

OPINION 6
TWO OCEANS
IN ONE

WORLD 8
BIDEN LEADS TRUMP BY 7 PTS
IN NEW HAMPSHIRE: POLL

SPORT 12
HALEP WINS IN
FRENCH OPEN

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

*Late City Vol. 30 Issue 275
*Air Surcharge Extra if Applicable

NEW DELHI, SATURDAY OCTOBER 3, 2020; PAGES 12 ₹3

the pioneer

www.dailypioneer.com

MOM IS TOUGH
AS A ROCK:
ANIL KAPOOR
10 VIVACITY



Hathras SP, DSP, SHO suspended after SIT probe

Yogi says those 'who even think of harming a woman's self-respect will face total destruction'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI
After the district administration and police force of Hathras came under scanner in handling of the probe into rape and murder of a Dalit woman, the Yogi Adityanath Government on Friday suspended five policemen, including Superintendent of Police Vikrant Vir. The Government asked SP, Shamli, Vineet Jaiswal, to immediately take charge as new SP of Hathras.

Facing criticism and calls for his resignation, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi said those "who even think of harming a woman's self-respect will face total destruction". An official communiqué released by the Government spokesman here on Friday night confirmed that on basis of primarily enquiry of the SIT, Yogi placed SP Vikrant Vir, then Deputy SP Ram Sabd, then SHO Dinesh Kumar Verma, senior Sub-Inspector, Jagveer Singh and head constable clerk Mahesh Pal under suspension.

The Government also decided to conduct narco analysis and polygraph tests of both — the complainant and the accused — to extract the truth, the Government spokesman claimed.

Sources said the surprising decision to conduct narco analysis and polygraph tests on the complainant has been taken after villagers from a dozen hamlets of the Hathras district held a panchayat on Friday and claimed that all the accused were innocent and that the family members of the victims should be put through the narco test.

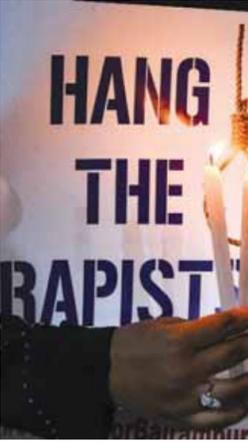
- The Government also decided to conduct narco analysis and polygraph tests of both — the complainant and the accused — to extract the truth
- Panchayat held on Friday and in which claims made that all accused were innocent and that family members of the victims should be put through the narco test
- They demanded that probe be handed over to CBI
- Victim's relatives said they are under threat from police and attempts have been made to buy their silence by offering them compensation
- Role of police is also under scrutiny for not taking timely action to arrest the culprits
- BJP leaders Uma Bharti joined the Opp in slamming the administration for the way they clamped down on media

the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI).

Speculation was rife throughout the day that the DM will also be shown the door after he was caught on camera on Thursday threatening the family members of the victim. But he survived the purge, at least for time being.

The police action to cremate the body of the victim at midnight without the consent of her family members created countrywide outrage and triggered demand for the resignation of the Chief Minister. Several video and audio tapes have surfaced in which the family members of the victim have been heard saying they are under threat from the police and attempts have been made to buy their silence by offering them compensation.

Continued on Page 2



Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra at Valmiki temple to attend a prayer meet for the Hathras victim, at Valmiki Basti in New Delhi, on Friday PTI

Opp protests in Delhi, Priyanka attends Valmiki mandir prayer

Kejriwal, Left leaders turn up at Jantar Mantar

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Massive protest was held in Delhi over Hathras rape case. Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi attended a prayer meeting at Valmiki mandir at New Delhi, while actress Swara Bhaskar and Left leaders protest at Jantar Mantar.

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal joined the

protest at Jantar Mantar to express solidarity with the victim.

Addressing the gathering at the prayer meeting organised by Valmiki community at the Prachin Bhagwan Valmiki Mandir at Panchkuian Road in central Delhi, Priyanka said every woman in this country needs to raise her voice and question the Government to seek justice for the daughter of Hathras.

Meanwhile, Bhim Army chief Chandrashekhar Azad, senior lawyer Prashant Bhusan, CPI(M) leaders Brinda Karat and Sitaram Yechury, and Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader

Saurabh Bharadwaj were among those who gathered at the Jantar Mantar on Friday evening, demanding justice for the Hathras victim.

People gathered at the site wearing masks and raising slogans demanding resignation of the Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister and justice for the victim.

At protest, Kejriwal said they have assembled here in grief. "I pray to God that our daughter's soul gets peace. I request the UP Government with my folded hands to hang the guilty as soon as possible. The accused should get such a punishment that no one will dare commit such a crime again," said Kejriwal.

After sunset, the protesters lit up candles and stood holding them in the dark at Jantar Mantar to mark their protest. Following the protest the Delhi Police also beefed up security at the Jantar Mantar. Besides ground force, senior police officials and paramilitary personnel were deployed manage the crowd. Police said the protest site has been barricaded by the police to restrict the movement of protesters.

On Thursday night, the Delhi Police had issued a notification that no assembly would be permitted at the India Gate as CrPc section 144 has been imposed barring gathering of more than four people. However, gathering is permitted at Jantar Mantar.

The protest was initially supposed to be held at the India Gate but was later shifted to the Jantar Mantar owing to the prohibitory orders.

Continued on Page 2

Village out of bounds for all

Victim's cousin claims his uncle beaten up by cops, asked to keep mum

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Uttar Pradesh Police on Friday turned Hathras into an inaccessible fortress, blocked a TMC delegation from meeting the family members of the ganagrape victim and pushed and shoved media persons while preventing them from entering the village.

The victim's cousin reportedly told some media persons that that his uncle was beaten up by policemen and they were told not to interact with the media. Incidentally, the District Magistrate was caught on camera threatening the family members on Thursday.

The phones of all the family members are switched off, allegedly on the direction of the officials. In a repeat of Thursday when the Uttar Pradesh Police used force to stop Congress leader Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi

from entering Hathras, they meted out the same treatment to senior TMC leader Derek O'Brien and two women MPs from the party.

The three of them managed to reach Hathras, but were not allowed entry into the village. The police used force to prevent them from entering the village and O'Brien fell down during the skirmish.

In a statement, the party said the delegation of Trinamool Congress MPs was stopped by police around 1.5 kilometres from the victim's home.

"A delegation of Trinamool MPs has been stopped by the UP Police from entering Hathras. The delegation had travelled about 200 kms from Delhi. The Trinamool MPs were on their way to the village in Hathras, travelling separately, to express solidarity with the grieving family and convey their condolences," the statement said.

The delegation included Derek O'Brien, Dr Kakoli Ghosh Dastidar, Pratima Mondal and Mamata Thakur (former MP).

Continued on Page 2



Police personnel detain SP activists during a protest in Lucknow on Friday PTI

Over 1L die of Covid in India

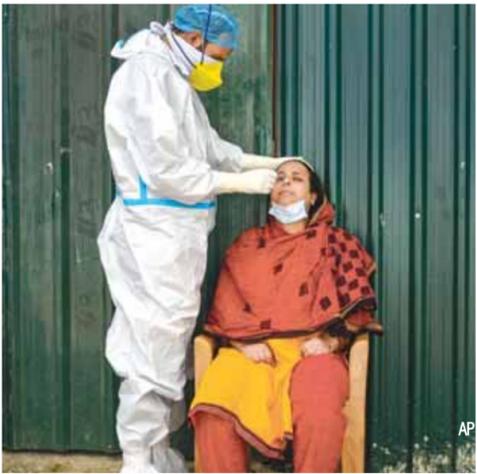
Toll third highest in world even as death rate among lowest in world

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India's Covid-19 death toll crossed over one lakh mark while the number of positive cases raced towards six and a half million count on Friday.

The data also revealed that 83.37 per cent Covid-related deaths and 76.62 per cent of the active cases are concentrated in just 10 States across the country. India is the second-most-affected country by active and total cases after the USA and death toll is third highest globally after the USA (2,12,912) and Brazil (1,44,767).

According to the Union Health Ministry data, the first Covid-19 death was reported on March 12, from south India. India's Covid-19 casualties had crossed 100 on April 5, 1,000 on April 28, 10,000 on June 16, 20,000 on July 6, 50,000 on August 15 and 1,00,000 on October 2. The number of casualties was reported 66,462 till September 1. Maharashtra (9,011), Tamil Nadu (9,653),



Karnataka (9,119), Andhra Pradesh (5,900) and Uttar Pradesh (5,917) are among the top five States in Covid-19 deaths in the country. As per the data, even though the country is reaching 0.1 million deaths in 7 months, India's Covid-19 death rate is among the lowest in the world. Country's current case fatality rate, which is the proportion of people who die of a disease among the total number of

patients diagnosed with the disease, stands at 1.56 per cent.

India's Covid-19 tally had crossed the one lakh mark on May 19, 10 lakh on July 16, 20 lakh-mark on August 7, 30 lakh on August 23 and 40 lakh on September 5. It went past the 50 lakh-mark on September 16 and crossed 60 lakh on September 28. The last 1 million cases for India have come in 13 days.

Continued on Page 2

ICMR, Biological E Ltd develop potential treatment for Covid

AP ■ WASHINGTON

New Delhi: The ICMR in collaboration with a Hyderabad-based biopharmaceutical company has developed "highly purified antisera" prepared by injecting inactivated SARS-CoV2 in horses, which can be a potential treatment for Covid-19. "The ICMR and Biological E Limited, Hyderabad, have developed highly purified antisera (raised in animals) for prophylaxis and treatment of Covid-19," the apex health research body said on Thursday.

Trump, Melania test Covid positive

US President has 'mild symptoms'

AP ■ WASHINGTON

President Donald Trump is experiencing "mild symptoms" of Covid-19 after revealing early Friday that he and first lady Melania Trump have tested positive for the coronavirus, a stunning announcement that plunged the country deeper into uncertainty just a month before the presidential election.

Trump, who has spent much of the year downplaying the threat of a virus that has killed more than 2,05,000 Americans, said he and Mrs. Trump were quarantining. The

White House physician said the president was expected to continue carrying out his duties "without disruption" while recovering. A White House official said Friday morning that the president was experiencing mild symptoms but was working from the White House residence.

Trump's diagnosis was sure to have a destabilising effect in Washington and around the world, raising questions about how far the virus had spread through the highest levels of the US Government. Hours before Trump announced he had contracted the virus, the White House said a top aide who had traveled with him during the week had test-



ed positive. "Tonight, @FLOTUS and I tested positive for Covid-19. We will begin our quarantine and recovery process immediately," Trump tweeted just before 1 am. "We will get through this TOGETHER!" Vice President Mike Pence tested negative for the virus on Friday morning and "remains in good health," his spokesman said.

Continued on Page 2

Congress strikes a bargain, to fight on 65-68 seats in Bihar

PNS ■ NEW DELHI/PATNA

The seat-sharing deal between the RJD and the Congress for Bihar Assembly polls has been finalised, but the announcement was delayed due to engagements of the senior Congress leaders in the protest over the Hathras incident.

Sources in Congress said the alliance partners are likely to officially announce the formula by Saturday afternoon at a joint Press conference in Patna.

A day after the RJD and Congress — two major alliance partners of the mahagathabandhan — attacked each other over seat sharing, leaders of both the parties, Tejashwi Yadav and Rahul Gandhi, had a telephonic discussion on to finalise an agreement.

Sources said the RJD patriarch Lalu Prasad, currently lodged in Ranchi jail, asked his

son Tejashwi to speak to Rahul and seal the deal. Lalu reportedly advised his son to offer the Congress between 65 to 68 Assembly constituencies. The Congress has been demanding 70 seats. AICC sources said the RJD has agreed to contest on 134-136 seats leaving 65-68 for the Congress.

Continued on Page 2

LJP meeting on Sun to decide on seats offered or go solo

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

While the nomination process has already commenced for the first phase of Assembly polls in Bihar, the Lok Janshakti Party (LJP) is yet not on board on the seat-sharing issue with the NDA allies and "may go it alone" unless a decision is taken as per

its demand by Sunday.

According to sources, the BJP representatives are working on the "best deal possible" with the disgruntled partner which has sought as high as 42 seats as against 23 to 27 seats offered by the BJP.

LJP top leadership has called a meeting of the party leaders on Sunday to take a final call on seat sharing and its ties with the NDA and "may announce its decision to field its candidates in 143 seats against the JDU"

In case of the LJP going alone, the BJP will not be contesting seats where LJP fields its candidates, sources said adding "informal friendly alliance will continue with the BJP", sources said maintaining that dialogue is still on with the LJP leadership for an amicable solution that could be of the satisfaction of all three parties.

Continued on Page 2

US judge blocks H-1B visa ban

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

In a major relief to thousands of Indian IT professionals, a federal judge in the US on Thursday blocked the enforcement of a temporary visa ban by the Trump administration on a large number of work permits, including the most sought after H-1B visas, ruling that the President exceeded his constitutional authority.

The order by US District Judge Jeffrey White of Northern District of California applies to members of organisations that filed a lawsuit against the Department of Commerce and Department of Homeland Security — the US Chamber of Commerce, National Association of Manufacturers, National Retail Federation, TechNet, and Intrans Inc.

The ruling places an immediate hold on a series of damaging visa restrictions that prevent manufacturers from filling crucial, hard-to-fill jobs to support economic recovery, growth and innovation.

Detailed report on P8

Covid-19 IN INDIA

TOTAL CASES: 64,49,259
DEATHS: 1,00,352
RECOVERED: 54,02,807
ACTIVE: 9,45,179

STATES	TOTAL CASES	DEATHS	RECOVERED
Maharashtra	14,00,922	37,056	11,04,426
Andhra Pradesh	7,06,790	5,900	6,43,993
Karnataka	6,20,630	9,119	4,99,506
Tamil Nadu	6,08,885	9,653	5,52,938
Uttar Pradesh	4,06,995	5,917	3,51,966
Delhi	2,85,672	5,438	2,53,784
West Bengal	2,63,634	5,070	2,31,699
Odisha	2,26,334	928	1,94,128
Kerala	2,13,500	792	1,35,140
Telangana	1,95,609	1,145	1,65,844
Bihar	1,85,707	910	1,72,364
Assam	1,82,396	711	1,47,519
Gujarat	1,40,054	3,478	1,19,915
Rajasthan	1,39,696	1,516	1,17,238
Madhya Pradesh	1,32,107	2,372	1,09,611
Haryana	1,31,388	1,425	1,16,716



RJD leader Shivnath Paswan, with supporters, joins Jan Adhikar Party in the presence of party president Rajesh Ranjan, alias, Pappu Yadav, ahead of Bihar Assembly elections, in Patna, on Friday PTI

HATHRAS GANGRAPE CASE — Ensure strictest punishment for culprits: Kejriwal to UP Govt

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal appealed to the Uttar Pradesh Government to ensure the strictest punishment for the alleged culprits in the Hathras rape case.

Joining the protest at Jantar Mantar, Kejriwal demanded that the culprits should be hanged till death so that such an incident is never repeated in the country.

Along Kejriwal, several senior leaders and volunteers of the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) participated in the protest to demand justice in the recent

incident of alleged gangrape and murder of a 19-year-old Dalit woman.

Several senior AAP leaders such as Saurabh Bhardwaj, Atishi Marlena, Rajendra Pal Gautam, Dilip Pandey also joined the protest.

Kejriwal said, "We are in a deep pit. I am not here to give a speech, we pray to God for our daughter to rest in peace. The whole country would like to appeal to the Uttar Pradesh government that the culprits be given stringent punishment and must be hanged till death."

"They should be given the harshest punishment so that

nobody in the world tries to repeat such an act. Some people have been feeling that attempts are being made to save the culprits and the whole incident is being covered, this is wrong. What happened is very painful and a gruesome act has been meted out against the victim, and she lost her life at the end. The FIR for rape was not lodged for many days, no proper treatment was given to her, and her body was cremated at night going against the Hindu customs. Several actions have made people believe that the whole incident and the culprits are being shielded. The

culprits must be punished."

Urging transparency in the matter, Kejriwal said there should be no politics on this issue.

Kejriwal further said the family who has suffered all of this has lost their daughter. "At this point, all that the family need is peace and they should be made free so that they can meet whoever they want to." "There should be no politics on the matter, it is not ethical to play politics on this. When one says a rape has happened in Uttar Pradesh, another person says a rape has also happened in Rajasthan. This is no argu-

ment. Why should such incidents of rape happen in Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan? Why should they happen in Madhya Pradesh, Mumbai, and Delhi? They are our daughters, whether, from Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, Bangalore, no incidents of rape should happen anywhere in the country. All of us, all the governments, parties, and people of the country, must create a system that keeps our daughters safe. There should be no politics on the matter," said the CM.

AAP's spokesperson Saurabh Bhardwaj said, "Media

and the BJP are repeatedly asking why are the people protesting against the Hathras rape case. Lakhs of people gathered at India Gate to demand justice for Nirbhaya, while there were many rape incidents even before Nirbhaya and even after Nirbhaya. The reason that the people have joined today in huge numbers is that in this rape case of Hathras, every officer of the administration, whether it was SHO, DM, DSP, ADG, or Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh, everybody is trying to save the accused starting right from September 14 till today. The

rape case was not registered and a weak case was filed. The rape case was filed after 8 days of the actual incident. The girl was left to die and she was not given proper medical treatment. Even after the girl lost her life, her dead body was cremated to erase any evidence without the consent of the family."

"What is the reason behind all these officers standing with the accused? No administrative officer stands with the victim's family. Even today, the victim's family has been locked inside their house, and they are not allowed to talk to the media. All

the officers have been given directions that no politician should be allowed to meet the victim's family as Yogi Adityanath is standing with the accused."

"Yogi Adityanath comes from the Thakur family and all the accused in the rape incident also belong to the Thakur family. Yogi is standing with Thakurs and so, no Thakur accused in Yogi Adityanath state can be punished. The only way to punish the accused in Uttar Pradesh is to remove Yogi Adityanath from the position of Chief Minister," added Bharadwaj.

Govt to protect 'swabhimani' of women: UP CM

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

While reiterating his government's resolve to protect the 'swabhimani' (self-respect) of women, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said that the perpetrators of crime against women would be severely punished to set an example for the future.

In a tweet in Hindi, the chief minister said on Friday that the forces thinking about trampling the self-respect of women's pride would be destroyed.

"They will get such a punishment which will be a lesson for the future generations," Yogi said and added that the Uttar Pradesh government was committed to providing security to women and ensuring their empowerment.

"This is our promise to women," the chief minister said.

The tweet came on Friday following an opposition attack on the state government following Hathras incident in which a 19-year-old girl was killed by four people.

Opposition leaders including Congress national general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra and Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav have demanded resignation of the chief minister while Bahujan Samaj Party supreme Mayawati has suggested imposition of President's rule in UP.

The government has paid Rs 25 lakh as compensation, promised a house in Hathras city and a government job to the family members of the victim.

MP Rajvir Diler visits victim family, assures all possible help

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ HATHRAS

BJP MP Rajveer Diler and member of Central Sanitation Staff Commission Manju Diler visited the incident place on Thursday and assured the victim family of all possible help regarding the incident with daughter Nirbhaya of Hathras district.

Both the leaders said that the opposition parties want to make this matter a caste struggle so that the atmosphere of the district deteriorates.

MP Diler said that these people want to sabotage the peace of this place in order to serve their political loaves which will not be tolerated.

MP Diler appealed to the social organizations and citizens of Hathras district to maintain peace and peace in the district.

Opp protests in Delhi...

From Page 1

Hitting hard at Bharatiya Janta Party (BJP)-led UP Government, Azad said there is no hope for justice for the 19-year-old woman who died after being allegedly being gang-raped and assaulted in Hathras till Yogi resigns and the Supreme Court takes cognisance of the issue.

