanent industry shifts.”The Low Touch Economy is here to stay. It offers unseen opportunities for innovators to make bold moves - now,” said the report.

NHPC organises Anti-Terrorism Day



New Delhi: NHPC, India’s premier hydropower company, observed Anti-Terrorism Day at its Corporate Office and across all its Regional Offices, Power Stations and Projects on May 21, 2020. AK Singh, Chairman and Managing Director, NHPC administered the oath of Anti-Terrorism Day to staff of the CMD Secretariat. Ratish Kumar, Director (Projects), NK Jain, Director (Personnel), MK Mittal, Director (Finance) and YK Chaubey, Director (Technical) administered the oath to the staff of their respective offices.

The oath was also administered through PA system wherein all other employees took the pledge from their respective workstations/ offices as per directions issued by Ministry of Home Affairs, Govt. of India.

Swiggy, Zomato begin home delivery of alcohol, start from Ranchi

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Leading food ordering and delivery platforms Swiggy and Zomato on Thursday said they have started home delivery of alcohol in Ranchi and plan to expand it to other cities going forward.Swiggy on Thursday said it has started home delivery of alcohol in Ranchi and is in talks with various State Governments to provide support with online processing and home delivery of alcohol in their States.

The service has gone live in Ranchi and will be launched in other major cities in Jharkhand within a week, Swiggy said in a statement. The company is also in advanced stage of discussions with multiple State Governments to provide support with online processing and home delivery of alcohol, it added.

In similar vein, Zomato said it will go live in Ranchi on Thursday and seven other cities in Jharkhand over the next couple of days.

“With due permissions and licences in place, we are starting home delivery of alcohol in Jharkhand. We believe that a technology-enabled home delivery-based solution can enable responsible consumption of alcohol as well as provide an option that’s safer and promotes social distancing,” a Zomato spokesperson said in a statement.

On the steps taken to ensure safe delivery of alcohol

Zomato said it will go live in Ranchi on Thursday and seven other cities in Jharkhand over the next couple of days

in compliance with applicable laws, Swiggy said it has introduced measures such as mandatory age verification and user authentication to complete deliveries. “By enabling home delivery of alcohol in a safe and responsible manner, we can generate additional business for retail outlets while solving the problem of overcrowding, thereby promoting social distancing,” Swiggy Vice-President (Products) Anuj Rath said.

Taking advantage of the company’s existing technology and infrastructure to enable hyperlocal deliveries, it has been working closely with the local authorities to support them with initiatives like expansion of grocery delivery and COVID-19 relief efforts, he added.

The company is partnering with authorised retailers after validating their licence and other required documents as outlined by respective State Governments, Swiggy said.

WESTERN RAILWAY				
VARIOUS WORKS AT VIRAR-SURAT SECTION				
Divisional Railway Manager(WA), Western Railway,6th floor, Engg. Deptt., Mumbai Central, Mumbai - 400 008. invites E-tender as per details given as follows.				
Sr. No.	Tender Notice No. & Date	Work and location	Approx. cost of work in ₹	EMD ₹
1	BCT/20-21/105 dtd. 20.05.2020	Virar-Surat section:- (i) TFR=28.02km & TBR=1.684km (ii) Thick Web Switch Renewal & Deep Screening of P&C (iii) Rectification of bad layouts and TBR of P&C by use of T-28, JCB, Crane etc. (iv) Painting of AT weld collars & rails under ADEN/Surat in connection of sanctioned track work under CPW/INAVSARI.	13662443.61	218300.00
2	BCT/20-21/106 dtd. 20.05.2020	Virar-Surat section:- (i) TRR(P)=1.711km, CTR(S)=3.90kms. (ii) Casual renewal of rails for a section of under ADEN-SURAT (iii) Painting of AT weld collars & rails under ADEN/Surat in connection of sanctioned track work under CPW/INAVSARI.	16213524.98	231100.00
3	BCT/20-21/107 dtd. 20.05.2020	Virar-Surat section:- (i) TFR=28.02km & TBR=1.684km (ii) Thick Web Switch Renewal & Deep Screening of P&C (iii) Rectification of bad layouts and TBR of P&C by use of T-28, JCB, Crane etc. (iv) Painting of AT weld collars & rails under ADEN/Surat in connection of sanctioned track work under CPW/INAVSARI.	12683084.93	213400.00
4	BCT/20-21/108 dtd. 20.05.2020	Virar-Surat section:- (i) TRR(P)=1.711km, CTR(S)=3.90kms. (ii) Casual renewal of rails for a section of under ADEN-SURAT (iii) Painting of AT weld collars & rails under ADEN/Surat (iv) Providing slack gauge sleepers and check rails on Curve No. TV-1 between Udhna & Chalthan in the jurisdiction of ADEN/ST in connection of sanctioned track work under CPW/ISurat.	17028649.32	235100.00
5	BCT/20-21/109 dtd. 20.05.2020	Virar-Surat section:- Surat-Repairs to p-way of washing line no. 1 to 3.	20238542.06	251200.00
6	BCT/20-21/110 dtd. 20.05.2020	Virar-Surat section:- Providing steel fencing for track safety by trespassing of men and vehicles. Cattle run over etc. from KM 263/1-3 to KM 268/31.	21998545.98	260000.00
7	BCT/20-21/111 dtd. 20.05.2020	Virar-Surat section :- Repairing damaged, corroded, and heavy leakages pipe lines in Surat and Udhna Yard colonies under DEN (Central), BCT.	11696437.1	208500.00
8	BCT/20-21/112 dtd. 20.05.2020	Virar-Surat section:- Improvement to damaged corroded and heavy leakages pipe line in Bilimora, Surat and Udhna colonies under DEN (C), BCT	27066816.26	285300.00
Executive: DEN (Central) MMCT. Date & time of submission : on 22-06-2020 at 15:00 hrs. Date & time of opening: on 22-06-2020 at 15:30 hrs. Regarding detailed nature of work, containing cost of 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.				
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04-13