"The accused should be punished as soon as possible so that others get scared before committing such crimes," he said, addressing the protesters. "We will go to Hathras and till the time the matter doesn't come to Delhi, there is no chance of getting justice," Azad added.

Prashant said what is happening in Uttar Pradesh is goondaraj. "The police have surrounded the village, are not allowing Opposition leaders and mediapersons to enter it. They have taken away the mobile phones of the family members of the victim," he said.

Bhushan also condemned the way the victim was cremated against the wishes of her family. The body of the 19-year-old Dalit woman, who died in Delhi's Safdarjung Hospital, a fortnight after she was gang-raped, was cremated in Hathras, Uttar Pradesh, in the early hours of Wednesday, with her family alleging that the local police forced them to conduct the last rites in the dead of the night. Local police officers, however, had said the cremation was carried out as per the wishes of the family.

Hathras SP, DSP, SHO suspended after SIT probe

From Page 1

The role of the police is also under scrutiny for not taking timely action to arrest the culprits after arresting one person on the basis of the FIR filed by the brother of the victims on September 14, the day of the brutal sexual assault. If four people were involved in the crime, the police should have been able to know about their involvement from the interrogation of the first accused. But they waited for eight days before taking any action.

Sources said in its preliminary report, the Special Investigation Team probing the incident called for the suspension of the SP and others cops over allegations of mismanagement. BJP leaders Uma Bharti joined the Opposition in slamming the administration for the way they have clamped down on the media and stopped political leaders from entering Hathras. Similarly, the High

Court has severely criticised the government for the midnight cremation of the Dalit girl.

Bharti on Friday urged Yogi to allow the media and politicians to meet the family and criticised the haste with which the young woman was cremated at midnight.

"She was the daughter of a Dalit family. She was cremated by the police in a hurry and now the family and the village police are under siege," she wrote in Hindi.

"At first I thought that I should not say anything because you must be taking action in this regard. However, the manner in which the police have laid a siege to the village and the victim's family is concerning no matter what the arguments in its favour may be," Bharti said.

"I don't know of any rule under which a family can't meet anybody because of a SIT probe. Doing this would cast doubts on the SIT probe itself," she said.

TN CM, Dy CM attend events together for first time days after standoff

Chennai: Chief Minister K

Palaniswami and Deputy Chief Minister O Panneerselvam together took part in public events here on Friday for the first time days after they crossed swords over who should be the ruling AIADMK's chief ministerial candidate for 2021 assembly elections. The twin events of Gandhi Jayanathi and the death anniversary of former Tamil Nadu chief minister K Kamaraj brought the two leaders together as they took part in the official functions paying tributes to the late leaders. It assumed significance since Panneerselvam, the AIADMK coordinator, had kept himself away from some official events chaired by Palaniswami amid reports of a rift between them on the leadership issue.

Panneerselvam did not take part in a COVID-19 review meeting of District collectors on Tuesday while he was not invited to a project launch event here

on September 30, both presided over by the chief minister.

Also, the deputy CM did not attend the "One Nation, One Ration Card" scheme launch by Palaniswami at the Secretariat on Thursday and in the evening he visited temples in nearby Tiruvallur district. Panneerselvam had also been holding discussions with his loyalists besides other leaders. On September 28, both Panneerselvam and Palaniswami had a heated debate at the AIADMK Executive Committee meeting here on the issue of chief ministerial candidate for the next year's elections.

Following the discussions, though the party said the two leaders would announce on October 7 the chief ministerial nominee, there has been speculation about its probability besides some leaders voicing views contrary to the official party stand that no one should air their opinion in public on the CM candidate. **PTI**

Over 1L die...

From Page 1

Overall, five States with the biggest 24-hour jump in total cases are Maharashtra (15,591), Kerala (9,258), Karnataka (8,793) Andhra Pradesh (6,555), and Tamil Nadu (5,595). The five most affected States by total cases are Maharashtra (14,16,513), Andhra Pradesh (7,06,790), Karnataka (6,20,630), Tamil Nadu (6,08,885), and Uttar Pradesh (4,06,995).

With 14,16,513 cases, Maharashtra is continued to be on the top in coronavirus cases in the country. As per data, the financial capital has reported 15,591 fresh cases and 424 deaths in the last 24 hours. The total active cases stood at 2,60,876. Mumbai recorded 2,440 new cases and 42 deaths in the last 24 hours, taking active cases to 28,472 and death toll to 9,011. There are 141 police personnel tested positive and one died in the last 24 hours, taking total cases to 23,689 in the force including 20,605 recoveries, 2,836 active cases and 248 deaths.

Kerala recorded its highest single-day spike of coronavirus cases with 9,258 persons testing positive for the virus and 20 deaths in the last 24 hours.

There are 77,482 active cases in the state and 1,35,144 people have recovered from the infection till date. Among the new cases, 8,274 persons contracted the disease through contact, including 657 cases, without an identified source of infection. 93 health workers tested positive for the virus on Friday. The Kerala government has imposed Section 144 of the CrPC across the State for a month, starting Saturday, in the wake of rising coronavirus cases.

Karnataka reported 8,793 new cases, and 125 deaths in the last 24 hours, taking total cases to 6,20,630 including 4,99,506 discharges and 9,119 deaths.

Andhra Pradesh reported 6,555 new cases, 7,485 recoveries and 31 deaths in the last 24 hours, taking total positive cases to 7,06,790, including 6,43,993 recoveries, 56,897 active cases and 5,900 deaths.

Tamil Nadu reported 5,595 new cases, taking the tally to 6,08,885 while the death toll mounted to 9,653 with 67 more fatalities. The active cases were 46,294 with 5,603 patients getting discharged from various hospitals, pushing the cumulative recoveries to 5,52,938 people. In less than a month of surpassing the five lakh-mark

(September 13), the State added another one lakh cases.

West Bengal recorded 3,310 new cases, 2,944 recoveries and 53 deaths in the last 24 hours, taking total cases to 2,63,634 including 2,31,699 recoveries, 5,070 deaths and 26,865 active cases. The national Capital reported 2,920 new cases, and 37 deaths in a single day. The total cases in the state rise to 2,85,672 including 2,53,784 recoveries and 5,438 deaths.

Village out of bounds for all

From Page 1

One of the MPs, who was stopped, said, "We are peacefully proceeding to Hathras to meet the family and pay our condolences. We are travelling individually and maintaining all protocols. We are not armed. Why are we stopped? What kind of jungle raj is this that elected MPs are prevented from meeting a grieving family?"

"At this moment, we are just 1.5 kms from the victims home in Hathras, explaining to police officials that we will walk the 1.5 kms to the victims house in Hathras," the statement said quoting the MP. Meanwhile, throughout the

media dozens of journalists made desperate attempt to enter the village to interact with the family members of the victims, but the police would not let them in.

While the police claimed that section 144 was imposed in the village, more than 50 men, mainly from an influential upper caste, held a meeting in the village and claimed that the four men arrested by the police in the cases were falsely implicated.

The police did nothing to disperse that gathering while not allowing anyone else to enter the village. Hathras Additional

Congress strikes...

From Page 1

While, Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) can fight on 17-19, and five each for two other Left parties - CPI and CPM - 10-12 seats for the Vikasheel Insaan Party and two for the JMM.

RJD and Congress leaders had exchanged words, blaming each other for the delay and not making an agreement for the polls starting from October 28 and for which the nomination for first phase already started on October 1.

The three-phase poll is scheduled to take place on October 28, November 3 and 7 and results will be declared on November 10.

"The RJD will contest on double the number of seats than Congress and all our alliance partners too have been suitably accommodated. Announcement will be done soon," a senior RJD leader said. The Bihar Assembly has 243 members.

Earlier the two Left parties, CPI and CPI(M), had declared that they would contest the poll along with mahagathbandhan but the CPI(ML) had indicated that it was unhappy with the number of seats allotted. However, on Friday CPI (ML) also is said to have agreed to the deal to contest between 17-19 seats.

LJP meeting on Sun to decide...

From Page 1

BJP which has almost settled its seat-sharing formula with the JD (U) with each have more or less equal number of seats, is expected to call its Central Election Committee meet (CEC) on Sunday to finalise the names of its assembly candidates.

Speaking at a press conference in Patna, senior BJP leader and Union Law Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad did not offer any straight answer on the seat sharing with the LJP saying "BJP representatives are working on the issue."

The comment has come after LJP President Chirag Paswan met BJP President J P Nadda in the presence of Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Thursday and the BJP General Secretary and in-charge of Bihar Bhupendra Yadav claimed that the seat-sharing will be firmed up in a day's time.

According to sources, BJP has offered 23 to 27 seats to the LJP as against its demand of as many as 42 seats, numbers which it contested in 2015

Assembly polls when JDU was not in the NDA.

"Look, we don't have any problems with the BJP. We have fought under the leadership of Narendra Modi. But as far as the seat-sharing agreement is concerned, it hasn't moved ahead. The final call will be taken by Chirag Paswan," said LJP's National Spokesperson Sanjay Saraf.

Asked about their precise demands, Saraf said the LJP wants 42 seats. Saraf saying, "If our demands are not met, we are even ready to fight on 143 seats on our own in Bihar."

While the JDU and the BJP seems to have more or less sorted their seat-sharing agreement, if they stuck to these numbers, it leaves barely 23-33 seats that can be distributed between the LJP and the Hindustani Awam Morcha(Secular).

With the limited seats available for allocation and the LJP refusing to make a climb-down on its quota of seats, the stalemate is refusing to go in the ongoing dialogue, sources said.

Trump, Melania test...

Many White House and senior administration officials were undergoing tests Friday, but the full scale of the outbreak around the president may not be known for some time as it can take days for an infection to be detectable by a test. Officials with the White House Medical Unit were tracing the president's contacts.

Trump was considering how he might address the nation or otherwise communicate with the American people Friday, an official added.

Trump was last seen by reporters returning to the White House on Thursday evening and did not appear ill. He is 74 years old and clinically obese, putting him at higher risk of serious complications from a virus that has infected more than 7 million people nationwide.

said in a memo that Trump and the first lady, who is 50, "are both well at this time" and "plan to remain at home within the White House during their convalescence." Their son Barron, who lives at the White House, tested negative.

Trump has been trying all year to convince the American public that the worst of the pandemic is behind them. In the best of cases, if he develops no symptoms, which can include fever, cough and breathing trouble, it will likely force him off the campaign trail just weeks before the election and puts his participation in the second presidential debate, scheduled for Oct 15 in Miami, into doubt.

Trump's handling of the pandemic has already been a major flashpoint in his race against Democrat Joe Biden, who spent much of the summer off the campaign trail and at his home in Delaware citing concern about the virus. Biden has since resumed a more active campaign schedule, but with

small, socially distanced crowds. He also regularly wears a mask in public, something Trump mocked him for at Tuesday night's debate.

"I don't wear masks like him," Trump said of Biden. "Every time you see him, he's got a mask. He could be speaking 200 feet away from me, and he shows up with the biggest mask I've ever seen."

In a tweet Friday morning, Biden said he and his wife "send our thoughts to President Trump and First Lady Melania Trump for a swift recovery. We will continue to pray for the health and safety of the president and his family."

It was not immediately clear whether the former vice president had been tested since appearing at the debate with Trump or whether he was taking any additional safety protocols. Trump and Biden did not shake hands during the debate, but stood without masks about 10 feet apart for the 90-minute event.

World leaders offered the president and first family their best wishes after their diagnosis, as governments used their case as a reminder for their citizens to wear masks and practice social distancing measures.

Trump's announcement came hours after he confirmed that Hope Hicks, one of his most trusted and longest-serving aides, had been diagnosed with the virus Thursday. Hicks began feeling mild symptoms during the plane ride home from a rally in Minnesota on Wednesday evening, according to an administration official who spoke on condition of anonymity to disclose private information. She was isolated from other passengers aboard the plane, the person said.

Hicks had been with Trump and other senior staff aboard Marine One and Air Force One en route to that rally and had accompanied the president to Tuesday's presidential debate in Cleveland, along with members of the Trump family. The Trump

contingent removed their masks during the debate, in violation of the venue rules.

Multiple White House staffers have previously tested positive for the virus, including Pence's press secretary, Katie Miller, national security adviser Robert O'Brien and one of the president's personal valets. An RNC official confirmed Friday that Chairwoman Ronna McDaniel learned she had tested positive Wednesday afternoon. She has been at her home in Michigan since last Saturday and did not attend the debate.

But Trump has consistently played down concerns about being personally vulnerable. He has mostly refused to abide by basic public health guidelines — including those issued by his own administration — such as wearing face coverings in public and practicing social distancing. Instead, he has continued to hold campaign rallies that draw thousands of often mask-less supporters.

"I felt no vulnerability whatsoever," he told reporters back in May.

The news was sure to rattle an already shaken nation still grappling with how to safely reopen the economy without driving virus transmission. The White House has access to near-unlimited resources, including a constant supply of quick-result tests, and still failed to keep the president safe, raising questions about how the rest of the country will be able to protect its workers, students and the public as businesses and schools reopen. U.S. stock futures declined on the news of Trump's diagnosis.

Questions remain about why Trump and his aides continued to come to work and travel after Hicks fell ill. Trump traveled to New Jersey on Thursday for a fundraiser, potentially exposing attendees to the virus. Trump's social media director Dan Scavino and press secretary Kayleigh McEnany, who were originally set to join him on the

trip, were replaced at the last minute by other aides.

But McEnany still briefed the press Thursday morning and made no mention of Hicks' suspected illness, raising anew concerns about White House transparency.

It is unclear where the Trumps and Hicks may have caught the virus, but in a Fox interview, Trump seemed to suggest it may have been spread by someone in the military or law enforcement in greetings.

The White House began instituting a daily testing regimen for the president's senior aides after earlier positive cases close to the president. Anyone in close proximity to the president or vice president is also tested every day, including reporters.

Several members of Trump's Cabinet were undergoing testing for COVID-19 Friday. The president's youngest son, Barron, tested negative "and all precautions are being taken to ensure he's kept safe and healthy," said Stephanie Grisham, the first

lady's spokeswoman. Trump's Supreme Court nominee, Judge Amy Coney Barrett, who has been on Capitol Hill meeting with lawmakers, also tested negative, the White House said.

Yet since the early days of the pandemic, experts have questioned the health and safety protocols at the White House and asked why more wasn't being done to protect the commander in chief. Trump continued to shake hands with visitors long after public health officials were warning against it, and he initially resisted being tested.

Trump is far from the first world leader to test positive for the virus, which previously infected Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro and British Prime Minister Boris Johnson, who spent a week in the hospital, including three nights in intensive care. Former Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi was hospitalized last month while fighting what he called a "hellish" case of COVID-19.

Bapu — The unforgettable launched

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia launched a coffee table book "Bapu - The unforgettable" on Friday 2020 to commemorate the 151st birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi.

A webinar on 'Footprints of Gandhi' was also inaugurated by the deputy chief minister. While speaking at the launch, Sisodia said, "This book cannot fulfill the void created by the absence of Bapu but can cer-

tainly make us think, give us ideas, give us a glimpse of his philosophy."

"There are several untouched aspects of history in this book, a lot of photographs, epigraphs, and several other details about Delhi which we usually do not get to see," he said.

Sisodia said, "In today's times when there are a lot of stories about the social decline, we are in dire need of Gandhian philosophies. If Gandhi ji would have been here today, he would



While congratulating the 'Art and Culture' and the archives department' Sisodia have been playing a crucial role in directing us towards the upliftment of our society."

"Time and again our Art and Culture department has been organizing events showcasing the unseen events of Baapu's life. Our archives department has also been working with the same zeal and enthusiasm as they were working before the pandemic. I congratulate both these departments today for successfully organizing today's event."

Gandhi Ji had a phenomenal relationship with the capital city Delhi.

Though his birth and edu-

cation were in Porbandar, Gujarat and he used the tool of non-violence first time in South Africa but from 1915 to 1948, he visited Delhi eighty times and stayed in this historic city for 720 days.

He also constituted some of the prominent institutions in Delhi such as Harijan Sevak Sangh (Kingsway Camp), Khadi Ashram (Narela), Valmiki Basti, and also inaugurated the Modern School, Lakshminarayan Temple, and Hindustan Times.

151ST BIRTH ANNIVERSARY

CM, Speaker pay floral tributes to Mahatma Gandhi

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal along with Assembly Speaker Ram Niwas Goel paid floral tributes to

Father of Nation Mahatma Gandhi on his 151st birth anniversary in a function organized at Delhi Vidhan Sabha on Friday.

Delhi Vidhan Sabha Deputy Speaker Rakhi Bidlan, Delhi Cabinet Minister Rajendra Pal Gautam and the general public also paid tributes on this occasion.

Speaking on the occasion, Ram Niwas Goel said that Gandhi's belief in simple living has been a beacon of hope for marginalized people.

Goel further said that Mahatma Gandhi was the primary leader of India's independence movement. Mahatma Gandhi's life achievement stands unique in political history. "Gandhi invented a completely new and humane means for the liberation war of an oppressed country, and practised it with greatest energy and devotion."



Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal with Speaker Ram Niwas Goel and MLA Rakhi Bidlan during celebration of Mahatma Gandhi's 151st birth anniversary at Vidhan Sabha in New Delhi on Friday

Man held for posing as Army officer, duping people

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A 28-year-old man has been arrested by the Delhi Police who used to disguise himself as Army personnel at Railway stations in city and cheat the persons by asking them for help in ATM booth. Police said that the accused used to swap ATM cards of the victims and then he used to withdraw money from their account.

The accused has been iden-

Police have also recovered one Army Identity card and 14 Credit and Debit Cards from the possession of the accused. The accused is also found involved in four cases

identified as Sunil Kumar Dubey, a resident of Uttar Pradesh's Mirzapur area.

According to Harendra Kumar Singh, the Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP), Railway unit of Delhi Police, on October 1, police team at Hazrat Nizamuddin railway station observed that two persons were arguing inside PNB ATM Booth.

"On being suspicious, the police personnel reached at booth and made enquiry from them. During enquiry one person, Mohammad Aslam stated that he met Dubey him in parking area of railway station, who introduced himself as Army personnel and showed him Army Identity Card," said the DCP.

"The Army personnel, Dubey requested Aslam for help in ATM Booth as his ATM card was not working accompanied him to ATM Booth. Dubey was also questioned during which he confessed to his crime of swapping the ATMs," said the DCP.

"A case under section 419/420/511/171 of Indian Penal Code (IPC) was registered and during interrogation, Dubey disclosed that he targeted specifically Army personnel at Railway Stations and cheat them by exchanging the ATM Cards. He was earlier arrested at GRP Itarsi (MP), GRP Nagpur (MH) and New Delhi Railway Station," said the DCP.

"Police have also recovered one Army Identity card and 14 Credit and Debit Cards from the possession of the accused. The accused is also found involved in four cases," the DCP added.

Hindu Rao doctors warn of 'indefinite protest' over delayed salaries

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Resident doctors at the civic body-run Hindu Rao Hospital have warned the authorities of indefinite protest if their salaries are not released immediately for three months.

It is the largest municipal hospital in Delhi and has been declared as a dedicated Covid-19 facility. Many of its health-care workers had contracted the infection earlier.

"We have continuously demanded for timely disbursement of salaries, but no action has been taken since the past 6 months. Presently, the salaries have not been paid for the past three months," the Resident Doctors Association said in a letter to the North Corporation Commissioner.

It further said "We strongly urge you for releasing 3 months' pay and giving us an immediate permanent solution. We apologise to announce if following issues are not rec-

tified, we would be forced to hold an indefinite protest considering strictly 'No pay, No work'."

Doctors and staff are already doing the symbolic pen down from 9 AM to 12 noon for the last several days but no one is listening to us, one of the doctors said.

One doctor in full PPE kit, held out a poster that said "Doctors on Covid duty, unpaid days 105, Hindu Rao Hospital, Delhi" and was widely circulating on social media.