WESTERN RAILWAY				
VARIOUS WORKS AT VIRAR-SURAT SECTION				
Divisional Railway Manager(WA), Western Railway,6th floor, Engg. Deptt., Mumbai Central, Mumbai - 400 008. invites E-tender as per details given as follows.				
Sr. No.	Tender Notice No. & Date	Work and location	Approx. cost of work in ₹	EMD ₹
1	BCT/20-21/113 dt.21/05/2020	Virar-Surat Sec:- Gholvad-- Supply of pure drinking water in ORH for a period of 2 years approximate quantity 5000 litres per day under ADEN/DRD.	₹4,39,530/-	₹8800/-
2	BCT/20-21/114 dt.21/05/2020	Virar-Surat Sec:- Outsourcing of track maintenance by engaging companion to patrolman/Keymen for Monsoon patrolling under ADEN/DRD.	₹22,12,470/-	₹44300/-
3	BCT/20-21/115 dt.21/05/2020	Virar-Surat Sec:- Outsourcing of track maintenance by engaging companion to patrolman/Keymen for Monsoon patrolling under ADEN/Valsad.	₹24,09,134/-	₹48200/-
4	BCT/20-21/116 dt.21/05/2020	Virar-Surat Sec:- Providing sludge diesel pumps to pump out monsoon water at various location under Sr.DEN/N & DEN/C.	₹ 47,43,504/-	₹ 94900/-
5	BCT/20-21/117 dt.21/05/2020	Virar-Surat Sec:- Muck removal, cess lowering and clearing of grass vegetation in yard section in the jurisdiction of ADEN/VALSAD.	₹21,58,550/-	₹43200/-
6	BCT/20-21/118 dt.21/05/2020	Virar-Surat Sec:- Repairs to Pway under SSE(Valsad) Section for 12 month.	₹1,90,47,198.05	₹2,45,200/-
7	BCT/20-21/119 dt.21/05/2020	Virar- Surat Section:- Annual cleaning of culvert for Monsoon-2020.	₹31,54,032.04	₹63,100/-
Executive: Sr.DEN(North)BCT. Date & time of submission : 18-06-2020 till 15.00 hrs. Date & time of opening: on 18-06-2020 till 15.30 hrs. Regarding detailed nature of work, containing cost of 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.				
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04-13

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Union Minister Nitin Gadkari on Thursday said the Government is set to introduce a vehicle scrappage policy, under which recycling clusters may be established near ports, expressing confidence that India will emerge as the world’s leading automobile manufacturing hub in five years. “Now, we are going to start the new scrapping policy, by which old cars, trucks and buses will be scrapped,” the Minister of MSME and Road Transport and Highways said. He said the Government has decided to increase the depth of the country’s ports by 18 metres, and automobile clusters comprising recycling plants can be set up near the ports. The Minister added that the material recycled will be useful for the automobile industry as it will reduce cost of manufacturing cars, buses,

and trucks, increasing India’s competitiveness in international markets. “Within five years, India will be the number one manufacturing hub of all cars, buses and trucks, with all fuel, ethanol, methanol, bio-CNG, LNG, electric as well as hydrogen fuel cells,” Gadkari said.He was addressing a meeting via video conferencing with the representatives of MIT ADT University on future of higher education. Experts said the draft guidelines for setting up authorised vehicle scrappage facilities that the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH) released in October 2019 was seen as a step in the right direction but a lot of work was yet to be done.

The guidelines detailed the infrastructure requirement and the procedure for setting up vehicle scrappage facilities in the country, streamlining the process for entities interested in entering this business.

Kajal

SEARCH FOR MISSING/KIDNAPPED

General Public is hereby informed that one girl **Name: Kajal, D/o: Lt. Gunga Baba, R/o: H.No. 21/547, Indra Camp., Kalyan Puri, Delhi** has been missing/ kidnapped since **05.05.2020** at 5:30 pm. from the area of P. S. Kalyan Puri, Delhi. In this regard a case vide **GD No. 60A dated 10.05.2020** has been registered at P. S. Kalyan Puri, Delhi. The description of the missing girl are as under: **Age:** 24 years, **Height:** 5' 5", **Face:** Long, **Built:** Medium, **Complexion:** Shallow, **Identification:** Tattoo of Morpankh on left hand, **Wearing:** Red colour flower printed suit and sky colour shoes in her feet. Sincere efforts have been made by local police to trace out the girl but no clue has come to light so far. Any person having any information or clue about this girl kindly inform to the following.

Website: <http://cbi.nic.in>
E-mail Id - cic@cbi.gov.in **SHO**
Ph: 011-24368638, 24368641
Fax No. 011-24368639 **P.S. Kalyan Puri, Delhi**
DP/72/ED/2020 **Tel.No. 011-22772251, 8750871830**

NORTHERN RAILWAY

Tender Notice

The Deputy Chief Engineer/Survey & Const-II, Tilak Bridge, Northern Railway, New Delhi, for and on behalf of the President of India invites open e-tender for the following work:

Full name of work	Hiring of 01 (one) Number Vehicle for Three (03) Years i.e. (Jeep/Gypsy/Tata Sumo type or similar make) for the use of XEN/S&C/TKJ Northern Railway, Tilak Bridge, New Delhi.
Approx. Cost	Rs. 17,01,637/- (Rs. Seventeen lakh one thousand six hundred thirty seven only).
Completion period	36 months (Thirty Six months)
Earnest Money amount	Rs. 34,000/- (Rs. Thirty four thousand only)
Sale/availability of tender document on	Tender document will be available on IREPS web site i.e. www.ireps.gov.in from 01.06.2020 to 15.06.2020 upto 11.30 hrs.
Last date/Time of upload of tenders	15.06.2020 upto 11.30 hours. Tender documents can be uploaded by the tenderer on IREPS web site w.e.f. 01.06.2020 to 15.06.2020.
Date and time of opening of tender	15.06.2020 at 11.30 hours. (Immediately after close of uploading of tender (D2) in the office of Chief Administrative Officer/Const. N.Rly, Kashmir Gate, Delhi-110006.

This notice is available on www.nr.indianrailways.gov.in web site and documents on www.ireps.gov.in site is available.
Tender Notice No. 58 S/S&C/TKJ/Vehicle/XEN/2020 Dated : 18.05.2020 1146/2020
Serving Customers With A Smile

APPEAL FOR IDENTIFICATION

General public is hereby informed that an unidentified person **Name: Sanjay, S/o Unknown R/o Unknown Age :** about 38 years, **Height :** 5'7", **Complexion :** Shallow, **Face :** Oval, **Built :** Thin, **Wearing:** Kurta Payjama and bare footed was admitted in Sufdarjung Hospital, Delhi from Sadar Nala Road. During treatment Doctors declared him dead on 13.05.2020. In this regard a case vide DD No. 5A dated 13.05.2020 has been lodged at Police Station Sadar Bazar, Delhi. The Dead body has been preserved for 72 hrs in Sufdarjang Mortuary, Delhi. Any person having any information or clue about this dead person may kindly inform to the following:-

SHO :
P.S. Sadar Bazar, Delhi
North Distt., Delhi
Tel. No. 011-23512411, 23512412

DP/221/N/2020

Trend Blazer

Alia can't wait to work in new office

Bollywood superstar **ALIA BHATT** says that she cannot wait for the lockdown to get over because she is excited about sitting in her new office for meetings and script reading sessions.