NDMC launches pilot project 'Cycle4Change' to promote cycling

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC) Chairman Dharmendra flagged off a cycle ride tour on the occasion of launching of 'NDMC Cycle4Change' - a project to promote cycling on a dedicated 6 km pilot corridor from Bikaner House-near India Gate.

Dharmendra said that at the time when the physical and sports activities have been drastically curtailed in view of the COVID-19 pandemic, NDMC has initiated a move toward normalcy and road safety by organizing pilot cycle rides in New Delhi area.

"The Civic body in order to elevate the safety, convenience and experience of

cyclists, has dedicated this pilot corridor of 6 km for unique cycling experience around the playful recreational space surrounded by gorgeous wall paintings," he said.

The cycle rides tour will continue till October 10th. three hours in the morning between 6.00 am to 9.00 am and two hours in the evening from 5.00 pm to 7.00 pm every day in the dedicated pilot corridor from Bikaner House (India Gate) to Humayun Road, Amrita Shergil Marg, Lodhi Garden Gate No.6, Lodhi Garden Gate No.11, Avenue Road-II, Lodhi Colony Block-17, Lodhi Colony Cycle Plaza and Jor Bagh Metro Station.

The Secretary of NDMC Amit Singla invited citizens to take part in the cycle ride

and bring their own cycle or they can hire on rent the smart bike from the smart bike stations in New Delhi area. Smart bikes are already available in public bike sharing systems at 50 such stations.

"The transformation of road stretches; intersections and roundabout with temporary or permanent marking of cycle track have improved the cycling infrastructure to encourage people to opt cycling for their day-to-day physical activities as well as transport means," Singla said, adding that many more corridors will be dedicated in other areas under jurisdiction of New Delhi Municipal Council in the coming winter seasons based on the success of this pilot project.

Gang of two-wheeler thieves busted, 14 arrested; 100 stolen vehicles recovered

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Police has arrested 14 people and recovered over 100 stolen two-wheelers from their possession. With their arrest police claimed to have busted a nexus between auto lifters, middlemen and snatchers active in National Capital.

The accused have been identified as Vikram (35), Rashid (41), Jogender (25), Ashem (28), Suraj (22), Manish (20), Deepak (29), Sumit (25), Sumit (25), Nikhil (20), Rohit (25), Amit (25), Yogesh (23) and Sagar (22).

According to A Kaon, the Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP), Outer district, after receiving specific inputs regarding the nexus police formed two teams called Eagle Squad.

"The Eagle squad started a thorough checking of suspected vehicles in the area with the help of ZIPNet and seized various stolen motorcycles and scooters. On September 25, police found two vehicles lying unattended in Industrial Area Phase-I, Mangolpuri. The vehicles were found stolen from the areas of Tilak Nagar and South Rohini," said the DCP.

"Thereafter, a trap was laid and after sometime, four suspicious persons came near bikes and were apprehended when they tried to take away the vehicles. On their instance, 10 more accused persons, involved in such

kind of activities, were also arrested," said the DCP.

"During interrogation, it was revealed that the high-end motorcycles were being provided to the criminals by the syndicate for entertaining their girlfriends on high rental charges, whereas the low-end bikes were being provided to the snatchers and robbers on commission basis from the proceeds of stolen and snatched articles," said the DCP.

"On further interrogation, it has been revealed that Vikram was the mastermind of whole syndicate. He was involved in 89 cases. The accused also revealed that they used to provide the stolen bikes or scooters to the middlemen who further used to provide the stolen vehicles to snatchers or robbers for facilitating them in the commission of crime on rent or commission basis," said the DCP.

"Sometimes, auto lifters also used to provide the vehicles to the snatchers or robbers directly. It was also revealed that these accused persons used to park the stolen vehicles near parks, nallas or parking places," said the DCP.

"A total of 116 stolen vehicles, including 39 high-end bikes, were recovered from different places, police said, adding that one country-made pistol with live cartridge and three stolen mobile phones were also recovered from their possession.

Delhi EOW arrests woman from Gujarat for duping people

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Economic Offices Wing (EOW) of Delhi Police has arrested a 40-year-old woman from Gujarat for allegedly duping people on the pretext of inducing them to invest in various schemes for high returns.

According to Dr O P Mishra, the Joint Commissioner of Police, EOW, one Parveen Kumar Singh, along with his woman friend, was operating a society called Jai Maa Laxmi Co-operative Thrift and Credit Society Ltd and running a shop Arpit Cloth Store at Mandawali, Fajalpur.

"They induced people of Mandawali area who visited their shop to invest in various schemes, including interest earning scheme, loan scheme, flat booking scheme and lucky draw scheme," said the Joint CP.

"The accused cheated around 200 people of the Mandawali area to the tune of more than Rs two crore on the pretext of investing in different schemes to earn high profit," said the Joint CP. "During probe, it came to notice that neither any society in the name of 'Jai Maa Laxmi Co-operative Thrift and Credit Society' was registered with RBI as NBFC nor any Parveen Kumar Singh and his woman friend registered with RBI," said Joint CP.

"They were not authorised to collect the money from the public in any scheme. The accused were absconding. The woman was traced at Surat, through social media. Thereafter, a police team reached Gujarat on Thursday and apprehended the woman," said the Joint CP.

Senior Citizen's Day, Gandhi Jayanti celebrated

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Police Families Welfare Society (PFWS) on Friday

celebrated Senior Citizen's Day and Gandhi Jayanti at Ahata Kidara Welfare Centre in National Capital.

On the occasion, Skill

Centre VI was inaugurated at the renovated Ahata Kidara Welfare Centre and Pratima Shrivastava, President PFWS was Chief Guest who formal-

ly inaugurated the skill centre. Sapna Kumar, the team leader of Ahata Kidara Welfare Centre extended warm welcome to all the guests followed by a wide range of cultural performances by the residents of Ahata Kidara Police Colony.

A play on senior citizens and musical play on Mahatma Gandhi were the prime attractions of the show. The winners of Summer Camp and Khana Khazana Contest were also fettered with trophies, medals and certificates along with cash prize.

Inner Wheels Club of Mulund Hills, an NGO also donated two wheel chairs and two hearing aid machines to PFWS which were presented by the President PFWS to the beneficiaries of Delhi Police families.



Gurugram gets 1st dedicated cycle track on Gandhi Jayanti

PRAVESH SHARMA ■ GURUGRAM

In an attempt to bring down the pollution levels in an already congested city, the Gurugram Metropolitan Development Authority (GMDA) inaugurated the state's first dedicated color-coded lane for cyclists on Friday on the occasion of Gandhi Jayanti.

The track stretches for 10 kilometers between Huda City Centre and Subhash Chowk.

After the launch of this dedicated cycle lane, the authority is planning to create similar cycling tracks across the city in a phased manner. The development authority has identified multiple routes developing segregated cycle tracks-MG Road Metro station to Civil Hospital, Sheela Mata Mandir to Huda City Centre metro station, Huda City Centre to Pratiksha Hospital, Golf Course Road, Old Delhi Road, Shankar Chowk and Galleria market road.

Besides, for cycle lanes,

GMDA also plans to set up cycle and rickshaw stands at designated places and encourage bike rentals and sharing.

"The inauguration of the State's first dedicated cycle lane should also be considered a breakthrough in solutions for acute traffic congestion in Gurugram. The development of dedicated bicycle lanes is a good move from the local administration for promoting the use of bicycles as an alternative transportation mode," GMDA Chief VS Kundu said, adding that this plan would encourage more motorists to shift to using bicycles to work, the city's chronic traffic woes could be eventually reduced.

Meanwhile, GMDA officials said that the first dedicated cycle lane in the city is only a small step in developing Gurugram as a cycle-friendly city. There are many challenges for the city to become bicycle-friendly.

The estimated cost of the track, which GMDA is building is nearly Rs 2 crore which includes track repairing work,

signboards and others.

"The city administration needs to have a strong commitment to build more dedicated cycle lanes and integrate them with the city transportation network system. These

lanes should be part of the city transportation network system and designed to accommodate the needs of residents' mobility in the city," Kundu said.

However, the city based

cyclists have some different views about the dedicated lanes and said that, "A big challenge for cycle lanes in Gurugram is the lack of law enforcement. The local administration should strictly enforce the ded-

icated cycle lanes for cyclists," said Aman, a cyclist, adding that cycle lanes cannot be used as parking spots and a lane for motorcyclists.

"Without strict law enforcement, the dedicated

cycle lane will not be an effective way to reduce the city's traffic woes and will only be a failed initiative," said Aman.

Despite the challenges for cycle lanes in the city, the inauguration of the Gurugram's

first cycle lane should be seen as a promising way of curbing the acute traffic problems in Gurugram.

"I hope that the inauguration of the city's first cycle lane could be the milestone for the district administration in changing the mindset of how to address the chronic traffic problems in Gurugram. It will reduce the use of cars through encouraging more motorists to shift to cyclists or mass transportation riders," cyclist Sarika Panda, who is also involved with the project, said.

The track would have entry and exit points at regular intervals to allow cyclists to get onto the main road if needed.

"The stretch under consideration has traffic signals on all major intersections. So, crossing the road will not be an issue for the cyclists anymore," she added.

"Covid-19 has changed the view towards travel. Nowadays the people are preferring personal transport these days and what better option than a cycle," said a cyclist.



'Hydropower proliferation imperils biodiversity in HP'



ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

Hydropower proliferation in the name of 'clean energy' has severely impacted existing land-use, disturbed forest biodiversity and fragmented the forest landscape in the remote, ecologically vulnerable Kinnaur Division of Himachal Pradesh in the fragile Western Himalayas.

The findings are part of the study titled 'Mitigation or Myth? Impacts of Hydropower Development and Compensatory Afforestation on forest ecosystems in the high Himalayas'. The study, conducted between 2012 and 2016 and its findings appearing in the latest issue of 'Land Use Policy' journal, also found fault with the related compensatory afforestation plantations.

Environmentalists Manshi Asher and Prakash Bhandari, associated with the Himdhara Environment Research and Action Collective, in their study said that they found that of the



area of 'forest land' diverted to non-forest activities between 1980 and 2014, 90 per cent was transferred for hydroelectric projects (HEP) and transmission lines (TL), leading to change in land-use, fragmentation of forests and loss of biodiversity in the vulnerable Kinnaur region.

"We found that the 'compensatory afforestation', carried out as a 'mitigation' measure for loss of forests and a mandatory condition for forest clearance for forest diversion has not been able to fulfil its stated objective and further, maybe leading to change in composition of forests.

"While plantation work was undertaken only in 12 per cent of the proposed area this has been ridden with issues like abysmally low presence of surviving saplings (upto 10 per cent) interspecies conflict, infringement on local land usage, and vulnerability

to disasters," said the researchers.

The study also critically examines the role of state-led institutions and global green growth policies in driving and legitimizing these developments in the name of 'mitigation', ultimately causing more harm to fragile local ecosystems and communities dependent on these.

Moreover, these plantations may be causing further negative impacts like interspecies conflict and encroachment on local forest access and use, noted the researchers. They have now sought an independent, holistic and multidisciplinary inquiry into the impacts of these interventions and highlight "the need to confront the current notion of 'mitigation', the costs of which are being transferred to vulnerable ecosystems and people dependent on them."

India will have effective Covid-19 vaccine by early '21: AIIMS chief

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

If everything goes as per plan, India might have an effective Covid-19 vaccine by early next year but the initial availability of doses will not be enough for the entire population in the country, All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) Director Dr Randeep Guleria said on Friday.

"It is hard to say when a vaccine will be available in the country and that it depends on a lot of factors - from the ongoing trials to the effectiveness of the vaccine against Covid-19 infections.

"If all things go as planned, the vaccine could be available in the market by early next year," the AIIMS director said even as global experts in a survey conducted by researchers at McGill University in Canada said that an effective vaccine is not likely to be available for the general public by June next year.

Highlighting the next big challenge after the vaccine is ready, Guleria said, "The second challenge after the vaccine is deemed effective is production and distribution on such a large scale."

When asked how the Covid vaccine will be distrib-

uted among Indians considering the shortfall, the AIIMS director said discussions on the matter have already started and indicated that "vaccine prioritisation" model will be followed.

Explaining the model, Guleria said those groups with the highest risks will be prioritised over others.

"There are two groups that will be prioritised. Those who have a higher risk of infection including healthcare workers and other corona warriors. And those who have higher chances of mortality," Guleria said.

"If we prepare a priority list and follow it effectively, then the vaccine distribution can be done equitably."

When asked how doctors will determine the long-term effects of the vaccine, Dr Guleria said that the phase 1, 2 and 3 human trials of the vaccine are being conducted parallelly to "compress" the time need to study it.

In this process, the long-term side effects can also be studied over a comparatively shorter period of time, he said. "And people who receive the vaccine after it is available will also be closely monitored to determine if they are facing any long-term side-effects," he said.

Atal tunnel to boost operational readiness of troops at LAC



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Operational readiness of the troops posted on the tense Line of Actual Control (LAC) in Ladakh will get a major boost with the opening of the all-weather Atal Tunnel near Rohtang pass, Manali on Saturday. Prime Minister Narendra Modi will inaugurate the tunnel which reduces the distance between Manali and Leh by more than 46 km.

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh along with Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Jairam Thakur on Friday inspected all the aspects related to the formal opening of the nine km long tunnel after reaching Manali.

Prior to leaving Manali, the Defence Minister took to social media and said, "Leaving for Manali on a two-day visit to Himachal Pradesh. I shall visit the @DRDO_India's Snow & Avalanche Study establishment, interact with troops and review the preparations at the 'Atal Tunnel, Rohtang' today. PM Shri @narendramodi will inaugurate the 'Atal Tunnel' tomorrow." Rajnath also visited Defence Research and Development Organisations (DRDO) Snow and Avalanche Study establishment during his two-day visit.

Atal Tunnel, constructed by the Border Roads Organisation (BRO), is the

longest highway tunnel in the world (above 10,000 feet). The 9.02 km long tunnel connects Manali to Lahaul-Spiti valley throughout the year. The valley earlier was cut off for about six months every year due to heavy snowfall at the Rohtang pass.

With the opening of the tunnel, the armed forces besides the local population in Lahaul-Spiti and Ladakh will get the much-required essential items throughout the year. Earlier, the army used to start its winter stocking for Ladakh in the four-month window in summers as all the approach passes like Rohtang and Zojila in Kashmir get blocked due to snow from October onwards.

KVIC goes on employment spree in J&K to celebrate 151st Gandhi Jayanti

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC) rolled out multiple employment generation activities in Jammu and Kashmir to celebrate 151st birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi on Friday.

Under Kumhar Sashaktikaran Yojana, KVIC Chairman VK Saxena distributed electric potter wheels to 100 potter families in Baramulla and launched the training of artisans in willow work, a popular local art. He also inaugurated training of artisans in Crewe embroidery and Sozni Embroidery in Ganderbal and Pulwama districts.

The activities are part of the 150 mega events organized by KVIC across the country to celebrate 151st Gandhi Jayanti. These activities are expected to create a livelihood for over 500 people in the State.

The KVIC Chairman instructed the local KVIC officials to initiate the process for setting up two SFURTI clusters in Jammu & Kashmir for the embroidery work and for making paper mache, the peculiar Kashmiri handmade paper product. He lauded the artisans of J&K saying they had the capacity and the talent of producing some very unique products including pottery.

"Gandhi ji had always emphasized on empowering the Kashmiri people through Khadi. Our Prime Minister too has a special place for Kashmir in his heart and KVIC is work-

ing to fulfill this dream of the Prime Minister by creating sustainable employment opportunities in the state. Several art forms of Kashmir like Crewe and Sozni embroidery, Pashmina shawls, paper mache and its pottery are internationally acclaimed. By providing artisans proper training, advanced equipment and marketing platform, these products can definitely make them aatmanirbhar," Saxena said.

In Nagpur, Minister of MSME Shri Nitin Gadkari launched an initiative to associate Divyang people with Aatmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan by distributing mobile Khadi selling units in his Parliamentary Constituency. Gadkari distributed E-rickshaws to 5 divyang people through video-conference. These beneficiaries will be able to sell various Khadi products like Khadi fabric, readymade clothes, food items, food spices and other locally made products in nearby villages. Another 5 mobile Khadi selling units will be distributed in the next few days.

Gadkari lauded the initiative of KVIC saying this would empower the Divyang people by creating sustainable livelihood opportunities. At the same time, he said, this will increase the sale of Khadi and thus prompt higher production by Khadi artisans. He said efforts will be made to distribute at least 500 such mobile selling units to divyang people in every district of India.

NIA books three for undergoing training in Pakistan to carry out terrorist strike in India

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The NIA has filed a chargesheet against three persons who allegedly underwent training in Pakistan to carry out terrorist attacks in India on the instructions of Pakistan-based terror group Lashkar-e-Tayyaba (LeT).

The agency filed the charge-sheet in the Special NIA Court, Jammu, against three accused persons--Muneeb Hameed Bhat, Junaid Ahmad Mattoo and Umer Rashid Wani of Kulgam district of Jammu and Kashmir under Section 120-B (criminal conspiracy) of Ranbir Penal Code and relevant Sections of Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act.

The case relates to subversive activities of terrorist outfit LeT whereby it was motivating youth such as accused Muneeb Hameed Bhat and others to join the Pakistan-based terror outfit and organized their travel to Pakistan for terrorist training on the basis of valid travel documents on the recommendation of separatist leaders, the NIA said in a statement.

Investigation by NIA established that LeT terrorist Junaid Ahmad Mattoo motivated accused Muneeb Hameed Bhat to join LeT and go to Pakistan for terrorist training. Another LeT terrorist Umer Rashid Wani gave him funds to meet the expenses of his Pakistan visit, the agency said.

In July-August 2017,

accused Muneeb Hameed Bhat visited Pakistan on valid travel documents for terrorist training with the assistance of separatist leaders. He was imparted weapons training and also training for using secret social media chat platforms.

After returning from Pakistan, he remained constantly in touch with LeT handlers in Pakistan and active militants of Kulgam area on secret messaging platforms for carrying out subversive and terrorist activities in Kashmir Valley. He was working as a sleeper cell of LeT and further intended to join the militant ranks of the banned terrorist organisation LeT.

Investigation has also established that during the year 2016 to 2018, many Kashmiri youth were sent by separatist leaders to Pakistan on valid travel documents for getting terrorist training with active assistance of the commanders of militant groups. These youth got terrorist training in the terrorist camps of Pakistan for a period ranging from five to 15 days.

After returning, they are initially used as sleeper cells by militant organisations and subsequently recruited for active militancy, it further said.

Accused Junaid Ahmed Mattoo and Umer Rashid Wani were killed in separate encounters in Jammu and Kashmir in 2017 and 2018 respectively. Further investigation in the case is continuing, it added.

CBI files fresh chargesheet against PNB official for conniving with Nirav Modi



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The CBI has filed a fresh charge-sheet against Gokulnath Shetty, the Punjab National Bank Deputy Manager who allegedly helped diamond traders Nirav Modi and Mehul Choksi in the ₹13,000-crore fraud, and his wife for amassing disproportionate assets worth ₹2.63 crore.

The agency has charged Shetty and his wife Asha Latha Shetty, a clerk in Indian Bank, under corruption charges for amassing assets worth over ₹4.28 crore during the check period 2011-17 when the scam was underway at the Brady House branch of PNB in Mumbai where he was posted.

Of the total assets, the CBI alleged they could not provide satisfactory explanation

for assets worth ₹2.63 crore, which were 2.38 times disproportionate to their known sources of income.

As part of the probe, the CBI looked into the relationship between Shetty and Modi-Choksi duo during which it also unearthed the assets amassed by the retired deputy manager and a prime accused in the PNB scam.

The agency had registered a separate FIR in November, 2018 against Shetty and his wife to probe allegations of disproportionate assets.