The actor has collaborated with art director Rupin Suchak to create the interior design of her office.

“Rupin got the pulse of what I wanted to do with my office. He got the brief spot-on and effortlessly. The space is now an extension of my personality and that is exactly how I had envisaged. He has made the place look more spacious, included a surprise element or two breaking monotony, yet giving it an overlay of serenity and cosiness,” Alia said.



‘Today, we, as a planet, are called to reflect on our relationship with the natural world. The pandemic has unmistakably highlighted how our bond with the environment has existed well-before everything else. Everything we do, are and will be, is ultimately tied to nature to create one people and planet.’

—Dia Mirza

Former Miss World and Bollywood debutant **MANUSHI CHHILLAR** has been roped in for a global campaign against the novel Coronavirus. She joins Rohit Sharma, besides global football icons Lionel Messi, Gareth Bale, David Beckham and Mesut Ozil among others.



She has joined a fitness brand for a superstar-studded initiative aimed at raising fund for those affected by Coronavirus and is a part of a global campaign titled Home Team Hero.

“Super excited to become a part of the global Adidas campaign. It is an opportunity for the world’s athletes and creators to make a difference,” said she.

Jennifer happy to see Ben move on

Actor **JENNIFER GARNER** is happy that her former husband, actor Ben Affleck, has moved on and found love in actor Ana de Armas.

Garner and Affleck called off their 10-year marriage in 2015, and their divorce got finalised in 2018.

The 48-year-old actor, who shares Violet, Seraphina and Samuel with Affleck, is glad that Affleck is in a “good and healthy place.”



DAVID VS VIRUS

From continuing operations to tackling supply chain issues and managing cash flow, there is a plethora of challenges that the start-up ecosystem is facing currently. However, the uncertainty has also acted as a boon for various tech and online firms, says **SAKSHI SHARMA**

The Coronavirus pandemic has put the global economy into a tailspin. Several countries are already heading towards a full-fledged recession, which experts predict would be akin to the Great Depression, while other economic disruptions seem inevitable. While the present crisis has short-term impact on all organisations, its effect on small businesses and start-ups is turning out to be far-reaching and long-lasting. It has left various industries and markets jittery about their future.

The start-up ecosystem is desperately attempting to cope with the unprecedented circumstances. There are a plethora of challenges right from continuing operations to tackling supply chain issues to managing cash flow. Besides these, raising fresh funds has turned out to be a major challenge for the community. Dr Apoorva Ranjan Sharma, Co-founder, Venture Catalysts, and Managing Director of 9Unicorns Accelerator Fund, says that the fall in public markets has directly impacted venture capitalists and angel

investors which, in turn, has slowed down investments.

According to Venture Intelligence, start-up funding in India for March dropped by 22 per cent as compared to the same period in the previous year. The start-up data tracker also reports that Indian startups only secured \$354 million in March, down from \$714 million in February — more than 50 per cent decline. These numbers indicate that start-up investors are tightening their purse strings and only focussing on their existing portfolio companies. When we move beyond the statistics, we face another grim reality. A slowdown in funding activities has resulted in a severe liquidity crunch, rendering many start-ups on the verge of bankruptcy. Moreover, start-up valuations have also declined in the wake of the crisis.

Under such circumstances how are the startups surviving? As per NASSCOM's recent statement, the start-up sector is facing grave cash flow issues as 70 per cent of them have cash reserves that will last less



than three months. The e-survey, titled *Reviving the Indian start-up engine during COVID-19*, showed that about 90 per cent of Indian start-ups saw a decline in revenues, while 30-40 per cent have halted their businesses temporarily.

Shilpa Lalit, founder, Artyshills, a company related to artworks, says, “Non-sale of products in the red zones is a problem. Another major challenge is that we are running out of stock of a lot of our supplies. And there are no labourers to run the factory. This demand-supply gap will take time to be bridged and stocks to revive.”

While Jitendra Chouksey, Founder of Fitr, an online fitness platform, feels that there's no such thing as “disaster-proof” industry, he says: “There has been a slowdown in business, there is uncertainty and people are prioritising what they spend their money on.” If start-ups want to survive, they need to accept this new normal and figure out what the rules of doing business are going to be.

There are many start-ups that have

lowered the rates of their services to survive during these times of crisis. Aarnav Kalra, Chief Operations Officer, Beforv, a digital start-up says that his business has incurred profits, though he had to reduce the price of his services in order to create more demand during the lockdown.

An independent artist and DIY expert, Shilpi, who was planning to set up a start-up but couldn't accomplish her aim because of the pandemic, says that the lockdown has affected her craft immensely. “I have to confine my ideas to the products that I already have at home. I can't step out to buy things to keep myself going,” she adds.

Of course, the above incident would make one wonder about the fresh start-ups who had started their operations before the lockdown. What about them? Jitendra says, “I don't think anyone could have predicted this crisis. For those who've just started operations, the silver lining is that they have little to lose. Invest this time to go back to the drawing board and rejig the business plan and systems for a post-

COVID scenario. This virus is here to stay for a long time and has disrupted how business is done or taken forward. I have one piece of advice: “think lean!”

The situation has affected people in every possible manner. While for some it is proving to be the worst nightmare, for others it has also proved to be a boon — the tech-based and digital start-ups as they have got a boost. Jitendra says that their biggest strength is their business model. Right from inception, they have been an online fitness platform with no offline footprint. “Since the beginning, our primary source of revenue has been client enrollments with Fitr coaches. These enrollments have continued despite the lockdown. Our business model is such that the client and coach don't meet in person. All coaching is carried out online through our app. That's why we have managed to seamlessly adapt to the remote work culture,” says he and goes on to add, “Mainstream businesses tend to invest heavily in infrastructure. As we've seen with other players in the fitness industry, unmanageable overhead costs was a major reason behind their financial woes post lockdown. This is a lean start-up and we've concentrated more on building a strong IT infrastructure and robust internal systems. These have helped us and saved us from hitting a trough.”

Shilpa says that though her stocks are hanging mid-way but she has received positive responses online. “People have a lot of free time to explore and scroll through the paintings and other artworks right now. They also have the time to pursue their lost passion in arts and craft, which was not possible before due to busy schedules. This has also led to an increase in the viewership of my online art tutorials,” she adds.

It has resulted in rise of new online businesses. A B2B edtech startup Next Education has come up with several new features to adapt to the need of the hour. Beas DevRahnan, CEO and Co-Founder, says: “Being stuck at home does not necessarily mean that students cannot continue to learn. Advancements in technology, both computational and telecommunication have enabled remote learning opportunities and helped us gain profits.”

While the start-ups have been impacted by COVID-19, they are more likely to regain lost ground after the lockdown gets over. Apoorva says, “This is because they have low-risk investment options.”

It goes without saying that the COVID-19 pandemic has seriously disrupted India's start-up ecosystem, which was once thriving and booming. Apoorva says that the expectations from 2020 are low, but start-ups may pick up in the last quarter of this year. Of course, it will take time for it to go back into the pre-COVID state, but it is the early-stage start-ups that will take the lead.

Jitendra says that the founders should try to have a lean start-up, stay debt-free, invest in people and technology. “Also, keep an ear to the ground and be prepared to respond swiftly to market movements,” he adds.

The start-up Davids, who are able to ride out the virus, would emerge as the Goliaths of the business world post pandemic.

As some lockdown restrictions have been taken off, social distancing, minimal physical contact, hygiene and disposable incomes are going to determine human actions, says **ASHISH AHUJA**

Since time immemorial, humans have adapted to the changing environment. These adaptations pass off unnoticed, when viewed over a short period of time. But as one takes a bird's eye-view of the period in question — lets say a decade, a century or a millennium — the transformation becomes apparent. However, the pace at which COVID-19 is forcing humanity to change and adapt is astounding. It seems, that in less than six months since the virus struck, human behaviour is undergoing a shift, one that is noticeable.

An extended hand towards a confident handshake gesture is met with our age-old “Namaskar”. The act of cheek kissing (*La bise* in French) while meeting someone, gets replaced with an “elbow-knock”. Welcome to the new-age greeting trends in a world trying to come to terms with having to live with COVID-19. Human interactions seem to be changing, and naturally portend a shift in how consumers behave and interact while patronising restaurants in times to come.

As some lockdown restrictions have been taken off, social distancing, minimal physical contact, hygiene and disposable incomes are going to determine human behaviour. Each one of these, in some measure, shall alter consumer behaviour in the restaurant ecosystem.

Sparingly laid-out restaurants

From the concept of “six degrees of separation” which theorised human connect, the world is now hunkering down to “six feet of separation” in order to avoid the spread of COVID-19. Naturally, this entails that consumers would be averse to dining where tables are set close to each other. Expect seating capacity at restaurants to maybe halve, in order to create the requisite distance. Innovative ways to screen off adjacent tables are already being developed by enterprising ideators. No more pushing at the bar counter to squeeze oneself in for another round of gin & tonic. The vibe of a restaurant/bar went much



beyond the four walls. The cacophony of human chatter from close quarters is what made it vibrant. With the six feet in play, this would definitely change. The void, probably filled with lyrics of Michael Jackson's “We are the World”.

Smaller Groups

Taking off from the concept of social distancing, diners would prefer to meet in smaller groups. The sight of a table of 15 would probably be replaced with cosy tables of twos and fours. Dining shall get more intimate and would probably be limited to meeting family and close friends, rather than a party.

Contact-less Dining Experience

Consumers will avoid not just physical proximity, but shall prefer to minimise physical contact with objects as well as persons. At a restaurant, consumers would probably prefer to enter doors that are sensor controlled as opposed to palming the “push” sign, unless someone else does the pushing for them. Glossy paper menus would cede ground to digital menus accessible on their personal mobile phones. The fight over who gets the bill folder at the end of the meal might get replaced with a sublime chime on the mobile phone — a digital invoice. A few clicks and the same would have been paid digitally without the need for touching currency notes or fumbling with the keypad on the oft-used credit card terminal. This would be the coming of age of the “contact-less” dining experience, which was being peddled by start-ups for the last few years. The sight of robots serving is not unthinkable, but consumers would probably view them as pure optics, and still prefer the congenial server, who smiles, while bringing their food to the

for them to manage their monthly budgets.

Masks & Sanitisers — the new vanity kit

Hygiene, both personal as well as public, would be demanded as well as practiced by consumers. Dressing up for the evening before stepping out to dine, would now also involve choosing the right shade or print of the mask to be worn. The shade of the mask might become as important as the shade of the lipstick. Restaurant entrances would seem like sanitisation zones, with customers ensuring that their hands get a taste of the alcohol before they do. More than discounts, customers would demand that their servers splash the same before serving. In a nutshell, consumer behaviour would exhibit the strongest preference for all things hygienic. Standards of hygiene and safety would determine when, where and how the consumer opens his/her digital wallet.

The Right Degree - 98.4

Consumers would now be subjected to an infra-red thermal scanner to check whether they qualify to enter the premises, purely for safety reasons. Thus, consumers would probably check their body temperature before making a reservation. Whatsapp texts among friends would change from “Hope you are wearing a collared shirt” to “Hope, you are not hot enough”.

While, we second-guess what the new world looks like, the “new normal” would have varying degrees of what has been enumerated above. The factor of fear would determine if the changes to consumer behaviour are permanent or a passing phase.

Some changes would be permanent, while others would no longer be relevant, once the panic dissipates. Hopefully, among others, the art of queuing up without pushing and keeping our public spaces clean, would stay forever.

Till such time, learn to communicate with your eyes, since saying “read my lips” through the mask might not be as effective.

They say, time is a great healer. In time, we shall know.

(The writer is Director, Pebble Street.)

Cinema helps you relive memories: Bhumi

Actor Bhumi Pednekar is taken aback to discover the uncanny similarity that she has with her character in *Dolly Kitty Aur Woh Chamakte Sitare*. Currently in lockdown, Bhumi took a trip down memory lane when she found her long lost scrapbook from school and that triggered a huge moment for her.

She says, “There is so much time at hand that you can use it to declutter and it is not only your space but your mind. I was cleaning a trunk in my old house and I came across a scrapbook from my school. My first DVD audition tape from my acting college, the first script I wrote. I was so nostalgic. My character in *Dolly Kitty* does something similar in the film with her scrapbook and this moment was so uncanny. There are so many of your life experiences you go through again as an actor and that's what I love about cinema!”

Directed by Alankrita Shrivastava, the film has earned Bhumi several international accolades at prestigious film festivals including the Face of Asia award at Busan.

Talking about life in lockdown, Bhumi shares, “The first week was so weird, my room is towards the road so it's usually noisy but now it's silent and taken over by the birds chirping. The first week was manic, I mean all we used to do was talk about the virus, we still do but now we've figured out a way to deal with it. Be more empathetic about what so many people are going through.”