The CBI probe revealed that against a genuine income of Rs 72.52 lakh during the check period, the Shetty couple had assets in their as well as family members' names primarily in the form of residential flats in Mumbai,

the CBI alleged.

In its charge sheet filed before a Mumbai special court recently, the agency has said that they had purchased a flat worth ₹46.62 lakh in Goregaon and paid advance booking amount for three more flats in various localities of Mumbai and neighbouring areas.

In addition, the agency also detected fixed deposits, bank balance and recurring accounts of over ₹75 lakh.

After computing investments, income and expenditure, the CBI concluded that Shetty and his wife allegedly amassed disproportionate assets worth ₹2.63 crore during the check period.

The CBI has already filed charge sheets against Modi and Choksi in which role of Shetty, presently in judicial custody, was also spelt out.

Farmers to earn four-time more in next 10 yrs due to farm Bills: Min

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Seeking to allay concerns of farmers over a new set of legislations amid continuing protests by Opposition parties, Union Minister of State for Water Resources and Social Justice and Empowerment Ratanlal Kataria has said that there will be a four-fold increase in per capita income in the next 10 years in the country due to these Bills.

Hitting out at Congress and other Opposition parties, he said they are trying to create misunderstandings about the farm bills passed by Parliament. He also attacked Congress for the burning of a tractor by protesters from their youth wing.

Kataria said the UPA government could not do anything about these legislations during its tenure. Now, when the NDA Government has passed these bills for agricultural reforms, they have started opposition, which is completely baseless and meaningless. He accused the Opposition of creating a misunderstanding among people about the minimum support price (MSP) mechanism and the mandi system and categorically said that both will stay.

"As a result of the three bills passed in terms of agrarian reforms and labour reforms, directly and indirectly the current per capita income in the country will increase upto 10,000 USD dollars in the next five years from present per capita income 2500 USD," he added.

Now, free motorised tri-cycle for divyang

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

In good news to persons with disabilities for mobilities, particularly those from the poor strata needing motorised tricycle, the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (DEPWD) under the Union Social Justice and Empowerment Ministry has decided to bear the entire cost of the vehicle.

In other words, the beneficiary does not have to scout for the cost difference of ₹12,000, which is almost one-third of the total cost of motorised tricycle, either from his own resources or from MP/MLA funds. Needing to bear the cost difference used to deprive them of getting the tricycle under the Assistance to Disabled Persons for Purchase/Fitting of Aids & Appliances Scheme (ADIP Scheme) of the Ministry.

However, recently the (DEPWD) submitted before a Parliamentary Panel on Social Justice and Welfare that it



intends to bear the entire cost of the motorised tricycle to be provided under the ADIP scheme.

The Department's decision came following repeated recommendations from the parliamentary panels in the past.

"The Committee notes with satisfaction that the Department has now expressed its intent to comply with the Committee's long pending demand and would consider it during appraisal of

the ADIP Scheme. "The Committee strongly recommends that the issue be presented for approval during the said appraisal and all the procedural prerequisites for revision of cost norms be readied in right earnestness. The Committee desires to be apprised of the progress made in this regard," said the report submitted in the Parliament recently.

A large number of beneficiaries come from poor and deprived sections of the soci-

ety and are not in a position to meet the cost difference. This negates the benefit which is provided by the government in the form of two-third portion of the cost of tricycle, said the panel headed by Lok Sabha MP Rama Devi.

As the next financial year is approaching now, the Committee is optimistic that the Department would sincerely take up this issue and bring it to the desired conclusion to mitigate the plight of PwDs in need of motorized tricycle, said the report.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which India ratified in 2007, talks about the right to personal mobility for persons with disabilities. State parties are supposed to facilitate access to quality mobility aids, devices, assistive technologies and forms of live assistance and intermediaries (like personal assistants, interpreters and service animals), including by making them available at affordable cost, as per the Convention.

Ray of hope for multiple sclerosis patients

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

When the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPWD) Act, 2016 came into enforcement, the persons with multiple sclerosis (MS) were hopeful of leading a dignified and less agonised life, given that disability was brought under its ambit.

However, much to their disappointment, despite four years into the Act came into being, the sector has realised that it does not ensure them disability certificates on ground. There are systemic barriers such as non-availability of neurologists in the assessment panel, making them wait in long lines in the extreme hot or cold weather (making their symptoms worse).

Not ready to give up, the stakeholders in the sector, under NGO Multiple Sclerosis Society of India (MSSI), have now launched a campaign #ReassessMS, seeking re-assessment of the MS guidelines under the RPWD Act to make it more inclusive.

The assessment guidelines currently directly address the



benchmark disability caused by Primary progressive MS.

"However, primary progressive MS is only 15 per cent of worldwide cases of S. As a result the MS persons are finding it difficult to get the certificates. People don't know about MS, they know about cancer and HIV, but not so much about MS", pointed out Renuka Malaker, National Secretary, MSSI.

We don't have data for India and there is also a stigma, especially towards women, she said adding there are many cases

where people get divorced after they are diagnosed.

"MS affects mostly women in the age group of 20-35," she pointed out. The RPWD Act does not take into consideration 'Remitting Relapsing' type of MS which might have invisible disability such as motor and sensory impairment, speech, bladder and bowel dysfunction, fatigue or depression.

The certificate would entitle the PMS to educational scholarship schemes, rebate in income tax, reservation in Government jobs, free travel in

The certificate would entitle the PMS to educational scholarship schemes, rebate in income tax

state buses, loans for setting up businesses and more.

"If a person, who is completely normal, suddenly has severe seizures, numbness, blindness or other neurological issues, the chances of them having MS is really high. It is crucial to take an MRI to find out which part of the brain is affected," said Dr M Netravathi, a senior neurologist from NIMHANS.

Bipasha Gupta, chairperson of MSSI, Delhi said, expanded Disability Status Scale (EDSS) is a method of quantifying disability in MS. "This certificate from a Neuro Doctor should be enough for availing Disability certificate during assessment," she stressed.

Denied entry into Hathras, TMC says it's 'jungle raj'

SUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

The Trinamool Congress on Friday hit out at the Yogi Adityanath Government for perpetrating a "jungle raj" in Uttar Pradesh shortly after its MPs including its leader in Rajya Sabha Derek O'Brien were allegedly heckled near Hathras and stopped by the police administration from entering the village of the Dalit girl who was reportedly gang-raped. The woman succumbed to her injuries a couple of days ago.

Condemning the incident of his party MPs being shoved and heckled near Hathras, TMC general secretary Partho Chatterjee said "what is going on in that State? Are we in India? Are we in a democracy or in a jungle raj where MPs are heckled and pushed around for

just going to inspect the veracity of an incident which is well within their rights as parliamentarians.

"Who gave the police officers the audacity to heckle members of Parliament? The state government, which is busy hushing up the matter after having failed to protect a Dalit girl, is now using brute force against opposition and that too the MPs."

Those who were projecting themselves as champions of "Beti Bachao" (save daughter campaign) were now "trying to intimidate the family members of a victim girl. A jungle raj prevails in Uttar Pradesh. It's a shame," he said adding the TMC would continue its protest against the BJP's anti-people ways.

This, even as television footages showed the four-

member TMC team being shoved around by the police. So much so that O'Brien fell to the ground receiving minor injuries. Subsequently TMC MP Mamata Bala Thakur herself a member of Matua (SC) community exploded saying one of the TMC MPs were inappropriately touched and even lathi-charged.

"We were going to meet the family of the victim by maintaining all the protocols... we were not in a crowd but going individually... in fact the police created all the crowd breaking the protocol... the police were not allowing us. When we insisted, the women police personnel pulled at our blouses and lathi-charged at our MP Pratima Mondal. She fell down. The male police officers touched her. This is shameful," she said

J&K: Jawan laid to rest with full military honours

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

Twenty-two-year-old Rifleman Shubham Sharma, who made the supreme sacrifice in the line of duty in North Kashmir's Nowgam sector on October 1 was cremated with full military honours in his native village of Shakhian Chak in RS Pura area of Jammu on Friday.

There were emotional scenes at the soldier's residence as his body, wrapped in a Tricolour, was brought by Army personnel. Ignoring SOP's announced by the district authorities to contain the spread of Coronavirus, thousands of people converged near his residence in Suchetgarh area to pay their tributes to the son of the soil.

Large number of youngsters, holding tricolour in their hands, escorted his mortal remains chanting patriotic slogans to the cremation ground where people from different walks of life including local politicians, senior army and



police officers paid their glowing tributes. R

In Srinagar, the top brass of the Chinara Corps also paid a befitting tribute to Havildar Kuldeep Singh and Rifleman Shubham Sharma at BB Cantt.

Lt-Gen BS Raju, Chinara Corps Commander and all ranks paid homage to the bravehearts on behalf of the proud nation.

In a brief statement the Indian army said, "Late Havildar Kuldeep Singh and Late Rifleman Shubham Sharma were directing their own retaliatory fire from a forward post on the Line of Control in Kupwara district, in response to an unprovoked Ceasefire Violation by Pakistan.

They both laid down their life in the line of duty as a result

of a direct hit by enemy fire and succumbed to their injuries".

Late Havildar Kuldeep Singh was 37 years old and had joined the Army on 26 Aug 2002. He belonged to Village Raju Dwakhari of Dasua Tehsil, Hoshiarpur District in Punjab and is survived by his wife, Rajwinder Kaur, a son and a daughter.

Gopalakrishnan, former Indian Bank CMD, no more

CHENNAI: M Gopalakrishnan, former chairman and managing director of Indian Bank, passed away on Thursday at Chennai. He was 86 and was ailing for sometime.

Gopalakrishnan shot into fame along with two prominent political leaders in Tamil Nadu who made him issue bank loans worth thousands of crores, most of which ended up as Non Performing Assets. While the political leaders escaped scot free, Gopalakrishnan ended up as the victim and he was convicted in some of the cases to undergo rigorous imprisonments.

He was out on bail on medical grounds. Gopalakrishnan was also the president of Yadava Maha Sabha. Chief Minister Edappadi Palaniswami, deputy chief minister O Panneerselvam and DMK leader M K Stalin condoled his death terming him as the great son of Tamil Nadu. **PNS**

Shun violence and return to mainstream: J&K LG to youths

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ JAMMU

Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha while launching the J&K Government's ambitious 'Back to Village-3 programme from Shirmal, Shopian on Friday urged the misguided youth to shun violence and return to the mainstream.

"The Government is ready to help all with jobs and entrepreneurial opportunities", Sinha added.

Paying glowing tributes to Mahatma Gandhi on the occasion of his 151st birth anniversary, LG Manoj Sinha said the day, also celebrated as the International Day of Non-Violence, is an opportunity for the people of India to reflect upon his commitment to the principle of non-violence.

He said the people of J&K, especially the youth, want to tread the path of

progress & development and the government is committed to making J&K a role model of development and prosperity. 'We will empower youth and strengthen PRI's', Lt Governor maintained.

Speaking on the Back to Village-3 program, the Lt Governor called it a bridge between the public and the administration. Sharing his dream of making villages equally developed as the cities, he said that the government is persistently delivering services and helping them join the mainstream. 'Efforts are being made to make villages Atmanirbhar', he added.

On 'Apple Town' Shopian, the Lt Governor said that officials have been directed to focus on the local apple production and processing with special attention on building storage capacity and other allied activities.

AMU to open on all working days

ALIGARH: The Aligarh Muslim University offices will now open as usual, on all working days from Monday to Saturday, with immediate effect. This decision has been taken after an office order from the Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India and an advisory issued by the Government of Uttar Pradesh, easing out the preventive measures taken earlier to check the spread of COVID-19.

The notice, issued by the Registrar, Mr Abdul Hamid (IPS), urged all the heads of departments and offices to ensure social distancing and wearing of the mask as per various directives of the Government of India. The notice further directed all the bonafide students of the university to continue their studies in an online mode and not to plan to come to AMU hostels till further information to be given on AMU websites.

Inter-Faith Understanding and Dialogue's international conference concludes

ALIGARH: The online international conference on 'The Role of Faith in Facing Crises: What Religion can offer to the Post-Covid World' organised by the Dara Shikoh Centre for Inter-Faith Understanding and Dialogue, Aligarh Muslim University (AMU) was concluded with experts speaking on how faith can provide spiritual support as Covid-19 takes a heavy toll on mental health.

Speaking on the occasion, Dr Zafar Mahmood, President, Zakat Foundation said that the faith leaders have the authority to impact the behaviour and attitudes of billions of people. Their institutions are among the oldest and most long-standing and provide essential services to billions of people around the globe, making them essential partners in normal times as well as in an emergency.

Hathras case: Panchayat of 12 villages claims accused innocent, demands CBI probe, narco test

PRADEEP SAXENA ■ ALIGARH

In the case of the daughter's death, the people of the upper caste are gradually coming forward. On Friday, a panchayat of people from 12 villages held in village Baghna. In this panchayat, people have raised the demand from the side of the accused that the entire case should be investigated by the CBI.

At the same time, the narco test of the people of the accused side and the daughter side should be done, so that the facts can be revealed and the innocents can get justice.

It is important to mention that the activism of political parties has increased with regard to the incident of Hathras. Section 144 has been imposed in Hathras after protests by Rahul and Priyanka Gandhi. A large number of policemen have been deployed on all the routes going to the village of victim and the

village has been converted into a cantonment.

Piyush Mordia, IG, Aligarh Range, says that section 144 has been implemented to maintain law and order in Hathras. The paths leading to the victim's village have been sealed. Police patrolling has been increased in view of the protests.

On the other hand, the incident with the girl has now started to be mobilized. After this, tension has also deepened in the area. Officials are also feeling the smell of tension. This is the reason that a lot of police force has been deployed in the area as a precaution.

Ever since the incident, the other party has declared itself innocent and is also becoming united. This type of fragrance is also seen in the surrounding villages. Tension is increasing in the area. Former BJP MLA Rajvir Singh Pehalwan has alleged that the girl was killed by her brother and mother.

Mahatma Gandhi's visit to AMU during freedom struggle

ALIGARH: Father of Nation Mahatma Gandhi had a close relationship with Aligarh and Aligarh Muslim University. During the freedom movement, he visited Aligarh many times. AMU's Maulana Azad Library has letters and photographs adorning his memories. The AMU Student Union gave him the first-lifetime membership. On Mahatma Gandhi's appeal, students burnt foreign goods and clothes inside the campus.

AMU commemorates Gandhi Jayanti

ALIGARH: Very few people in this world left an ever-lasting impression on fellow beings like Mahatma Gandhi and to pay homage to an apostle of peace and a missionary of non-violence, Aligarh Muslim University (AMU) commemorated the Gandhi Jayanti, the 151st birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi with an online celebration organised by the Maulana Azad (MA) Library.

15,591 test +ve, 424 more die in Maha

RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Having witnessed 1,305 staggering Covid-19-triggered deaths during the past three days, Maharashtra logged 424 more deaths on Friday, while 15,591 more tested positive for Coronavirus in various parts of the state.

After it recorded 430, 481 and 394 deaths respectively on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday respectively, Maharashtra did not see any let up in the continuing trend of substantial deaths on the fourth consecutive day, a day when 424 more people died of Covid-19. In essence, the Coronavirus has claimed a total 1732 lives during the last four days.

With 424 deaths reported on Friday, the Covid-19 toll went up from 37,056 to 37,480. With 15,591 fresh infections, the total number of infected cases jumped from 14,00,922 to 14,16,513.

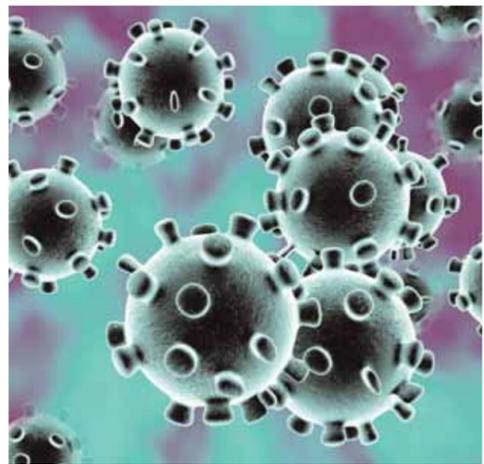
On a day when 13,294

people were discharged from various hospitals in the state, the number of people discharged from various hospitals after full recovery since the second week of March this year went up to 11,17,720.

The recovery rate in the state rose from 78.84 to 78.91 per cent.

Of the 424 deaths reported on Friday, Raigad district topped the list with 90 deaths, followed by 46 deaths in Pune, 42 each in Mumbai and Satara, 29 in Nagpur, 24 in Nashik, 20 each in Solapur and Sangli, 19 in Thane and 10 deaths in Palghar.

In the lower range, there were eight deaths in Osmanabad, 7 each in Kolhapur and Bhandara, 6 in Latur, 5 each in Jalgaon, Aurangabad and Yavatmal, 4 each in Ahmednagar, Sindhudurg, Ratnagiri and Beed, 3 each in Hingoli, Nanded, Wardha and Chandrapur, 2 each in Dhule



and Gondia and one death each in Nandurbar, Parbhani, Akola and Buldhana. In addition, two persons from outside the state died in Maharashtra. With 42 deaths, the Covid-

Meanwhile, the mortality rate in the state stood at 2.65 per cent. The number of "active cases" in the state rose marginally from Thursday's figure of 2,59,006 to 2,60,876.

Pune district, infected cases continued to be the worst-affected city-district in Maharashtra, inched closer to 3 lakh infection mark, as the total number of cases touched a final figure of 2,98,227, while the total number of deaths in Pune increased from 5858 to 5904.

Thane district remained on the third spot -- after Pune and Mumbai -- with 1,90,779 total cases, while the pandemic toll rose from 4919 to 4938. Out of 69,60,203 samples sent to laboratories, 14,16,513 have tested positive (20.35 per cent) for COVID-19 until Friday.

Currently, 21,94,347 people are in home quarantine while 29,051 people are in institutional quarantine.

Two lynched, beheaded, set afire in Assam over black magic allegations

GUWAHATI

Nine people, including three women, were arrested by the Assam police for lynching two persons including a woman on suspicion of "witchcraft", police said on Friday.

Superintendent of Police Debojit Deuri said that two persons, including a woman, were hacked to death, beheaded and set afire by a mob over suspicion of practising witchcraft (black magic) in Central Assam's Karbi Anglong district. "On suspicion of witch-

craft a mob lynched Ramawati Halua, 50 and Bijoy Gour, 45, following the death of a teenage girl in Rohimapur village under Dokmoka police station area earlier this week," the district police chief told the media.

After the death of the teenage girl in Rohimapur, another girl in the same village also accused the duo of performing 'black magic' on her, leading to her falling sick.

According to the police, after the illness of the second girl, the agitated villagers killed the duo and took their bodies

to a nearby hill before beheading the bodies near a burial site and setting them afire.

Police continued their search to nab the remaining accused involved in the murder, which took place on the intervening night of Wednesday and Thursday. The Rohimapur village is dominated by the Adivasi (or tea tribe).

Witchcraft (black magic), an unscientific social belief, claims a dozen lives in Assam's tea belt and tribal areas every year on an average.

1,090 fresh Covid cases take J&K tally past 77K mark

SRINAGAR

Jammu & Kashmir reported 1,090 fresh Covid cases on Friday taking the total tally of the Union Territory past 77,000.

Out of 1,090 new cases on Friday, 603 were reported from Jammu while 487 were reported from Kashmir as the total number of Covid infected patients reached 77,253 in J&K,

a statement issued by Information and Public Relations department said.

Out of these, 59,952 have recovered completely while 1,212 have died including 14 deaths on Friday.

The total number of active cases in J&K are reported to be 16,089 of which 9,153 are from Jammu and 6,936 are from Kashmir.

Andhra CM begins process to distribute 3 lakh acres of land to tribals

Amaravati: Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy initiated the process of distributing land through Recognition of Forest Right (RoFR) to 1.53 lakh tribals from 3 lakh acres of forest land on Friday.

Reddy launched the distribution of documents (pattas) through a video conference on the occasion of Mahatma Gandhi's birth anniversary. Each of the eligible tribals will get ownership of at least two acres of land, which will be distributed through digitized surveys.

The tribals faced during his more than 3,000 km padyatra and promised to help them.

"Tribals kept waiting all these years, fighting for their rights. For the last ten years (2009 to 2019), the previous governments did not take any steps to address their grievances. Today, we fulfilled the promise and made sure that these tribals get their land," said Reddy.

The government will also distribute pattas to DKT lands, other than the forest lands which are also cultivated by them.

As many as 19,919 tribal

families are set to benefit from 31,155 acres of DKT lands.

He said the state government would also provide financial assistance to the tribals to cultivate crops.

Deputy Chief Minister and Tribal Welfare Minister Pamula Pushpa Sreevani said Reddy is giving more land to tribals than what his late father and former Chief Minister Y.S. Rajasekhara Reddy had distributed.

"While YSR (Reddy's father) gave RoFR pattas for 1.30 lakh acres of land to 56,000 tribals in the past, this government, under the leader-

ship of CM Jagan, will distribute pattas for nearly 3 lakh acres to 1.53 lakh beneficiaries," she said.

Likewise, Sreevani said the government has deposited Rs 2,136 crore into the bank accounts of 18.4 lakh tribals under 15 welfare schemes such as rythu bharosa, pension, vahana mitra, amnavodi and vidya deevina in the past one year.

"The government is taking every initiative to improve the living standards of tribals and setting up educational institutions and health facilities for them," she said. **IANS**

Will continue to protest for total school fee waiver, says Gujarat Opp leader

Gandhinagar: Gujarat Leader of Opposition Pares Dhanani who was detained by the Amreli police on Friday for holding a protest demanding total school fee waiver by the government, reiterated his demands and continued his 'dharna' inside the police lock-up.

He said he will continue to protest demanding total fee waiver even if he is hanged for the sake of 1.5 crore students. The Congress has been demanding total school fee waiver in the wake of the Covid outbreak due to which schools were shutdown and education was imparted

through digital mode.

"Why did the Gujarat government announce only a 25 per cent cut in school fee when the Gujarat High Court had left the decision on the government to decide on the school fee issue? When the schools have not been functional, why levy school fees at all? The government is sitting in the lap of private educational institutes and acting on their behalf. The Gujarat government should waive the entire term fee of more than 1.5 crore students of the state and arrange for the salaries of the private school teachers," said Pares Dhanani. **IANS**

Bengal BJP leader tests Covid positive

Kolkata: West Bengal Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader Anupam Hazra tested positive for Covid-19 on Friday, health officials said.

The BJP leader had developed certain symptoms and his samples were tested for coronavirus. He has been admitted to a private hospital here, after the report came positive.

Recently, Hazra was appointed as a national secretary of the party.

A few days ago, he made a controversial statement by saying he would hug Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee if he tests Covid positive. After that the Trinamool Congress had lodged a police complaint against Hazra for maligning the image of a public figure, who is a woman, and for violating the Constitution. **IANS**

Clampdown backfires

By stopping Opp leaders from meeting rape victim's family, the UP Govt looks guilty and has handed them an issue on a platter



The Uttar Pradesh Government believes that Section 144 is the antidote to all ills and has mighty ammunition, howsoever archaic and authoritarian, to silence its critics and shield itself from the consequences of its wrong-doings. And now that it has bungled in its handling of the Hathras gang-rape, where a Dalit girl was brutally violated and killed by upper caste men and her body hastily cremated, it is using a colonial law to silence the massive outcry over it. The law, as originally intended, was meant to stop assemblage of people or deter them from speaking out collectively on any issue that threatened the peace and well-being of society. How can

an unpunished rape not be a threat to our conscience and peace? How can commiserating with the family that wasn't even allowed the dignity to give a decent farewell to their daughter or standing by them amount to social unrest? And how does the burning of "evidence" before sunrise become legal and proper? So by desperately stopping Opposition leaders, activists, mediapersons or genuine sympathisers from entering Hathras, the State Government is being seen as fuelling societal fury than dousing it. When it allows only its own officials and party functionaries to visit the family and talk to them, it makes the family feel more isolated, vulnerable, compromised and be at their mercy even to seek redress. Or coerced into toeing the official line. What Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath doesn't realise is that his rather belated assurance that those "harming women would get such punishment that it will set an example" rings hollow in comparison. Only because it seems like an afterthought to stall the Opposition parties, who have been handed a new cause to fight for. Had his administration been proactive enough, registering FIRs in time, investigating the case, visiting the girl's family and reassuring them instead of intimidating them by shutting out their access to the world, things wouldn't have come to such a pass.

By cracking down on senior Opposition leaders wanting to visit Hathras, who had anyway respected COVID protocols in limiting their numbers, the ruling BJP just proved it is guilty and handed them an issue on a platter. Certainly the dramatic visuals of Congress leader Rahul and Priyanka Gandhi being heckled, the former even physically brought down by restraining policemen, made them look like crusaders for a just cause than politicians in search of news-making fodder. When Trinamool Congress MP Derek O' Brien and his women party colleagues were seen caught in a scuffle, it automatically blighted the UP police even more. The women legislators wondered aloud if they could be accosted and roughed up, what chance did any ordinary rape victim have testifying and seeking justice before the cops? The stiffer the crackdown, the louder will be the dissent as Bhim Army leader Chandra Shekhar Azad asked a pertinent question on whether the police would have dared to subvert the law had the victim been an upper caste woman. Can any restraining order deny the hierarchical politics of caste that is at play here? For the Congress, the Hathras rape has certainly given it the momentary relevance it needs. The Gandhi scions are known to have tactically used optics in building narratives against the establishment, be it during the migrant workers' exodus or Priyanka's sit-ins over the Sonbhadra clashes. But this time, the visuals of them being hectorated and stopped despite choosing to walk and being carried away in a police vehicle have had an intended effect. It made them look hands-on and determined, a strong message for the party rank and file as well as recalibrating seniors that they mean business and can hit the dusty road if need be. Rahul Gandhi's retort to the police that he wasn't violating Section 144 but would go alone walking did get him support from other Opposition parties as well. Certainly, it made the Gandhi scions look more than just seasonal paratroopers. With their outing, they were also able to stall criticism of the party's tepid response to the Babri demolition case ruling absolving all BJP veterans of conspiracy charges. But it was pragmatic, slamming the order and instead asking States to challenge it, knowing full well that Ayodhya had become a national emotion and that the BJP would let out its predictable offensive had the Gandhis objected. The Hathras rape case has given the party an opportunity to make the State's law and order a poll plank, something that Priyanka, as general secretary, has been consistent about. If she can persist in her crusade against excesses on women, what with UP topping the charts in the country in the worst crimes, she may at least carve a dedicated constituency for herself. Also with the Samajwadi Party (SP) and the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) not pressing the issue as stridently as would have been expected — probably because of the BJP pressure of CBI probes against their respective leaders — the Congress is hoping to move into an unclaimed space. On its part, the BJP must stop its whataboutery about Dalit excesses in Congress States and focus on demonstrable proof of Adityanath's pledge to destroy violators. For UP has errands roaming free. Besides the caste-brotherhood bias doesn't hold water within the BJP's own rainbow coalition, Dalit MPs admitting that the incident had damaged the party's image, particularly in view of the Bihar elections and byelections in 56 seats. That the Allahabad High Court has summoned senior Government and police officials to explain their procedural flaws and lapses in Hathras is encouraging. But this isn't about just the police, the entire administration is guilty.

Trump gets it!

The US President and his wife, Melania Trump, have tested positive. Will he now change his views?



Many were incredulous that US President Donald Trump had contracted the Coronavirus when he tweeted that he and First Lady Melania had tested positive for the "Chinese Virus" as Trump refers to the COVID-19 infection. Some predicted that Trump was faking it in order to withdraw from the US Presidential elections on medical grounds. Others thought that he was faking it in order to prove to the public that the infection is mild and that his vigour and vitality are intact, and those panicking about the infection like Dr Anthony Fauci, the Presidential advisor on infectious diseases, are nothing but scare-mongers. Maybe, Trump is just one of those

countless getting infected these days, and most countries, including India have proper protocols in place to manage the illness, which is why fatality rates are dropping significantly. The actions of the US Defence Forces, managed from the Pentagon, however, brought into stark relief these conspiracy theories with the US Air Force putting its airborne command centre EA-6B aircraft into the air. This plane ensures Government continuity in case of a nuclear strike and with the US adopting a bipartisan attitude of belligerence against China, this was also to send a message to any nation opposing it.

Trump will most likely have access to the best healthcare money can buy if he is indeed ill, because no matter what people say about his relationship with the truth, one should assume that people do not lie about their health, or rather falling prey to a pandemic. Also, given that the US makes its national leaders' health a matter of public discussion, it would be almost impossible to fake the illness. This just proves that it remains important for everyone of us to continue to practise safe hygiene practices, meaning wearing masks, continuing social and physical distancing, washing our hands frequently and using sanitisers. While many people are indulging in "revenge travel," now that flights and hotels are up and running, we just cannot afford to be lax. As Deep Kalra, Chief Executive of online travel agency MakeMyTrip, says, many resorts in and around major cities like Delhi, Mumbai and Bengaluru were fully booked for the long weekend we are currently in. Trump is also proof that this disease, like any other airborne infectious disease, makes no distinctions about who to infect. Hope he recovers and revises his controversial views on the pandemic and acknowledges its seriousness.



HIRANMAY KARLEKAR

How many people remembered on September 26 (last Saturday) that it was the 200th birth anniversary of Ishvarchandra Vidyasagar — as the correct English rendering of his name, as spelt in Bengali, would be? One of the greatest Indians ever born, much has been written about his contributions as a scholar, educationist, social reformer and writer. As early as 1841, Sanskrit College — now Sanskrit College and University — in Kolkata (then Calcutta), had conferred upon him the honorific title of *Vidyasagar* (Ocean of Learning) for his vast knowledge of classical Sanskrit texts and philosophy. He wrote two books on Sanskrit Grammar — *Samagra Byakaran Kaumudi* and *Upakramonika* — in Bengali, and translated several books from Sanskrit into Bengali.

Instead of seeking laurels for himself, he dedicated his life to spreading education. In 1864, Calcutta Training School, established by Thakurdas Chakraborty in 1859, came to be known as the Metropolitan Institution, which, in turn, was subsequently recognised by the University of Calcutta (Now Kolkata) as an affiliated college — the first Indian-managed private institution to be given this status. Saradaranjan Ray, a great mathematician whose exploits as a batsman led him to be called "WG Grace of Bengal", was an early principal; Surendranath Banerjee, stalwart national leader and a founder of the Indian National Congress, was a teacher. The institution, which owed its remarkable growth and expansion mainly to the tireless efforts of Isvarchandra, was named Vidyasagar College in 1917.

An educationist described by Rabindranath Tagore as Bengal's first *Shikshaguru* (preceptor of education), Vidyasagar had also opened schools in villages because he believed that sans education the country could neither progress nor become independent. His special emphasis was on children's and women's education. Even now, many children learn the alphabets and the fundamentals of Bengali language from his primer *Bornporichoy* (*Introduction to Letters*) first published in 1855. His *Kathamala* (*Garland of Stories*) is perhaps the best-known collection of folk tales — each with a moral

Two oceans in one

From his struggle for legalising widow remarriage to his emphasis on women's education, Ishvarchandra Vidyasagar laid the foundations of modern India



Ujwal jagate/ Hemadrir hemkanti, amlan kirone." Its rough English translation would be, "You are famous in India as an Ocean of Learning/ That you are an Ocean of Kindness is known/ Only to the poor, friend of the Poor! Shining worldwide/ In the unfading golden light of the golden mountain."

Vidyasagar wrote the first definitive grammar that gave form, structure and a highly Sanskritised but intelligible and fluent mode of expression to the Bengali language. Earlier, the latter was used mainly in Chandidas' songs on the love between Radha and Krishna, Krishnadasa Kaviraja's *Chaitanya Charanamrita*, a hagiography on the life of the medieval saint, Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, versified renditions of the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana* in Bengali by Kashiram Das and Krittibas Ojha respectively, Ramprasad's devotional songs, Bharatchandra's poetry and Ramram Basu's prose.

The groundwork laid by Vidyasagar was built upon by the chaste literary language of Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay, the distinct style evolved by Rabindranath Tagore, the use of colloquial Bengali by Peary Chand Mitra, author of *Alaler Gharer Dulal* (*A Wealthy Family's Pampered Boy*), and the easy prose of Kaliprasanna Singha's *Hutom Pyanchar Naksha* (*Sketch by the Owl*), both, in their own ways satirical depictions of affluent mid-19th century Kolkata, and Upendrakishore Ray's simple language meant for children. The result of the interactive and mutually influencing styles and forms led to the emergence of Bengali as a powerful medium of complex and varied articulation in diverse areas like criticism, analysis and argumentation.

An important result of this was the emergence of the essay both as a literary format and a tool of discourse. Besides Rabindranath Tagore and Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay, its two other important exponents were Akshay Kumar Boral and Ramendra Sundar Tribedi. Vidyasagar's two tracts supporting widow remarriage were outstanding pieces, which were more in the nature of long essays than books. It was not just the essay. The evolved Bengali language made possible the production of path-breaking works in it in social, political, philosophical, theological and cultural domains, which made a significant contribution to the unfolding of the Bengal Renaissance.

Like the European

Renaissance, which stretched from the late 14th to the late 18th century, the Bengal Renaissance, which had unfolded from the first half of the 19th century and waned gradually in the first half of the 20th, was the result of a multiplicity of factors — the coming of British rule; the introduction of Western education through the medium of the English language; the creation of a strong *zamindari* system through the implementation of Permanent Settlement; the rise of a trading class from the ranks of the *banyas* (agents) of the East India Company and its servants, who and others benefited from the expansion of trade and commerce under British rule; and the rise of a growing bureaucracy to cater to the administrative needs of the East India Company's expanding regime.

A critically important factor was the emergence of the *Bhadralok*. In *Elite Conflict in a Plural Society: Twentieth Century Bengal*, JH Broomfield has described the *Bhadralok* as "a socially privileged and consciously superior group, economically dependent on landed rents and professional and clerical employment." He carefully distinguished between the *Bhadralok* and the middle class. According to him, the *Bhadralok* were upper and not middle class, if class was taken as a status group after Talcott Parsons. For the category did not include many middle-class elements in the Marxian sense of the latter being an economic group, while encompassing persons from both higher and lower classes.

As a status group, the *Bhadralok* constituted an elite, which, in turn encompassed several elites comprising landlords, businessmen, government employees as well as professionals like lawyers, doctors, and teachers. They became flag bearers of the Bengal Renaissance through not only their personal achievements but contribution to processes like the spread of education which extended the reach of the Renaissance. Their role in this context was much greater than that of Europe's emerging bourgeoisie in furthering the European Renaissance. The many splendoured achievements of the Bengal Renaissance transformed the province's intellectual life and was instrumental to the advent of modernity in Bengal, and then India. Vidyasagar's strivings in multiple fields were a significant factor in its waxing. He was one of the greatest Indians who ever lived.

(The writer is Consultant Editor, The Pioneer, and an author)

message — for children. Compiled from several English sources, *Bodhoday* (*Dawn of Understanding*) was meant to initiate the readers, particularly boys and girls, into a rational system of knowledge, providing basic ideas about animate and inanimate objects, vegetation, humankind, the senses, shapes and forms of objects, counting numerals, buying and selling, monetary systems and property and labour.

His efforts to promote women's education, manifested among other things in the opening of a number of schools for them, was based on his firm belief that women were equal to men but suffered grave injustices and inequalities. This, he felt, had to be fought. His unflagging struggle for legalising widow remarriage, in support of which he cited Hindu scriptural texts, particularly the *Parasarsanghita* and the *Manusanghita*, led to the passage of the Hindu Widows' Remarriage Act (Act XV) on July 16, 1856. His exertions led to the enactment of the Female Infanticide Prevention Act (Act VIII) on March 18, 1870, and the Age of Consent Act (ACT X) on March 19, 1891. The title of the first of the above two Acts speaks for itself; the second, passed a little more than six months before his death, raised the minimum marriageable age of girls from 10 to 12 years. His

best efforts failed to get an Act enacted for banning hypergamous polygamy, especially of the *Kulin Pratha* or the *Kulin* system. Under it, descendants of the five Brahmin families from Kannauj, brought to Bengal at the time of king Laxman Sen (1178-1206), commanded great value in the marriage market and had numerous wives, some of them mere girls. But the moral stigma the evil acquired, thanks to the campaign led by Vidyasagar, tapered it down to an end.

Vidyasagar was a rational humanist whose cerebral psyche went with limitless compassion and a generosity of spirit that instinctively prompted him to help out the straitened and suffering. This had led him to be called "*Karunasagar*" or "*Dayar Sagar*" (both meaning an Ocean of kindness) — *Karunasagar Vidyasagar* is the title of Indra Mitra's well-researched biography of him — by public acclaim. The cue perhaps came from the famous poem dedicated to him by Michael Madhusudan Dutt whom he had lauded when in severe financial distress.

It would be worthwhile to quote the first four lines of the poem rendered in English alphabet for this column: "*Vidyasagar tumi bikhoyto Bharate/ Karunar shindhu tumi, shei jane mone/ Deen je, deener bondhu!*"

SOUNDBITE

During the Congress Government no law was passed without consultation with farmers or stakeholders, but in this Government laws are passed to help the crony capitalists.



Congress president — Sonia Gandhi

Nawaz Sharif is playing a dangerous game against Pakistan and I am 100 per cent sure that India is supporting him.



Pakistan PM — Imran Khan

I'm in a good place. I feel confident. I guess it's good to have that motivation to get to Vegas now, I guess, or maybe even better. So we'll see.



Golfer — Anirban Lahiri

I will not leave Hathras without meeting the family. They have requested me to stand as their legal counsel but the administration is not allowing me to meet them.



Lawyer — Seema Kushwaha

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Justice denied

Sir — Exonerating all the 32 accused, including LK Advani, earlier indicted by the CBI for conspiracy to demolish the Babri Masjid, the special court has not only disappointed the people who expected justice but has also vetoed the Supreme Court's recognition of the demolition of the mosque as an "egregious violation of the rule of law". This is more so, when the learned judge went to the extent of quoting verbatim the fallacious theory advocated by the BJP, Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) and Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP) combine, that the demolition was a "spontaneous act" and not a pre-planned criminal act to strengthen his decision to acquit all the accused.

While the motive behind the *rath yatra* undertaken by Advani was crystal clear, when every devotee was advised to send a brick each for the new temple to be constructed on the disputed site, the verdict of the special court defies all logic. The Supreme Court should intervene and in the rightful constitutional spirit ensure justice.

Tharcus S Fernando
Chennai

Regressive mindset of upper caste men

The eerie image of the pyre in the far-flung village of Hathras in Uttar Pradesh will be etched in our minds for a long time. The whole incident has highlighted our country's growing insensitivity towards the Dalits and other vulnerable sections of society. The fact that Dalits continue to be humiliated and brutally victimised by the upper caste reflects the deep-rooted casteist mindset of the society.

Dalit women suffer the twin disadvantages of gender and caste biases. And rape is often used as an instrument of caste oppression. Unfortunately, the Uttar Pradesh State administration has deemed it okay to cremate the victim's body in the dead of night without the family's consent. Additionally, the Hathras district magistrate's intimidatory tactics to force the victim's family to change their statement has shown the utter lack of empathy and sensitivity.

The right-wing, Hindutva-oriented Yogi Adityanath Government's acts of commission and omission exemplify its notoriety for mistaking the demonstration



of might before the meek for valour.