The actor takes over her house post 6 pm every day and lets her hair down with her mother, Sumitra, and sister Samiksha. “I love dressing up my room and my house — there is always some music, I light up the candles. So, post 6 pm I take over the house because for me it's a way of survival. You have to be positive and you have to spread positivity,” she adds.



HOLISTIC SERVING

All of us are looking at ways of eating healthy and incorporating dishes that would help us do the same. The Oberoi has come with options for different times of the day and meals. So you can make a risotto with a millet or make *khichdi* that combines five grains. Read on to know more

FIVE GRAIN KHICHDI

INGREDIENTS

Cracked wheat grains

Rice

Barley

Millet

Moong lentil

Ghee

Garlic

Cumin seeds

Cardamom

Cinnamon

Bay leaf

Salt

SUBSTITUTE:

Use a variety of grains and lentils such as burghul, masoor lentil, Amaranth seeds, jowar and oats.

METHOD

Add ghee to a pan. Put cumin seeds, cinnamon, cardamom and bay leaf. Cook for a while, then add garlic. Saute till golden brown. Add all the grains and roast them for some time. Put water and cook till soft. Adjust seasoning.



CHARCOAL LEMONADE

INGREDIENTS

Lemon juice: 100 gm

Water: 1 lt

Activated charcoal: 15 gm

Hot water: 120 ml

Sugar: 10 gm

METHOD

Combine the activated charcoal and hot water. Make lemonade out of lemon juice, water and sugar. Combine the activated charcoal mixture and the lemonade.



POORVANCHAL KA SAAG

INGREDIENTS

Ghee: 150 gm

Cumin: 20 gm

Garlic: 50 gm

Ginger: 30 gm

Green chilli: 10 gm

Mustard leaves: 500 gm

Amaranth leaves: 500 gm

Spinach leaves: 500 gm

SUBSTITUTE: Mustard leaves with rocket leaves. Amaranth leaves with kale/Swiss chard.

METHOD

Add ghee to a pan. Then add cumin seeds, cinnamon, cardamom and bay leaf. Cook for a while and add garlic. Saut  till golden brown. Put all the grains and roast them for some time. Add water and cook till soft. Adjust seasoning.



DATE AND BANANA SMOOTHIE

INGREDIENTS

Almond milk: 75 ml

Dates: 75 gm

Bananas: 150 gm

Flax seeds or chia seeds: 5 gm

Honey: 30 gm

METHOD

Combine everything in a blender. Blend until smooth.



SPINACH AND EGG BAKED CASSEROLE

INGREDIENTS

Eggs: 8

Coconut oil: 2 tbsp

Onion: 1

Tightly packed spinach: 2 cups

Garlic, minced: 1 clove

Salt and pepper to taste

METHOD

Preheat oven to 180 degree and grease a baking dish with coconut oil. Heat coconut oil in a frying pan and add onions. Cook until translucent. Add spinach to the frying pan and cook until wilted,

about two minutes. Set aside and let cool. In a large bowl add the eggs and stir together until combined. Then add garlic, salt and pepper. Add the coconut oil, onion and spinach mixture once cooled. If the mixture is too hot, it will begin to cook the eggs. Mix all ingredients together thoroughly. Pour the mixture into the baking dish. Bake for 25to 30 minutes, until eggs are cooked in the middle and lightly browned on top.

Note: The bake will rise while cooking. It is fine and it will return to normal after taken out of the oven and cooled.



KIWI AND MINT COOLER

INGREDIENTS

Kiwi, peeled: 3

Mint leaves: 4 to 5

Honey: 15 ml

Soda water: 200 ml

Lemon juice: 10 ml

Ice cubes

METHOD

Combine everything in a blender. Blend until smooth.

SATTU AUR GUD KE LADDU

INGREDIENTS

Ghee: 100 gm

Sattu: 500 gm

Black pepper: 7 gm

White sesame: 50 gm

Jaggery: 200 gm

SUBSTITUTE: Sattu can be made at home by grinding roasted channa lentils or by dr roasting whole wheat flour.

METHOD

Add ghee to a heavy bottom pan. Put sattu and cook well till it gives a nice nutty smell. Add jiggery, white sesame and crushed black pepper.



SPINACH AND GARLIC PEARL BARLEY RISOTTO

INGREDIENTS

Pearl barley: 100 gm

Spinach: 100 gm

Garlic: 3 gm

Onions: 2 gm

Butter: 10 gm

Parmesan cheese: 10 gm

Veg stock: 100 gm

SUBSTITUTE:

Pearl

barley with broken wheat or any millets like jowahar and bajra.

METHOD

Boil and strain the pearl barley separately. Blanch the spinach and finally chop it. In a pan, add butter sweat chopped garlic and onions. Add the pearl barley to this. Add the stock and cook. Put chopped spinach. Finish with butter and parmesan cheese. Garnish with fried garlic slivers.



PUTTING HEALTH FIRST

Eating healthy is the first step towards building a strong immune system. If you're looking at ways to safeguard yourself from any infection, your first stop should be your local grocery store rather than the chemist. Plan your meals to include these powerful immune system boosters



immune systems. It is healthiest when it's cooked as little as possible so that it retains its nutrients. However, light cooking makes it easier to absorb the vitamin A and allows other nutrients to be released from oxal-

ic acid, an antinutrient.

YOGURT

The live and active cultures in yogurt stimulate your immune system to help fight

diseases. Yogurt is a natural probiotic and aids in the formation of good bacteria in our body. However, if you have sore throat regardless of the cause, yogurt might worsen it. Yogurt can also be a great source

of vitamin D which helps regulate the immune system and is thought to boost our body's natural defenses against diseases.

ALMONDS

When it comes to preventing and fighting off colds, vitamin E tends to take a backseat to vitamin C. However, this powerful antioxidant is key to a healthy immune system. It's a fat-soluble vitamin, which means it requires the presence of fat to be absorbed properly. Nuts, such as almonds, are packed with the vitamin and also have healthy fats.

SUNFLOWER SEEDS

These are full of nutrients, including phosphorus, magnesium, and vitamins B-6 and E. Vitamin E is important in regulating and maintaining immune system function. Sunflower seeds are also incredibly high in selenium.

TURMERIC

There is ancient wisdom packed in that turmeric laced milk that our grandmoth-

ers forced us to drink when we were ill. This golden spice is known for its anti-oxidant and anti-inflammatory properties. Curcumin, the compound present in turmeric is a very potent agent and aids in healing of wounds and infections. This bright yellow, bitter spice has also been used for years as an anti-inflammatory in treating both osteoarthritis and rheumatoid arthritis. Research shows that high concentrations of curcumin, which gives turmeric its distinctive color, can help decrease exercise-induced muscle damage. Curcumin has promise as an immune booster (based on findings from animal studies) and an antiviral.

PAPAYA

It is loaded with vitamin C. You can find the daily recommended amount of vitamin C in a single medium fruit. Papayas also have a digestive enzyme called papain that has anti-inflammatory effects. The fruit has potassium, magnesium, and folate, all of which are beneficial to your overall health.

TEA

A good old cup of some black tea can actually help build your immunity. Regardless of colour, black or green, tea packs a big punch of polyphenols, flavonoids, and antioxidants that destroy free radicals that can damage healthy cells and even cause premature aging. It's also a good means of hydrating your body. Just don't mix it with milk, as the proteins in milk bind with the polyphenols, thereby reducing their benefits.



Trick and treat

Want to give your friends and family a meal they will remember and refer to in the future?

SHILARNA VAZE, in her book, *How To Party Like A Star*, shares how to keep your sanity while bringing guests home

Remember that scrumptious quinoa salad we ate at Natasha's brunch? Or what was that amazing orange elderflower cocktail Nikhil whipped up for us? Well, you certainly want to give your friends and family a meal they will remember and refer to in the future. But you also want to keep your sanity while bringing the home. The trick to hosting and cooking is to make sure 90 per cent of your work is done before the guests arrive, preferably over a span of two or three days, so that you aren't exhausted and ready for a nap before the first Bellini is served. In professional terms, this is called mise en place, which literally means 'to put in its place'. Let me break it down.

First, fix your menu. That is the backbone of everything else. Say you want to have three snacks, three salads, three mains and two desserts. Always have some room for options, as someone might be vegetarian, gluten-intolerant or allergic to seafood. Another dish might need you to cook it from scratch at the last minute. Look for dishes that you have made before and like to eat. Beware of recipes from random sources on the internet. Rather, ask friends for recipes. Think of the cooking process or look at the recipe and see what you can make in advance. Make a shopping list and break it up into sections such as fresh vegetables and fruits, grocery store, specialty store, fishmonger, butcher and bakery. Write down quantities and also dates for when you should buy everything. For example, vegetables and protein can be bought in advance, but try to buy fruits and salads on the day of or the evening before the brunch.

Plan your prep over two or three days. Say you want to make an antipasti and cheese platter. Cheese can be bought and stored three days in advance. Roasting vegetables such as peppers and eggplants can happen a day in advance. Bread should be bought on the day of the event.

Do a check the night before the event to make a 'collection list' of all the things you forgot. Keep all the crockery, tableware, linen and glassware ready the day before. Ideally, you will just have to toss the salad, reheat your already baked phyllo parcels, toss the burrata in the spaghetti and brunch will be served!

Do ask for help. Enlist your best friend, husband's assistant, sister or mom to help you or refill



your glass while you play domestic goddess. Get the kids to set the table. Make it fun so you don't feel like a slave.

I don't know whether to thank the stars for the internet, Google and Pinterest, or to rue the day they were created. Although it helps you get inspiration and tells you how to execute anything your imagination can conceive of, it also makes the life of any professional (caterer, stylist, bartender) who is working for you a living nightmare. Keeping things real is important. Do you want to spend the month before your brunch knitting dreamcatcher return presents for your guests? Do you want to be scouring local bazaars for chairs for the wooden ledge on your terrace? Do you want to be practising how to make a souffl  repeatedly before the big day? If the answer is yes, then by all means, go for it. But if you want to keep life pretty yet relaxed, identify a few areas where d cor elements will have the biggest impact, such as the entrance, dinner table or the bar counter.

Flowers that go with the theme, a few rustic items like watering cans, mason jars, wooden platters, boards and jute strings can go a long way. First, work out the look you are going for, pick two-three items that will help you achieve it, and repeat the look through the venue. 'Online home delivery' are the magic words here, and a few trusted stores can also help you create that magical feel.

If you are working with event stylists, give them your references and ideas but also let them present their ideas and tell you — what is impossible and out of your budget. Ask for a quotation, reference photos and break up for each item so as to avoid any nasty surprises in the end.

(The book has been published with permission from Penguin Random House India.)

SA-INDIA AGREE T20 SERIES

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

With a commitment to tour South Africa in August followed by the IPL likely in October, the BCCI seems ready with its resumption plan as it waits for the COVID-19 situation to improve and cricket to resume in earnest: after the monsoon.

Cricket South Africa on Thursday revealed that the BCCI has shown "willingness" to play three T20 Internationals at the end of August. This was after Board CEO Rahul Johri said he expects the sport to restart after the monsoon.

India and South Africa could play three T20 Internationals at the end of August as part of a prior "agreement", provided the situation arising out of the pandemic improves substantially for governments on both sides to give a go-ahead.

The fixtures are currently earmarked for late August but Cricket South Africa's acting chief executive Jacques Faul, encouraged by the BCCI's "willingness", said both parties are not averse to having the series at a later date.

"India wants to honour its agreement. If it's postponed, maybe a bit later," Faul said during a virtual press conference on Thursday.

"We've had a very good discussion with them (BCCI)," the CSA executive added.

A BCCI official on condition of anonymity said that the possibility is "there" provided they get an all clearance from the government of India.

"First, we have to get the players for a conditioning camp in a green zone. Obviously, if things are on track, we would play in South Africa," the official told PTI.

BCCI agreeing to this bilateral series will also mean that they will have CSA's support if they want to organise the cash-rich IPL in October-November



India players train at HPCA stadium in Dharamsala on the eve of first ODI of three match series in March 2020. The series was later cancelled due to coronavirus pandemic

window instead of the T20 World Cup.

Considering the fast-evolving situation, CSA has reiterated that the series will be subject to the clearances from the highest authorities of both India and South Africa.

Faul said they have already initiated the process to seek permission from the South African government.

CSA's Director of Cricket Graeme Smith said having the series without spectators is not much of a logistical issue either.

"We have been talking to them and

the commitment is there to get the three T20s done," Smith said at a news conference on Thursday.

"There is an element of guesswork, no-one knows what things will be like at the end of August. But we believe we are a socially-distanced sport and that we can play behind closed doors," he added.

Johri, while addressing a webinar on Wednesday, gave some insight into the BCCI's plans going forward.

"We are going to be guided by the Government of India in its entirety,

whatever are the government guidelines is what we'll follow...Cricketing activity in earnest can start practically only after the monsoon season," he said.