All those who believe in equality, freedom and democracy should deplore and condemn the gruesome gang-rape and murder of the Dalit woman. We, as a society, should see to it that such heinous crimes don't recur and further the struggle for "annihilation of caste".

G David Milton
Maruthancode

Safety first

Sir — The Government has announced the opening of cinema halls and multiplexes from October 15. Given the capacity of the halls, maintaining social distancing would be a huge challenge even with 50 per cent seating. Keeping the current situation in mind, since most of the bookings, especially in big cities, are

made online, alternate seats can be left unsold. Strict procedures need to be enforced during the intervals and also ensuring the same while entering or exiting the movie halls. Maintaining the crowd would require some skill from the staff members, who should be properly trained for the present circumstances. The responsibility equally lies on the movie-goers. They should strict-

ly follow COVID protocols, thus ensuring that the process is seamless.

Bal Govind
Noida

Unjustly detained

Sir — Congress leaders Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi Vadra were detained on the highway between Delhi and

Uttar Pradesh as they headed to Hathras to meet the family of the gang-rape victim. Rahul alleged that he was lathi-charged and pushed when he and Priyanka Gandhi started marching after their convoy was stopped by the UP Police. In visuals, too, he was seen resisting policemen who were trying to stop him. He was being pushed around in the chaos due to which he lost his balance and fell on the ground. So, was it wrong for the Opposition to visit the victim's family or was it a sheer display of power by the UP Government? With the nation enraged over the rising gender and caste violence in UP, the State Government is under attack for being negligent to the oppression of Dalits. The ongoing nationwide attack on Opposition leaders, liberal thinkers, activists and student leaders has only proved that the current Government is using State police to further its political agenda and crush dissent. It is time it stops arm-twisting the police to do its dirty work.

Bhagwan Thadani
Mumbai

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

FIRST COLUMN

Don't ignore the plight of *divyangs*

In the Covid era, physical distancing and isolation may be impossible to follow for those who rely on the support of others to eat, dress and bathe



SOUMI ROY CHOWDHURY SANJIB POHIT

Disability is an issue which has been the least researched. According to the *Global Burden of Disease* (GBD) study, disability ranges from five per cent in children, to 15 per cent in people between 15-59 years of age and 46 per cent among those aged 60 years and above. In India, 2.21 per cent of the total population is physically challenged as per the 2011 census. However, it is a matter of great worry that those in the age group of 10-19 years form the major part of the disabled population (17.23 per cent). This implies that India may be losing out on the demographic dividend because *divyang* (physically challenged) children are not found to be at par with their counterparts when it comes to completing primary and secondary education. It is seen that almost a third of the children without primary education suffer from some degree of disability. This has a ripple down effect on their employment opportunities. In fact unemployment rates among the *divyangs* are as high as 80 to 90 per cent in some countries. Not only does this leave a damaging effect on the household, a higher unemployment rate of the *divyang* population increases a country's social expenditure. Moreover, family members may have to cut down their work hours or opt out of the labour market to care for them, further adding to the financial burden.

Amartya Sen argued the economic loss due to disability through two ideas: 'Earning handicap' and 'Conversion handicap.' "To achieve the same level of opulence, a disabled person may find it harder to get a job or to retain it, and may receive lower compensation for work," he says. This is an 'Earning handicap.' "To do the same things as an able-bodied person, a person with physical disability may need more income than the able-bodied person. To move easily or at all, a person who happens to be, say, crippled by an accident or by illness may need assistance, or prosthesis, or both. The 'Conversion handicap' refers to the disadvantage that a disabled person has in converting money into good living," he adds.

To ensure inclusiveness of the *divyang* population such that Universal Health Coverage (UHC) is attained and no one is left behind, the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the World Bank realised the need for health interventions to promote equity. The UN refers to assistive technologies (ATs) as pre-conditions to achieving equal opportunities, enjoying human rights and living with dignity. Without the aid of ATs, employment opportunities for *divyangs* are significantly reduced. Even when employed, labour productivity of *divyangs* is significantly lower than that of others.

So far, the Indian Government does not have a plan on ATs and they are not built-in as basic requirements within the medical system. But time to time, ATs are distributed as part of media programmes of politicians. There is little or no planning on how the beneficiaries would maintain or repair the ATs in case of a problem. To the best of our knowledge, Indian data on ATs, their procurement procedures, and the financial hardship in acquiring and maintaining those are absent. Policymakers need to realise that making universal access to ATs is not a charity but a major need to reduce GDP loss.

We are living in a Covid era and most likely, we have to live with the virus till a vaccine comes into the market. In effect, this implies that one has to continue living with the new norms and maintain social distancing. While the Government's diktat on social distancing applies to all and imposes financial as well as physical costs, it significantly affects *divyangs*. The crucial question is whether they are in a position to follow the "stay safe" manual as advocated repeatedly by the Government? Physical distancing and self-isolation may be impossible to follow for those who rely on the support of others to eat, dress and bathe. The WHO has stated that *divyangs* may be at a greater risk of contracting COVID-19 as frequent washing may not be possible for them due to mobility issues. *Divyangs* who require additional support may find it difficult to practise physical distancing; it is unlikely that *divyangs* with intellectual impairments may cope with self-isolation; people with visual disabilities rely on "touch functions for mobility and work", thereby increasing their risk of infection. Further, most of the information about the new social norm or on social distancing, health information is being distributed through normal media, which may not be accessible to people with hearing/visible impairments.

To take care of the needs of *divyangs*, just like the financial package for migrant workers, the Government should provide financial compensation for families and care-givers who need to be self-isolated and are prone to infection. At present, the Arogya Setu app, the principal front for disseminating information on COVID-19 and coping with the same, does not address the special needs of *divyangs* even after activists flagged it. This goes against the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 where it is mandatory to provide all information in accessible formats to *divyangs*. Till now, the rules do not make any exception for these people. This must be rectified at the earliest.

(Chowdhury is Associate Fellow and Pohit is Professor at NCAER)

POINTCOUNTERPOINT

THE RAINFORESTS OF BRAZIL ARE BEING TORN DOWN. I WOULD SAY STOP TEARING DOWN THE FOREST. AND IF YOU DON'T THEN YOU'RE GONNA HAVE CONSEQUENCES

—FORMER US VICE-PRESIDENT
JOE BIDEN



GREED (FOR AMAZON) BY SOMEONE WHO IS RUNNING FOR THE PRESIDENCY (OF THE US) IS A SIGN OF CONTEMPT FOR COEXISTENCE BETWEEN TWO NATIONS.

—BRAZILIAN PRESIDENT
JAIR BOLSONARO

No thought for small farmers

Marginal farmers are becoming unwitting pawns in the Govt's cost-cutting process as they are staring at the MSP going down on one hand and negotiating with big corporates on the other



KOTA SRIRAJ

The recently-passed three farm laws — the Essential Commodities (Amendment) Act, the Farmer's Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Act and Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement on Price Assurance and Farm Services Act — have catapulted India's agricultural sector into national news. The three Act, which have received both parliamentary and presidential assent, ostensibly seek to change the condition of the beleaguered farmers for the better. However, the Acts have run into rough weather in a short span of time as the farming community does not seem to agree with the Government's views.

However, the fact of the matter is that on paper, they allow the farmers to sell their produce outside the APMCs without paying any necessary taxes to the Government. The Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement on Price Assurance and Farm Services Act on the other hand facilitates contract farming and direct marketing. The Essential Commodities (Amendment) Act deregulates the production, storage, movement and sale of several major food items such as cereals, pulses, edible oils, onion and so on. With major changes pertaining to the way agricultural produce is marketed, sold and stored, the Government maintains that these Acts will improve the conditions of the farmers.

However, the farmer community across India seems to think otherwise and one of the main concerns of the growers is the ambiguity regarding continued protection of the Minimum Support Price (MSP) and Government procurement of the produce. The farmers also want the MSP regime to be extended outside the APMC market so that the MSP is observed as a minimum floor price, whether the farmer chooses to sell to a private buyer or a Government one. Adding to the dissent against the Acts is the tussle between the Centre and States as some non-BJP ruled States have pointed out that agriculture is a State subject and the Centre has no *locus-standi* to take a decision on the same. Amid protests by farmers' organisations across the country, the Governments of Chhattisgarh, Maharashtra and Punjab have said they might not implement the new laws while Kerala and Punjab intend to challenge them in the Supreme Court. In fact, Congress MP from Kerala, Prathapan TN, has already done so.

As the debate rages regarding the Acts and their impact on growers, one cannot help but notice how many other issues plaguing the farmers are being ignored. Marginal farmers with small tracts of land are possibly the worst affected as they neither have the quantum produce nor the financial muscle to bypass low-balled offers on their produce and wait for better quotes. These marginal farmers are not directly benefitted by these Acts as they are not extricated from the vice-like grip of the money lenders. It is these entities who most of the time are the reason why growers end their lives as they are unable to come out of the never-ending debt cycle. The Acts may have all the good intentions of the Government behind them but they may also usher in bigger private players with considerable financial heft into the agricultural produce market dynamics. This may further diminish the say of the marginal farmers whose negotiating powers would get eclipsed by the dealings between big buyers and big producers.

The architects of these farm "reforms" seem to have entirely missed the medium and small farmers and their woes. The National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) statistics show that in 2019 about 10,000 farmers committed suicide due

“ THE THREE FARM ACTS HAVE PUT THE SPOTLIGHT ON THE AGRI-SECTOR WHICH IS BESIEGED BY CHALLENGES FOR FARMERS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR THE ENVIRONMENT. THE ACTS COULD HAVE PROVIDED INNOVATIVE ECOLOGICAL SOLUTIONS FOR THE FARM SECTOR BESIDES SEEKING TO SOLVE SOME OF THE CHRONIC PROBLEMS FACING THE INDIAN GROWERS. SADLY, THIS HAS NOT HAPPENED ”



to agrarian distress. This colossal loss of life is not an issue to gloss over especially when a national policy with lasting impact is being drafted. But that is what has happened.

Instead of strengthening the middle and lower rung farmers with a slew of special measures aimed at stemming the suicide rates and instilling confidence, the Acts actually direct their attention towards making the playing field more suitable for bigger players while marginalising small stakeholders further. How these apparent woes of the small farmers escaped the Government's attention is unclear.

Through these Acts, the Government is not only trying to bring down its financial costs by gradually limiting the MSP but also driving down storage costs at the Food Corporation of India (FCI) warehouses. However, the marginal farmers are becoming unwitting pawns in this cost-cutting process as they are staring at the major possibility of the MSP going down on one hand and negotiating as equals with big corporates on the other hand. More likely than not the small farmers will be dictated terms by the big players on a "take it or leave it basis."

Yet another hurdle facing the farmers is their lack of education and awareness, which stops them from organising themselves into a meaningful forum that can put forward their opinion in one voice. As a result, this hard-working community that forms the spine of India falls prey to dodgy schemes of political parties which aim at leveraging their suffering for personal gain. A more intriguing aspect of this entire episode is the speed with which these Bills went through the draft stage and approval in a remarkably short time, including presidential assent.

The moot question in such a situation is why were the farmers not given time to respond and convey their con-

cerns? Is this the way a Government in a large democracy like ours should take decisions regarding a sector which is the mainstay of our economy? Because about 60 per cent of our population depend directly or indirectly on agriculture and contribute about 16 per cent to the country's Gross Domestic Product. Plus, the farm sector provides raw materials to the major industries and India earns foreign exchange by exporting agricultural products. So, would it not have been prudent to involve all the stakeholders before bringing in these Acts? Only the Government can answer these questions.

The farm reforms were a great opportunity to provide a much-needed balance to the Indian crop calendar besides ensuring protection of the environment. The choice of crops over time in the country has become lopsided in growers' preference for a certain category of crops that are water-intensive. This has not only resulted in unequal prosperity among the farming community but is also contributing to environmental degradation and water shortage.

There is an urgent need to divert the efforts and the precious finances of the farmers towards other non-water intensive crops so that the excess production of rice, sugar and wheat is adequately counterbalanced with non-water intensive crops such as pulses and oilseeds whose reserves are noticeably less.

Too much focus on water-intensive crops such as paddy and wheat over the past decades has resulted in the Indian agricultural system drawing nearly 89 per cent of the ground water. To make matters worse, the provision of incentives from the Government in the form of free electricity has resulted in over-exploitation of ground water and has put the country's future water security in major jeopardy. The subsidised canal water facilities provided by the Government

have added to the problem.

The fact that water-intensive crops such as paddy and wheat consume nearly 10 times the water needed for oilseed and pulse crops and around 500-600 litres of water is required to produce one kilogram of grain has to be taken seriously. This extreme consumption is inadvisable for the environment which is struggling to bridge the gap between demand and supply of precious water resources that are increasingly becoming stressed. In order to diversify crop choice, protect natural resources and ensure environmental resilience, the Government must set up policies that, instead of depending on the prices based on the previous year's production period, are based on the MSP that is backed by enough procurement. This will enable the farmers to take acreage decisions based on the MSP rather than basing their decisions on last year's prices. For this precise reason, the MSP is critical and the fact that it might get impacted due to the farm Acts is an unsettling aspect.

Government policy plays an important role in providing much-needed confidence to farmers, be it in the form of extending stable prices, assured procurement or weeding out bottlenecks pertaining to finances. An efficiently-drafted and implemented policy can also safeguard the environment by rationalising the use of natural resources and curbing their exploitation.

The three farm Acts have put the spotlight on the agri-sector which is besieged by challenges for farmers and implications for the environment. The Acts could have provided innovative ecological solutions for the farm sector besides seeking to solve some of the chronic problems facing the Indian growers. Sadly, this has not happened.

(The writer is an environmental journalist)

Indians keen to embrace green buildings

Around 46 per cent of buyers are willing to pay a premium to lease space in a certified green building as compared to 51 per cent globally



ARCHANA JYOTI

The International Finance Corporation (IFC), a member of the World Bank, in its report released late last year offered a ray of hope amid the threat posed by climate change. It pointed out that by 2030, in emerging markets like India alone, green buildings will offer a \$24.7 trillion investment opportunity, which will spur economic growth and accelerate sustainable development.

The study further said that green buildings can be a strong driver of economic growth, generating upwards of nine million skilled jobs in both the

renewable and construction sectors by 2030. Currently, green buildings account for just eight per cent of the construction and renovation sector, indicating a vast potential for growth.

"The floor area of the buildings that dot our skylines is expected to double by 2060," noted Alzbeta Klein, Director of Climate Business at IFC. "Green construction is one of the largest investment opportunities of the next decade that can spur low-carbon economic growth and create skilled jobs for decades to come."

India is no exception and the IFC estimates a \$1.4 trillion opportunity for the country. A whopping \$1.25 trillion in the residential sector and \$228 billion in the commercial one, given that buildings in the two segments account for 30 per cent of the energy consumption, which is expected to zoom to 48 per cent by 2042. It is estimated that India will have a shortfall of three crore additional housing units by 2022.

Having committed to cut down emissions as envisioned in the Paris

Agreement on climate change, India should have no choice but to promote green buildings. Experts say that the Government's "Housing for All by 2022" scheme, which envisages construction of one crore homes by 2022, can be a game changer. Provided the Government seriously looks into it.

"These homes will be made using conventional building techniques and an energy consumption of 21 million units per year and massive CO2 emission of 17 million tonnes per year will be recorded," says Ajay Jaiswal, Head, Compliance, IIFL Home Finance. "We can change this through green affordable housing. Therefore, it would not be wrong to call green affordable housing the alternative face of India's 'Housing for All by 2022' mission," he adds.

Some State Governments, including West Bengal, Rajasthan, Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand and Maharashtra (Pune) are offering additional Floor Area Ratio (FAR) ranging from five to

15 per cent for the Indian Green Building Council's (IGBC's) silver, gold and platinum-rated projects to boost green housing.

However, this is not enough. While financial and lending institutions in developed nations are giving funds in a big way to developers and buyers in the green sector, India is still at a nascent stage as far as financing green buildings is considered.

"Green real estate has not received the much-needed attention by investors due to several market barriers such as lack of awareness about the green component and limited financial products and instruments," says Shreyans Jain, Consultant, Asian Development Bank.

Sameer Maithal, from Greentech Knowledge Solutions, a clean energy research and advisory firm, concurs, "India has worked a bit in the financial market in the green housing sector. For instance, the State Bank of India (SBI) has signed a pact with the German development bank KfW

while the National Housing Bank (NHB) has one with the Agence Francaise de Development (AFD) under a borrowing programme SUNREF (Sustainable Use of Natural Resources and Energy Finance). But these are just pilot programmes. There are no regular products which are available."

Though the SBI launched its Green Home Loan scheme in 2009, not much progress has been reported as it does not look so lucrative to prospective home buyers. Experts are of the opinion that there is no major change in the features of the existing home loan products except for the five per cent concession in margin, 0.25 per cent cut in interest rate and waiver of the processing fee.

Similarly, the regulator for housing finance companies, the NHB's performance in providing loans to the green housing sector has not been encouraging. So far it has doled out just ₹300 crore out of the total kitty of ₹800 crore in the last three years under the SUNREF to housing companies to spur

energy and environment efficiency in the residential housing sector. "It's a minuscule amount. In reality, the building industry will go green in two ways. Either if policies are strictly implemented or if the end users start demanding them. Here, finance can play a major role. The banks can link the rebate on loan with green certification of the building project," points out Maithal.

Jain says, "Housing loans are already covered under the priority sector lending (PSL) guidelines of the RBI and the possibility of including green mortgage as a sub-category under PSL norms could be explored. To incentivise property buyers, banks could explore linking home loan interest rate to the star rating/certification of the property. The higher the star rating, the lower the interest rate."

Does opting for green housing escalate the budget? Not really. There are numerous studies which point out that as long as the design is appropriate, the additional cost of energy-efficient and environment-friendly build-

ings would not be more than one per cent compared to a traditional building. Therefore, the misconception that green buildings cost more in terms of capital cost should be dispelled, according to experts. Like we have committed finance and targets under International Solar Alliance, there are no serious targets for green buildings. If one goes by the Johnson Controls' survey, India has only four per cent green buildings. However, 38 per cent of buildings in India want to get the green building certification in the future as compared to the global percentage of 44, the survey points out.

Around 46 per cent people in India are willing to pay a premium to lease space in a certified green building as compared to 51 per cent globally. This is a positive outlook and can be taken further with the right policies and push.

(The writer is Special Correspondent with The Pioneer. The article has been published as part of CMS-BEEP Media Fellowship Programme.)

Biden leads Trump by 7 pts in New Hampshire: Poll

PIANS ■ WASHINGTON

A new poll has revealed that Democratic presidential nominee was leading US President Donald Trump in New Hampshire, a swing state where former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton won against the incumbent leader in the 2016 election.

Released on Thursday, the Emerson College poll found that 45 per cent of the state's voters backed the former Vice President, while 45 per cent sided with Trump, The Hill news website reported.

While 1 per cent of the voters were undecided, 2 per cent said they would vote for someone else.

Biden leads among women in New Hampshire with 55 per cent, while Trump garnered 42 per cent of the female votes.

Among the male voters, the two rivals were tied at 49 per cent.

In the poll, the President was ahead of Biden among the age group between 45-64 with 50 per cent.



But among all other age groups, the former Vice President was leading.

Biden also earned the backing among independents at 54 per cent.

According to CBS/YouGov poll released on Sunday, Trump and Biden were also neck-and-neck in the swing states of Georgia and North Carolina.

In Georgia 47 per cent of likely voters support Trump, versus 46 per cent for Biden, while in

North Carolina, 48 per cent of likely voters supported the former Vice President, versus 46 per cent for the President. Meanwhile, an NBC News-Marist poll also released

on Sunday found Biden leading Trump in two other swing states of Wisconsin and Michigan.

Last month, the CBS News Tracker revealed that the states of Florida and Texas remain tight battlegrounds in the November 3 presidential election, reports Politico news.