India's monsoon season lasts from June to September. There is speculation that IPL might be conducted in October-November if the T20 World Cup in Australia is postponed.

"...hopefully things will improve and give us more variables which we can control and accordingly take the decision."

He also highlighted the many

logistical issues that are going to crop up because of the new safety protocols to minimise the risk of infection.

"The flavour of the IPL is that the best players around the world come and play, and everyone is committed to maintaining that flavour. Of course, it is going to be a step-by-step process, so you cannot expect normalisation tomorrow," he said.

"We need to factor what the government advisories will be. Right now there are no flights. At some point flights will open and everybody needs to quarantine themselves before playing.

"How will that impact the schedules because as it is the schedules are extremely tight," he explained.

A 14-day quarantine is being talked about as one of the compulsory safety measures, which is likely to have a huge bearing on the overall scheduling.

"So there are a lot of moving parts. Having said that we stay optimistic. Hopefully the situation post the monsoon will improve and we approach it that point of time," Johri said.

He also touched on the challenges the Board will face while conducting India's lengthy domestic season, which goes on from October to May and features more than 2000 matches.

"In this changing scenario the scheduling of domestic cricket needs to be completely relooked at because today there is a team which can travel 50 kilometres to play a match or 3000 kilometres to play a match," he said.

"Everybody plays every other team home and away. Now in this scenario where travel is restricted, where players' safety, support staff safety is of paramount importance, how do you conduct these leagues?

"It is a discussion that will be had and interesting options will have to come up. Innovation will be the key in this," he added.



Gambhir picks Tendulkar over Kohli in ODIs

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Former India opener Gautam Gambhir has chosen legendary Sachin Tendulkar over current skipper Virat Kohli as a better batsman in the ODI format, considering the changed rules of the game and the Mumbai's longevity of career.

Tendulkar, who retired in 2013, played 463 ODIs and amassed 18,426 runs with 49 hundreds at an average of 44.83.

Kohli, on the other hand, has played 248 ODIs and scored 11,867 runs with 43 tons at an average of 59.33.

"Sachin Tendulkar, because probably with one white ball and four fielders inside the circle, not five fielders outside, it will be Sachin Tendulkar for me," Gambhir said on Star Sports show 'Cricket Connected'.

Nowadays, a one-day innings is played with two white balls and with three powerplays.

In the first power play (overs 1-10), two fielders are

allowed beyond the 30-yard circle, while in the second powerplay (overs 10-40) four fielders are allowed. In the last powerplay (overs 40-50), five fielders are allowed outside the 30-yard circle.

Gambhir, who was the star performer in 2011 ODI World Cup final which India won, feels that the change in rules has helped batsmen.

"It's difficult because Virat Kohli has done phenomenally well but I think the rules have changed as well, which has helped a lot of new batters," elaborated Gambhir, who played 58 Tests and 147 ODIs.

"The new generation, with 2 new balls, no reverse swing, nothing for the finger spin, five fielders inside for the 50 overs, probably that makes batting much easier.

He said he would also go with Tendulkar, considering his longevity and flow of the ODI cricket format at that time.

"Probably I'll go with Sachin Tendulkar if we see the longevity and flow of the one-day cricket format.

Comparisons with Hardik won't help me: Shankar

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Vijay Shankar would not torment himself by thinking that it's not he but Hardik Pandya, who is Indian team's preferred all-rounder in the white-ball format, as the Tamil Nadu cricketer is focussed at churning out match-winning performances to stay in the mix.

The 29-year-old was part of India's World Cup campaign but an ankle injury cut short his journey.

Since then, he hasn't been part of the senior team with Shivam Dube coming in place of an injured Pandya. Now with a fit-again Pandya back in the mix, the wait for another national comeback could be longer.

"If it starts affecting me (that Hardik is the No 1 choice) then I will lose out on games that I have with me. If I focus on the games that I have and have match-winning performances, then my name will be there in the circuit (reckoning)," Vijay told PTI during an interview.

"If I perform, people will talk about me and if some opportunity arises, I will be getting into the Indian side. So I can't think about what other players are doing," said Vijay, who played 12 ODIs and 8 T20Is for India.

Vijay said that he is not looking at being a mere sur-



vivor in the Indian team but someone who can perform for long time.

"My dream is not just to get there and be a mere survivor. Only if I excel, can I prolong my international career. It's important for us to be at our best when we go to international level."

But for that, the man with 45 first-class games under his belt want a permanent batting position in the Tamil Nadu set-up which would give him an opportunity to score more runs.

"Over the years, if you see, I have batted in all middle-order slots and adapted to the needs of the team. However, when people ask me what my goal is, I tell them for that I need to have a fixed batting

position. If I bat at Number 3 or 4, then only can I think about all these goals," he said.

"If I am always shifting my batting position, then I will only end up getting those 30s and 40s," he opined.

World Cup was a golden opportunity and he admitted that Afghanistan game ended up being a missed chance.

"I missed out on two opportunities and one was against Afghanistan (he scored 29). Against West Indies, I got a good delivery. Before that I had successive 40 plus scores against New Zealand in a tough game and against Australia. Had I converted even one start into a big knock, it would have been a different story," he rued.

Vijay has an astro-turf wicket on the rooftop of his residence but during lockdown, he didn't hit the nets.

"Usually, I call two or three people who come and bowl or give throwdowns. Due to the lockdown, I wasn't able to call anyone so just did my exercises. Hope I can now start training."

A lesser known fact about Vijay is his patronage for Tamil Nadu's physically challenged cricket team, where most of the players are daily wage earners suffering due to the lockdown.

"I have been the players for the last three years, and this time during lockdown, I helped them with some money so that they don't go hungry.

'Dhoni doesn't behave like a superstar at CSK'

IAN S ■ NEW DELHI

West Indies cricketer Dwayne Bravo heaped praise on Chennai Super Kings' skipper Mahendra Singh Dhoni and stated he has a calming influence on everyone in the CSK dressing room. The all-rounder also revealed how Dhoni makes teammates play with freedom which in turn gets the team results on the field.

In normal circumstances, Bravo and Dhoni would have been currently playing in the 13th edition of the Indian Premier League but due to coronavirus pandemic the tournament was postponed by the BCCI.

"CSK over the years have had many good captains in their dressing room.

We've had Faf du Plessis, Brendon McCullum, myself, Mike Hussey," Bravo said in a video uploaded on ESPNcricinfo.

"These guys have been leaders in various countries, but MS (Dhoni) is the type of person who always says that 'you are here because you're good enough, so when you come here, you don't need to prove anything to anyone. The franchise sees and it knows what you can offer. Just be yourself'."