In the 2016 election, Trump won both the states. No Democratic presidential candidate has won Texas since Jimmy Carter in 1976.

The swing states are Florida, Arizona, Georgia, Iowa, Maine, Michigan, Minnesota, Nevada, New Hampshire, North Carolina, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin.

Trump debate comment pushing Black Americans, others to vote

AP ■ DETROIT

When President Donald Trump refused to outright condemn white nationalists in this week's presidential debate and urged his supporters to monitor polling sites, Portia Roberson was reminded of earlier eras when Black Americans were intimidated at the polls to deter them from voting.

Roberson, a 51-year-old Black woman who lives in Detroit, found the comments chilling — but also felt a renewed resolve to vote.

For many Black Americans and other people of color, Trump's comments in his debate with Democratic challenger Joe Biden were a harsh reminder that the nation has yet to fully grapple with systemic racism laid bare this year by protests against police

killings of Black people, the coronavirus pandemic, and the resulting economic fallout. But they were also a call to action.

"I hope that we take some of that frustration, anger and sadness that we've all been feeling for the better part of 2020, and use it to motivate ourselves to go to the polls and make sure we vote and vote for candidates who really reflect what Black folks need in this country," said Roberson, CEO of the Detroit nonprofit Focus: Hope.

Trump tried to walk back his debate comments on Wednesday, but the moment when he told one far-right group to "stand back and stand by" had already been cemented in the minds of many Americans, experts and activists say. A day after the debate, the president said he didn't know the group but

that it should "let law enforcement do their work." During the debate, he also urged his "supporters to go into the polls and watch very carefully because that's what has to happen." Eric Sheffield, a Black real estate developer in Atlanta whose parents hail from the Deep South, said Trump's comments reminded him of the Jim Crow era.

"I hear the ghost of voter suppressionists' past," said Sheffield, 52. "It's the same soup. It's just warmed over now." It's not just Black Americans who took notice — and umbrage — at the president's debate comments. Similar concerns are also reverberating among Americans from other backgrounds, said Anna Mach, a biracial Filipino American woman who is a master's student at the University

US judge blocks Trump's H-1B visa ban

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

A federal judge has blocked the enforcement of the H-1B visa ban issued by President Donald Trump in June this year, saying the president exceeded his constitutional authority.

The order was issued on Thursday by District Judge Jeffrey White of Northern District of California.

The lawsuit against the Department of Commerce and Department of Homeland Security was filed by companies represented by National Association of Manufacturers, US Chamber of Commerce, National Retail Federation and TechNet.

The ruling places an immediate hold on a series of visa restrictions that prevent manufacturers from filling crucial, hard-to-fill jobs to support economic recovery, growth and innovation when most needed, the National Association of Manufacturers said.

In June, Trump had issued an executive order that had put

temporary bar on issuing of new H-1B and other foreign visas including H-2B, J and L visas, till the end of the year.

The president had argued that the United States needs to save and protect jobs for its domestic work force at a time when millions of them lost their jobs due to coronavirus pandemic.

A number of IT companies and other US firms, and those representing them had voiced their opposition to the temporary ban.

Manufacturers went to court to challenge the administration's ban on certain visas because the restrictions both undermined the industry at a critical time and conflicted with the law, said NAM senior vice president and general counsel Linda Kelly. "We are competing with the rest of the world to find and develop top talent to support innovation in our industry. Today's decision is a temporary win for manufacturers committed to building that innovation in the United States," he said.

Burj Khalifa to display Mahatma Gandhi's images: Report

pti n Dubai

UAE's iconic skyscraper Burj Khalifa would display the images of Mahatma Gandhi as a tribute to the great Indian peace icon on his 151st birth anniversary, a media report said on Friday.

The images of Gandhi would be displayed on Burj Khalifa with his relevant messages around 8.15 pm on Friday, the Gulf News reported, citing a tweet from the Indian Consulate in Dubai.

Gandhi Jayanti on October 2 is also marked as the International Day of Non-Violence on account of the non-violent strategy adopted by Gandhi to help India secure independence from the British colonial rule in 1947.

"The special Gandhi show on Burj Khalifa will be live-



streamed on social media pages of the consulate. We are thankful to Emaar for their support," the report quoted an official of the Indian Consulate saying the paper earlier this week.

The consulate officials are also holding a cleanliness drive in the premises of the mission. With the support from the Indian community, 151 trees will be planted on different sites

151ST BIRTH ANNIVERSARY

to mark the occasion, the report said.

The annual debate for students, held under the patronage of the mission at GEMS Our Own Indian School, will be organised online due to COVID-19. Essay writing and drawing competitions are also being organised for students. On the 149th birthday of Gandhi in 2018, a special LED show on Burj Khalifa marked the commencement of the two-year line up of programmes of 150 years of Gandhian ideologies in the UAE. The special LED show was jointly organised by the Indian Embassy, Abu Dhabi, Indian Consulate in Dubai and Emaar Properties. Images of Gandhi and the Indian flag were beamed on the world's largest LED-illuminated facade once again on the same day in 2019.

UK, EU leaders to discuss Brexit, free trade talks

Little progress has been made on such a deal since the U.K. Left the bloc at the end of Jan

AP ■ LONDON

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen on Saturday will "take stock" of negotiations on a post-Brexit free trade deal and to "discuss next steps," officials said.

The announcement by both sides came as they were winding up another weeklong session of detailed negotiations on a rudimentary free trade agreement that should come in force once a Brexit transition period ends Dec.

31. Little progress has been made on such a deal since the U.K. Left the bloc at the end of January.

Both sides have acknowledged that time is running out if they are to achieve an agreement before the current Brexit transition period comes to an end at the end of the year.

Johnson has said he is prepared to walk away from the negotiations if there is no agreement by the time of the next EU summit on Oct. 15. The EU sees a deadline at the end of the month, allowing for two months to get any deal through legislative approval.

Complicating the trade talks further are Britain's plans to breach an international agreement it signed with the EU to regulate trade on the island of Ireland, where both sides have their only land border separating the U.K.'s



Northern Ireland from EU member Ireland.



"We hope that we can move swiftly now to reach the kind of sensible trading that we would like to see," Jenrick said.

U.K. Communities Secretary Robert Jenrick said there were still some "very significant issues" which needed to be resolved if they were to get an agreement.

"There isn't very much time now so we are urging the EU to show flexibility and pragmatism in these final stages of the talks," he told the BBC.

"Of course, as we have always said, that if that isn't possible then we are perfectly content to see the transition period end and us to continue to trade on the same sort of arrangements" as many other nations that trade on rules set out by the World Trade Organization.

Pompeo: I have tested negative for coronavirus

AP ■ WASHINGTON

US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo says he and his wife have tested negative for the coronavirus after they were examined on their airplane 20 minutes prior to landing in Dubrovnik, Croatia, on Friday.

He said it was the fourth time in two weeks he has been tested.

President Donald Trump announced on Twitter early Friday that he and first lady Melania Trump had tested positive for the coronavirus.

Pompeo says the last time he was with Trump was on September 15, at the White House, for the signing of normalization agreements among



Israel, the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain.

The top US diplomat says he is reconsidering upcoming travel to Florida on Saturday and Asia starting Sunday as a precaution. He says, "We are praying for the president and the First Lady and we hope they have a speedy recovery."

Kim Jong-un inspects flood recovery efforts with sister

PIANS ■ SEOUL

North Korean leader Kim Jong-un inspected flood recovery efforts at a border village along with his sister, Kim Yo-jong, in her first public appearance after two months, state-media reported on Friday.

According to the report in Pyongyang's state-run Korean Central News Agency (KCNA), Kim Jong-un inspected the reconstruction site in Kimhwa county, where he was briefed about damage to dwellings, farms, transportation, the power grid and telecommunications.

"Hearing the report that about 88 per cent of the total construction project has now been done for nearly 1,000 families, he said with great satisfaction that the People's Army

There he was briefed about damage to dwellings, farms, transportation, the power grid and telecommunications

is making world-startling achievements under the energetic leadership and meticulous guidance of our Party," Yonhap News Agency quoted the KCNA report as saying.

The leader stressed that "this year has been the one of unprecedented hardships but it will be a year of great victory with particularly great worth of struggle", the report further said. Without providing a date of their visit, the North's official newspaper Rodong Sinmun published a photo of the leader and his sister, dressed in a beige trench coat.

India donates 41 ambulances, 6 school buses to Nepal on Gandhi Jayanti

PTI ■ KATHMANDU

India on Friday donated 41 ambulances and 6 school buses to several organisations working in the fields of health and education in Nepal on the occasion of 151st birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi.

Gandhi was born on this day in 1869 at Porbandar in Gujarat. The vehicles were provided to organisations working across 30 districts of Nepal, according to a statement issued by the India embassy in Kathmandu. India has gifted nearly 823 ambulances since 1994, including those given on Gandhi Jayanti. However, this is the first time the embassy has gifted three different categories of ambulances —

Advanced Life Support category, Basic Life Support and Common Life Support ambulances. All three categories are built as per the guidelines of Government of Nepal, the statement said.

The Advanced Life Support category ambulances include equipment such as travelling ventilator, ECG, wheelchair and 4G mobile device among others. The Common Life Support ambulances are 4 wheel drive vehicles and best suited for hilly and mountainous terrains. India donated 36 vehicles, including 30 ambulances, to various hospitals and charitable organisations of Nepal on the occasion of its 71st Republic Day on January 26 this year.

Walmart to sell UK unit Asda in \$8.8 billion deal

AP ■ LONDON

Retail giant Walmart has agreed to sell its British chain of supermarkets, Asda, to the investors behind an international group of gas stations and food shops in a deal that values the company at 6.8 billion pounds (USD 8.8 billion).

Brothers Mohsin and Zuber Issa, along with investors TDR Capital will acquire a majority of Asda, while Walmart will retain a minority stake and a seat of the board, the parties said in a joint statement issued Friday. Details of the deal weren't released.

The agreement comes more than a year after regulators rejected U.K. Supermarket

chain Sainsbury's bid to acquire Asda amid concerns the merged company would have too big a share of the country's market. Asda has seen its fortunes improve during the pandemic, with shoppers stocking up on extra groceries.

The new owners pledged that Asda would remain based in the English city of Leeds, and committed to keeping prices low amid tough economic conditions and potential new tariffs on EU-imported foods following Brexit.

The Issa Brothers are the founders of Euro Garages, which has more than 6,000 gas stations and convenience stores in Europe, North America and Australia.

Doha talks need patience, not mediators: Taliban

PIANS ■ KABUL

The Taliban has said that it does not feel the need for a mediator for the Afghan peace negotiations, adding that resolving a 40-year conflict requires patience instead, the media reported.

The statement on Thursday by Taliban spokesman Mohammad Naem came as US Special Representative for Afghanistan Reconciliation Zalmay Khalilzad arrived in Doha, where the talks are taking place, to "meet with partners on Afghan-owned, Afghan-led peace negotiations", TOLO News reported.

In a statement, Naem said that the Afghan conflict requires important, ongoing discussions, and stated that both sides of the negotiations should demonstrate patience for a positive outcome.

"If we hurry and expect to

resolve all the issues in 20 days or a month, I think this will not bring us to our objectives.

"We will not allow anyone to interfere in our internal affairs," the spokesman added.

Contact groups comprising Taliban and Afghan government delegates have failed to fully agree on the procedural rules. This delay has prolonged the time before an official face-to-face talk between both negotiation teams is possible.

Meanwhile, Khalilzad's trip to Doha has also sparked mixed reactions in Kabul, said the TOLO News report.

"I see this stalemate as a bit artificial because we release a controversy over the release of prisoners, but it was resolved on the 11th of September, now I think the solution to this issue has been scheduled for a certain date," said Abdul Karim Khurram, former chief of staff to former President Hamid

Karzai.

"This indicates that we, the people of Afghanistan, can't reach an agreement without foreign pressure," said Mohammad Alam Ezedyar, the first deputy of the Meshrano Jirga (Senate).

But critics have suggested that a mediator might be needed in the negotiations, as the contact groups of both sides of the Afghan peace talks have discussed the rules many times over the last 20 days but have not reached an agreement.

The procedural rules of the negotiations have over 20 articles. The two sides have agreed on 18 of them.

According to negotiators from both sides, two articles are still disputed: the foundational religious jurisprudence for the talks, and the recognition of February's US-Taliban deal as the overarching authority to which these Afghan peace negotiations are subject.

Turkey: UN registers maritime deal reached with Tripoli

AP ■ ANKARA

The United Nations has registered a maritime delimitation deal reached between Turkey and Libya's U.N.-backed government, the Turkish Defense Ministry announced Friday.

Last year, Turkey and the Government of National Accord, or GNA, which is based in Tripoli, reached a memorandum of understanding demarcating their maritime boundaries. The agreement, which would allow them to lay claim to large areas of the Mediterranean Sea and potential energy deposits, was denounced by Greece, Cyprus and other nations.

"The U.N. has registered the maritime jurisdiction deal as agreed between Turkey and Libya," the ministry announced

on its Twitter account.

"Our deep ties with Libya based on over 500 years of history will continue to strengthen." Greece and Cyprus have protested the deal, which added tension to an ongoing dispute over oil-and-gas drilling rights in the eastern Mediterranean.

Turkey and the GNA also signed a security and military cooperation agreement last year. Turkey earlier this year sent troops, Syrian mercenaries and other military support that helped the GNA repel an assault by the rival, eastern-based Libyan National Army and shifted the tide of the conflict.

"We will continue to provide training and advisory services to the U.N.-recognized, legitimate government of Libya," the ministry said.

Australia opens 'travel zone' to New Zealanders

PIANS ■ CANBERRA

New Zealanders will be allowed to enter Australia in the first opening of international borders by the two countries since travel restrictions were imposed due to the Covid-19 pandemic, Deputy Prime Minister Michael McCormack announced here on Friday.

"The establishment of a travel zone between Australia and New Zealand has been finalised," the BBC reported citing the Australian Deputy Prime Minister as saying to the media. "This is the first stage in what we hope to see as a trans-Tasman bubble between the two countries, stopping not just at that state and that territory," he added. According to the Deputy Prime Minister, at first travel will be limited to New

No seven day mandatory quarantine in Nepal for tourists

Kathmandu: In a bid to revive the hard-hit tourism industry, Nepal on Friday announced that foreign tourists having Covid-19 negative report will not be required to quarantine themselves for seven days from October 17. The move came after mounting pressure from travel and tourism entrepreneurs to open up the country's tourism sector for international visitors, as the industry is passing through a difficult time due to months-long lockdown. Earlier, a seven-day hotel quarantine was mandatory for all the tourists coming to the country. Foreign trekkers and mountaineers wishing to visit Nepal from October 17 may walk free without staying in quarantine if they produce a Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) negative report, said an official at the Department of Tourism, Ministry of Tourism and Civil Aviation.

'Successful bidders can't withdraw offer'

New Delhi: The NCLAT has said once a resolution plan for a debt-ridden company is approved by the lenders, then the successful bidder cannot be permitted to withdraw its offer.

A three-member NCLAT bench said the sanctity of resolution process has to be maintained and such withdrawal by a successful bidder "frustrate" the entire exercise of Corporate Insolvency Resolution Process (CIRP).

Moreover, there is also no express provision in the Insolvency & Bankruptcy Code to allow any successful resolution applicant to "stage a U-turn", it added.

"We are of the considered opinion that the sanctity of resolution process has to be maintained and the resolution applicant whose resolution plan has been approved by Committee of Creditors cannot be permitted to withdraw its Resolution Plan," said the bench headed by Acting Chairman Justice B L Bhat.

The appellate tribunal further said even under the Insolvency & Bankruptcy

Code, there is no express provision for allowing any successful resolution applicant to "stage a U-turn" and withdraw its bids, after being selected by the CoC.

"Provision for submission of a Performance Bank Guarantee by a resolution applicant while submitting its resolution plan, as required under the amended provisions of IBBI (Insolvency Resolution Process of Corporate Persons) Regulations, 2016 is a step in this direction but may not be deterrent enough to prevent a Successful Resolution Applicant from taking a U-turn," the National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT) said.

The NCLAT's observation came in the judgement, in which it dismissed a plea filed by a Delhi-based firm Kundan Care Products that has emerged as a successful bidder for Astonfield Solar (Gujarat) Pvt Ltd.

Kundan Care Products contended that on account of delay in conclusion of CIRP, its offer has been rendered com-

mercially unviable and the appellant could not be prevented from withdrawing the same.

It had approached the Delhi bench of the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT), which had on July 3, 2020, declined to pass any order on the ground that it would not be appropriate for it to deal with an issue which is already sub-judice before the Supreme Court.

After this, the firm moved the NCLAT.

It argued that IBC does not contain any provisions to compel specific performance of a Resolution Plan by an unwilling Resolution Applicant and a plea for withdrawal of a plan will have to be accepted if the plan is found to be unviable, unfit for implementation or is either lacking provisions for its successful implementation or is based on incorrect assumptions.

The Committee of Creditors (CoC) had submitted that IBC does not prescribe any provision for withdrawal of a resolution plan and the NCLT

is not bestowed with any power to allow withdrawal of the resolution plan.

It further submitted that once a resolution plan has been approved, it becomes a binding contract between the parties and the successful resolution applicant, and cannot be permitted to withdraw the same that will have the effect of sending the Corporate Debtor into liquidation.

Consenting to it, the NCLAT said earlier in a similar matter of Educomp Solutions, it has already held that once a resolution applicant has accepted the conditions of resolution plan, it was not open to it to make a U-turn and wriggle out of the liabilities imposed upon it under the Resolution Plan approved by the Committee of Creditors.

"We find no merit in this Appeal. The Appellant has failed to demonstrate that the impugned order suffers from any legal infirmity. The Appeal being devoid of merit is dismissed," the NCLAT ruled.

PTI

India's forex reserves decline by over \$3 billion

Mumbai: India's foreign exchange reserves plunged by \$3.017 billion during the week ended September 25.

According to the Reserve Bank of India's weekly statistical supplement, the reserves decreased to \$542.021 billion from \$545.038 billion reported for the week ended September 18. India's forex reserves comprise of foreign currency assets (FCAs), gold reserves, special drawing rights (SDRs), and the country's reserve position with the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

On a weekly basis, FCAs, the largest component of the forex reserves, edged lower by \$1.523 billion to \$499.941 billion. Similarly, the value of the country's gold reserves decreased. It declined by \$1.441 billion to \$35.999 billion.

Besides, the SDR value was down by \$10 million to \$1.472 billion. Additionally, the country's reserve position with the IMF declined by \$43 million to \$4.608 billion.

IANS

FY21 Central tax devolution to States expected to fall by over 36%: ICRA

New Delhi: Ratings agency ICRA has estimated that central tax devolution (CTD) to the states will be 36.2 per cent lower than the budgeted amount in the FY21 Union Budget.

Accordingly, the CTD is expected to be around Rs 5,00,500 crore (Rs 5,005 billion) in FY2021 compared to the budgeted Rs 7,84,200 crore (Rs 7,842 billion). "If the state governments exhaust a large portion of their permitted borrowing for FY2021 within 9M FY2021, the anticipated YoY decline in CTD in Q4 FY2021 could lead to fiscal and liquidity stress for the states in that quarter," ICRA said in a report.

At present, open market borrowings or state development loans (SDLs) are the chief source of funding the fiscal deficit of the Indian state governments. "The gross SDL issuance expanded by a substantial 56.8 per cent to Rs 3,536 billion in H1 FY2021

from Rs 2,254 billion in H1 FY2020," the report said.

"ICRA estimates that Rs 511 billion of SDLs were redeemed in H1 FY2021, lower than the estimated redemption of Rs 674 billion in H1 FY2020. Accordingly, the net SDL issuance rose by an even higher 91.4 per cent in H1 FY2021 to Rs 3,025 billion from Rs 1,580 billion in H1 FY2020."