Bravo also shed light on Dhoni's handling of players in the CSK change room and how he makes everyone feel comfortable without thinking too much about the game and the pressure it brings along with it.

"MS doesn't put pressure on anyone.



Outside of cricket, you rarely see him, but his room is always open, so you can walk in there anytime.

He's brilliant at having conversations with, obviously played so many games," Bravo said.

"He creates an environment where people feel comfortable and everyone relaxes; he doesn't behave like a superstar despite all his accolades and achievements," Bravo said.

Under the stewardship of Dhoni, CSK have won the IPL title three times, second-best behind Mumbai Indians' four.

Dhoni has also led Chennai in the knockout stage of every edition of the cash-rich league that they have participated in - the only team to do so.

It's a massive thing for me: Anderson on saliva ban

IAN S ■ LONDON

England pacer James Anderson believes his teammates will have to motivate each other when cricket resumes, and in all likelihood in front of empty stands, amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

England were on their tour of Sri Lanka when all cricketing activities came to a grinding halt due to the outbreak of novel coronavirus. All professional cricket activities currently remain suspended there till July 1 and the England team are next slated to play against Pakistan in August — three Tests and as many T20Is.

"We're lucky (in England) that most Test matches are sold out, certainly the first few



days, we get big crowds so motivating yourself isn't an issue," Anderson told CNN

Sport's Amanda Davies via Instagram Live.

"You just get out there in

front of a packed house and it's quite easy to get up for a game. I think we might have to lean on each other as players if there's no crowd there, no atmosphere, we hear the sound of leather on willow echoing around the ground rather than the applause," he added.

In the post-COVID era, cricket will see a number of changes amongst which one would be the ban on usage of saliva to shine the ball as has been recommended by the ICC Cricket Committee.

"It's a massive thing for me because to get the ball to swing, you need to be able to polish the ball and repair it when it gets scuffs on it," said Anderson who is England's leading wicket-taker in Test cricket and

One-Day Internationals.

The right-arm pacer also said while he is "desperate to get out there and play," he thinks it's only natural for players to be a bit nervous.

"It's just a human reaction to be nervous about this situation. We've got players in our team who have pregnant wives and the worry there is if they bring something back," he said.

"So I think what the ECB is doing is trying to make sure we really, really tick every box that we can to make sure the safety of the players and staff is paramount and make sure everything is in the right place so if and when we do join back up as a team before we start playing, we are as safe as we can be," he added.

WC final still on Williamson's mind



PTI ■ WELLINGTON

Cup final loss to England last year and hasn't yet figured if the epic match should count among the highs or lows of his career.

New Zealand got a raw deal in last year's World Cup final when England were adjudged the winners on the basis of their superior boundary count after the epic game and also the ensuing Super Over ended in a tie.

Williamson said he is still trying to comprehend what happened in the closing

moments of that spectacular final.

"To determine whether it was a high or a low takes a bit of time. And I'm still trying to work out what it was really... Sometimes it is difficult to make sense of it. You need to accept, which is that it is a part and parcel of life," said Williamson on a 'Cricbuzz' show.

"We didn't get the fruits but upon reflection, it was a pretty spectacular game to be a part of but a really difficult game to understand and get around because you were a part of the game."

In the drama-filled finale, a lot of things didn't go New Zealand's way, including Martin Gupthill's throw which ricocheted off a diving Ben Stokes' bat and went across the boundary. Add to that, on-field umpire Kumar Dharmasena erroneously gave Stokes an extra run.

Williamson said it was difficult to make sense of these "things on the outside that you can't control".

"When there were so many things that were out of your control, pivotal things that were so late in the match. It meant that you were trying to make sense and it was very difficult to do that," said Williamson, who was adjudged the 'Player of the Tournament' for scoring 578 runs.

"Despite being on the wrong side of the result you still think you played your part and were perhaps able to do that.

Cummins hopeful of playing IPL before T20 WC

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

Australian pace spearhead Pat Cummins believes the IPL will be a great way to resume cricket after the coronavirus-forced hiatus and the high-octane tournament will also help in preparing for the T20 World Cup this year.

Cummins was bought by Kolkata Knight Riders for a whopping Rs 15.5 crores, making him the most expensive foreign player in the IPL.

The 27-year-old said he has been in touch with his owners and is optimistic of playing the tournament this year.

"Whenever I speak to the owners of the team and the staff there, they're still really confident that it can be played at some stage this year," Cummins told SEN on Thursday.

"I was really looking forward to playing it for many obvious reasons, hopefully it goes ahead."



The COVID-19 pandemic, which has so far claimed over 3 lakh lives globally, forced the shutdown of sports, including cricket, across the world.

"It (IPL) could be a great way to get back into playing cricket (after the COVID-19 stoppage). It's T20, not as cumbersome on your body.

"We've got a big World Cup that is going to be played at some stage, so playing as much high-quality T20 cricket as we can is great."

The 13th IPL, which was scheduled to start in March end, was indefinitely suspended due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which has also put in doubt this year's T20 World Cup in Australia.

There is speculation that IPL might be conducted in October-November if the T20 World Cup in Australia is postponed.

In a bid to resume cricket, Boards across the globe are looking at ensuring a bio-secure environment which includes mandatory quarantine periods and other safety protocols.

Cummins, who will begin NSW pre-season training on June 1, said he is ready to do "Whatever it takes to get back playing cricket safely."

BBL participation depends on Int'l calendar: Warner

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

Australian opener David Warner's participation in the Big Bash League (BBL) would depend on how the international calendar pans out on resumption as he does not want "a cluttered mindset", playing different formats close to each other.

Warner reflected on how in 2013-14, playing Twenty20 tournament without much gap between the Test cricket adversely impacted his performance.

"All my decisions are based around how much playing and touring I'm doing in the summer," Warner told cricket.Com.Au about his Big Bash options.

"When I last played a game, my mindset in the next two Tests was cluttered between playing and not playing shots."

Warner had hit centuries in the first and third Ashes Tests of that whitewash summer before scoring 50 from 31 balls for the Sydney Thunder in a one-off appearance. In the final two Tests of the sum-



mer, he did not pass 25.

"I know that's how I play but I've reined it in a lot over the last few years and don't want to be putting myself into a situation again where I'm playing a Test match and then a T20 and then Tests again a few days later.

The star opener said he would prefer having "one rhythm going into it".

"It would be easy to sit here now and say 'Yes, I'd like to play' but I have to see what is happening at the end of the year. I'll have to have a hard think about it depending on the schedule."