Resultantly, high market borrowings by the state governments in H1 FY2021 reflect the expected wide gap between their revenue receipts and expenditure led by the adverse impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the fiscal health of the state governments, the report said.

Additionally, the indicative calendar of market borrowings for Q3 FY2021 released by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) pegs the market borrowing of 26 state governments and two Union Territories (UTs) at Rs 2,022 billion, 24.9 per cent higher than the total SDL

issuance of Rs 1,619 billion in Q3 FY2020.

"The step up in the volume of borrowing indicated for Q3 FY2021 is surprisingly muted, relative to Rs 1,673 billion in Q1 FY2021 and Rs 1,863 billion in Q2 FY2021," the report said.

"In our view, the actual borrowings in Q3 FY2021 could appreciably overshoot the indicative amount, especially given the absence of participation indicated for West Bengal (WB) in Q3 FY2021."

Furthermore, it said that based on estimate for full year SDL issuance for FY2021 and the borrowing concluded in H1 FY2021, "we project the gross SDL issuance in H2 FY2021 at Rs 6,797 billion, if the borrowing related to GST compensation would be through SDLs."

"This is sharply higher than the planned issuance of Rs 4,340 billion of dated securities indicated by the GoI in its borrowing calendar for H2 FY2021," the report said.

IANS

India's September merchandise exports rise over 5% YoY

New Delhi: India's merchandise exports in September rose by 5.27 per cent on a year-on-year basis, official data showed on Friday. The country shipped out merchandise worth \$27.40 billion from \$26.02 billion exported during the like period of the previous year.

According to the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, the top five commodities that showed positive growth during September 2020 vis-a-vis September 2019 were other cereals, iron ore, rice, oilmeal and carpets.

On Thursday, Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal, in a tweet, said: "Make in India, Make for the World: Indian merchandise exports grow 5.27 per cent in Sep 20 as compared to last year. Another indicator of the rapid recovery of Indian economy as it sur-

passes pre-COVID levels across parameters."

In terms of sequential movement, India's merchandise exports in August stood at \$22.70 billion from \$25.99 billion exported during the like period of the previous year.

However, exports during April-September 2020-21 were \$125.06 billion, exhibiting a negative growth of 21.43 per cent over the same period last year. Similarly, India's imports declined, falling 19.60 per cent to \$37.69 billion in September from \$37.69 billion reported for the corresponding month of 2019.

"Merchandise imports during April-September 2020-21 were \$148.69 billion, as compared to \$248.08 billion during the same period last year, exhibiting a negative growth of 40.06 per cent," the ministry said in a statement.

IANS

Goa airport eyes touching 80 pc capacity by Dec-end

Panaji: Goa airport expects to touch 75-80 per cent of its flight handling capacity by December-end from the current figure of around 35 per cent, a senior official said.

Airport Director Gagan Malik told PTI that it is absolutely safe to fly now with all the precautions at the aerodrome and during the flight in place.

Right from airport entry till the boarding gate, the entire area is sanitised, he said.

Even the baggage of the passengers is sanitised, he added.

Malik said before the COVID-19 outbreak, Goa airport was handling 85-90 departures a day.

In the current scenario, it is handling around 21 flights and the figure will increase in the days to come, he added.

Malik said that since Goa is open for the tourism sector, passenger growth has been consistent, especially during the weekends.

He said the airport would be touching 50 per cent capacity by the end of October.

There are certain metro airports which have restricted their slots due to which there are connectivity issues, he said.

Once the metro airports open up, then by December-end the Goa aerodrome will touch 75-80 per cent of its capacity, he emphasised.

He further said that while international arrivals are yet to resume, various chartered flight operators have booked 351 slots at Goa airport till March 2021. Majority of them are from Russia, followed by the UK, he said.

PTI

Fin Min allows additional ₹7,376 cr borrowing by UP, AP

New Delhi: The Centre on Friday permitted Uttar Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh to go for an additional borrowing of Rs 7,376 crore, to meet their expenditure requirements amid falling revenues due to the COVID-19 crisis.

"The Ministry of Finance has granted additional borrowing permission to two more states, Uttar Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh, for successfully undertaking reforms in the public distribution system (PDS) and ease of doing business," an official statement said.

This will make an additional amount of Rs 7,376 crore available to these states, it added.

Uttar Pradesh has become sixth state to complete the reform process in PDS to implement the One Nation-One Ration Card system.

This has made the state eligible to raise an amount of Rs 4,851 crore through open mar-

Uttar Pradesh has become sixth state to complete the reform process in PDS to implement the One Nation-One Ration Card system

ket borrowings (OMBs).

Andhra Pradesh has become the first state in the country to successfully undertake ease of doing business reforms and has thus become eligible to raise an additional amount of Rs 2,525 crore through open market borrowings.

Earlier, Andhra Pradesh had also completed PDS reforms to enable the One Nation-One Ration Card system.

Last week, five states - Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Goa, Karnataka and Tripura - received the finance ministry's

nod for additional Rs 9,913 crore borrowing, after meeting the reform condition of the implementation of One Nation-One Ration Card system.

In view of the COVID-19 pandemic, the central government in May 2020 allowed an additional borrowing limit of up to 2 per cent of gross state domestic product (GSDP) to the states for the year 2020-21. This made an amount up to Rs 4,27,302 crore available to the states.

One per cent of this is subject to the implementation of four specific state-level reforms, where weightage of each reform is 0.25 per cent of GSDP. These reforms include implementation of the One Nation-One Ration Card system, ease of doing business reform, urban local body or utility reforms, and power sector reforms.

PTI

Trade unions call for nationwide strike on Nov 26 against Government policies

New Delhi: Trade unions on Friday gave a call for a nationwide strike on November 26 to protest against the government policies.

The decision to go on strike was taken during an online or virtual National Convention of Workers on October 2, 2020, as per a declaration adopted by ten central Unions and their associates.

"The Convention calls upon all the working people, whether unionised or not, affiliated or independent, whether from organised sector or unorganised sector, to intensify the united struggle against the

anti-people, anti-worker, anti-farmer and anti-national policies of the government and make the call for a countrywide general strike on 26th November 2020 a total success," it said.

The National Convention Of Workers organised online jointly by the Central Trade Unions and independent Federations/Associations for the first time amid the pandemic.

While all indicators pointed to economy drastically slowing down due to lack of demand, the government continued to steer its policies in the name of "ease of doing busi-

ness", aggravating widespread impoverishment and deepening the crisis further, the unions alleged.

The convention called upon the working class to organise joint state/ district/ industry/sectoral level conventions, physically wherever possible, online otherwise, before the end of October 2020; to conduct an extensive campaign on the adverse impact of the labour codes on the workers down to the grassroots level up to mid-November and for the one-day countrywide general strike on November 26, 2020.

PTI

Housing supply down nearly 60 pc in Jan-Sep across top 7 cities: Report

New Delhi: New supply of residential properties fell nearly 60 per cent in January-September this year as low demand due to COVID-19 forced developers to go slow on launching new projects, according to property consultant Anarock.

Fresh housing supply in January-September 2020 across seven major cities declined to 75,150 units from 1,84,700 units in the same period previous year. This is in line with sales that plunged 57 per cent to 87,460 units, the data showed.

As per the Anarock data, new supply of homes in the national capital region (Delhi-NCR) dipped to 13,010 units in January-September 2020 from 27,390 units in the year-ago period.

In Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR), where the spread of the coronavirus disease was high, new supply plunged to 18,380 units from 63,930 units.

Bengaluru saw a decline in fresh supply to 15,020 units from 29,440 units, and Pune witnessed supply going down to 12,720 units from 36,540

units. New supply of residential properties in Hyderabad fell to 8,290 units from 11,050 units. In Chennai, it decreased to 5,240 units from 9,580 units.

In Kolkata, the fresh supply went down to 2,490 units in January-September period of this calendar year from 6,770 units in the corresponding period previous year.

Anarock said that most of the launches of new housing projects after April have been done on virtual platforms due to the pandemic.

PTI

Intl crude prices decline further on Trump's corona report

New Delhi: International crude oil prices continued to decline on Friday due to persistent global economic uncertainties, going down further after the announcement that US President Donald Trump had tested coronavirus positive.

A further increase in crude supplies also eased the prices, analysts said.

Consequently, Brent crude slumped below \$40 per barrel. Currently, the December contract Brent crude on the Intercontinental Exchange (ICE) is trading at \$39.58 per barrel, lower by 3.30 per cent from its previous close.

The November contract of WTI crude was at \$37.40 per barrel, lower by 3.41 per cent from its previous close.

Oil prices have of late been under pressure due to poor demand amid the coronavirus pandemic and vanishing hopes of further stimulus in the US.

IANS

Electric SUV from MG Motor India hits Coimbatore roads

Coimbatore: Car-maker MG Motor India has now initiated the expansion for the electric SUV - MG ZS - in 10 cities, including Coimbatore.

The move comes after the company recently completed the roll-out of the 1,000th unit of the ZS EV in the country, since deliveries began in February last.

The company will commence pre-bookings from Friday at a price of Rs 50,000 at dealerships across the cities

and on the MG Motor India website (mgmotor.co.in) with a price of Rs 20.89 lakh.

The latest expansion will make MG ZS EV available in 21 cities across the country and MG will simultaneously develop the EV eco-system across the cities by deploying super-fast charging infrastructure and extending on-road charging facilities, a press release from the company said here.

PTI

GNIDA celebrates Gandhi Jayanti

Greater Noida: A lecture and programme was organised on October 2, 2020, on the occasion of the 151st birth anniversary of the Father of the Nation Mahatma Gandhi and the birthday of former Prime Minister late Lal Bahadur Shastri in the auditorium of Greater Noida Industrial Development Authority (GNIDA).

The Chief Executive Officer and all the officers/employees of the authority paid floral tributes to



the statue of Gandhiji while giving a detailed discussion in the context of the great personalities and reverence was also paid to them.

Nirav Modi case: Fresh CBI chargesheet against retired PNB official for disproportionate assets

New Delhi: The CBI has filed a fresh charge sheet against Gokulnath Shetty, the Punjab National Bank Deputy Manager who allegedly helped Nirav Modi and Mehul Choksi perpetrate Rs 13000-crore fraud, and his wife for amassing disproportionate assets worth Rs 2.63 crore, officials said Friday. The agency has charged Shetty and his wife Asha Latha Shetty, a clerk in Indian Bank, under corruption charges for amassing assets worth over Rs 4.28 crore during the period 2011-17.

PTI

Online classes for MBBS students valid: National Medical Commission

The online theory classes for MBBS students will continue as per National Medical Commission's circular. This was clarified by the National Medical Commission stating that in view of COVID-19 pandemic, online classes are valid and are approved for teaching during the current pandemic situation.

A release from National Medical Commission to Dean/Principal of All Medical Colleges/Institutions stated: "Attention of National Medical Commission has been drawn to some media reports that online classes for teaching of

MBBS curriculum were not approved by erstwhile MCI. In this regard, it is clarified that in view of Pandemic COVID-19 the Medical Colleges/Institutions in India are conducting online theory classes for MBBS students. Online classes are valid and were approved for teaching during the current Pandemic COVID-19 only.

Such online theory classes are required to be supplemented by practical and clinical training as per the current curriculum in all MBBS subjects in the Colleges/Institutions and affiliated hospitals as and when colleges are open.

Bid to expose remote areas to Aatmanirbhar Bharat vision

New Delhi: With an aim to contributing towards making "Aatmanirbhar Bharat" scheme a success story, logistics e-Mall service provider Zipaworld plans to provide access to the portals to non-urban and even the remotest areas where there is production of various products, but the exposure is not there, said Ambrish Kumar, founder & group CEO of AAA 2 Innovate Pvt Ltd, the parent company of Zipaworld.

Lanxess India conferred awards

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Specialty chemicals company, Lanxess India, has received multiple awards from the Indian Chemical Council (ICC) in recognition of the organization's commitment and outstanding performance specifically in the

areas of environment and human resource management under the 'Large Companies' category. It also won the Certificate of Merit for Best Compliant Company for two codes under Responsible Care- Process Safety Code & Distribution Code.

GOVERNMENT OF JAMMU & KASHMIR OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER P.H.E (M&P) DIVISION, HMT, SRINAGAR. Phone: - 0194- 2496307, E-Mail:- xenmandp@gmail.com

Dates-Corrigendum

Subject :- Extension of dates for Supply of ISI marked Centrifugally Cast (Spun) Ductile Pipes conforming to IS: 8329/2000, read with upto date amendments for assorted sizes ranging from NB100mm upto and including NB400mm (in class K7) from Govt. registered / Gem approved manufacturers holding valid CML certification for the manufacture of said diameters of D. I. Pipes required for petty and maintenance works of the Department.

Ref: 1. This office NIT No: PHE/QC&PD/09/2020-21/e-Tender Dated: 12-09-2020.

2. Representation Made by different firms for extension of e-NIT. In light of above referred representation, the above referred e-tender is hereby re-scheduled as follows:

1. Tender Notice No. :- PHE/M&P/ 09 of 2020-21/ e-Tender Dated: 12-09-2020.

2. Date of Inviting Tender :- 12-09-2020.....10.00AM

3. Clarification End Date :- 07-10-2020.....04.00PM

4. Document Downloading End Date :- 13-10-2020.....02.00PM

5. On Line Document Submission End Date :- 13-10-2020.....4.00PM

6. Date of opening of Cover 1st. :- 14-10-2020.....2.00PM

No. D/PPK-6605/20

Dated: 01-10-2020

Sd/- Executive Engineer, Jal Shakti PHE (QC&PD), HMT Srinagar

PUBLIC NOTICE
To be known to all that Late Smt. Harbans Kaur wife of Late Sardar Jagat Singh, was the owner of property bearing Plot No. D-38, measuring 333.33square yards, situated at Defence Colony, New Delhi, who expired on 02.01.1993. The original Lease Deed, Sanction letter, Sanction Building Plan, D/Form, Occupancy certificate, Sale related Deed, Mutation letter and other related documents pertaining to above property have been lost. An M.C.R./Fiduciary to this effect has been lodged on 01.10.2020. Any person found in possession of original documents may write/contact with Mr. Harinder Singh at Flat No. 13, Green View Apartments, J3/1043, Ward No.8, Jain Mandir Dada Bari Road, Mehrauli, New Delhi or on Mobile: 9810014373 within 15 days from the date of publication of this notice.

BID NOTICE
Mann Technical Education Society, registered under Societies Registration Act 1860, wishes to dispose off approximately 5 acres of land located in Polumbi Khurd, in North Delhi. Sealed bids are invited from all interested parties for outright purchase of the said land within 7 days of publication of this advertisement. For site visit and inspection of documents, please contact Mr. P. S. Singh at 9810014373. An email for scheduling appointment to consultant@tpeps.in. Queries on price will not be entertained and interested parties are expected to provide their own assessment and need. All bids should be accompanied by an Earnest Money Deposit of Rs. 1,00,000/- Rupees (Rupees one lakh only) issued in the form of a Demand Draft in favour of Mann Technical Education Society, and payable at par in Delhi. The EMD will be refunded in case of unsuccessful bids.

Mann Technical Education Society reserves the right to reject any or all the bids without assigning any reasons therefor.

PUBLIC NOTICE
General Public is hereby informed that my client Mrs. Navneet Kaur is intending to purchase Entire Third Floor, with roof/terrace rights, built on property bearing no. D-77, part of Khirasa no. 445 & 446, situated in the area of Village-Tirah, colony known as Fateh Nagar, New Delhi from its owner Mrs. Sunita Kaur who has acquired the title by virtue of registered sale deed dated 16.01.2020. In prior chain Khator Singh of Khasra no. 445 & 451 is not available nor any survivor certificate of late Amrik Singh is on record. Any person having any claim in respect of the above mentioned property thereof by way of mortgage, transfer, mortgage, or otherwise, whatsoever, are requested to inform the same in writing with documentary evidence to the undersigned on below mentioned address within 07 days from the date of publication hereof together with copies of all documents on the basis of which claims are made, failing which any such right, title, interest, or claim, if any, will be deemed to have been waived and not binding on our Clients.

NOTICE
C.K. JHA (Advocate)
E-524, Karkardooma Courts, Delhi-110032 (M) - 9811295674

NOTICE
TATA MOTORS LIMITED
Regd. Office: Bombay House 24, Horni Mody Street, Fort, Mumbai 400 001
NOTICE is hereby given that the certificate(s) for the under mentioned securities of the Company has/have been lost/misaid and the holder(s) of the said securities / applicant(s) has/have applied to the Company to issue duplicate certificate(s). Any person who has a claim in respect of the said securities should lodge such claim with the Company at its Registered Office within 15 days from this date, else the Company will proceed to issue duplicate certificate(s) without further intimation.
Name of Holder Kind of Securities & Face Value
Mrs. Ramesh Equity Shares, Rs. 2/-
Dawar
No. of Securities/Distinctive number (s)
1360 6894001-6895360
Place:
147, Sunder Nagar, New Delhi-110003
Date: 03/10/2020
Name of Holder/Applicant
Mrs. Ramesh Dawar

SHORT CIRCUITS

ANIL KAPOOR

Mothers always surprise us with their inner strength and selfless love they have for their children. And as you become a parent yourself, you realise so much more. In this lockdown, my mom has been tough as a rock, she was not thinking about herself but concerned and worried about us. I love you mom.



AKSHAY OBEROI

The subject matter of my web series *High* isn't easy to translate to the screen. Addiction takes over and restructures the brain, making good people behave in a way unlike themselves. It's not easy for the audience to connect and empathise with something like this. I researched what my character would feel like.



DEEPAK DOBRIYAL

If your mindset is positive and you love your work, you can achieve anything despite unfavourable circumstances. Our cast and crew of the film *Aafat-e-Ishq* shot amid pandemic. We followed precautions, maintained cleanliness on the sets, wore masks and took care of each other. I feel great to be a part of this film.



AAHANA KUMRA

I spend a lot of time in Kolkata and I am surrounded by Bengalis. My brother-in-law is a Bengali. My first director Ribhu Dasgupta (of the TV series *Yudh*) is Bengali. Since I actively perform in theatre, I often go to Rabindra Sadan for performances. Bengali food, culture, everything, is so familiar that I am kind of home with it.

JESSICA ALBA

On the set of *90210*, I couldn't even make eye contact with any of the cast members, which was really strange when you're trying to do a scene with them. I was told that I am not allowed to do so.



CONVERSATION 45 MINUTES

How often do you come across people on an everyday basis who get trolled for disagreeing with a majoritarian viewpoint? Or how frequently do you notice the 'I hear and obey' culture among subordinates in a corporate meeting? How many times were you and your peers scolded in school or college for pushing a meaningful change? Well, we come across various instances everyday where dissenters are not being heard, as they are seen as troublemakers than contributors. This is the real intolerance. We tend to forget that it is important to celebrate healthy dissent and resistance in order to develop viewpoints. Without the clash of ideas, progress in any sphere is difficult.

Democratic societies take pride in the freedom of expression. Indeed, the right to dissent and tolerance of diverse viewpoints distinguishes it from a dictatorship. In his book *Rebels with a Cause*, Professor T.T. Ram Mohan profiles well-known dissenters — Arundhati Roy, Oliver Stone, Kancha Ilaiah, David Irving, Yanis Varoufakis, U.G. Krishnamurti and John Pilger to illustrate how, in practice, dissent tends to be severely circumscribed.

Through an exploration of the lives and ideas of these personalities, the author asks hard questions to challenge the way we view and live in the world — a book for anyone who refuses to accept the status quo.

What went into its research? How long did it take to complete the book?

Well, when you look around, you find that there isn't much tolerance of dissent in the world. There was, you will recall, a huge debate on intolerance in India a few years ago and it's an issue that surfaces time and again. I thought it useful, therefore, to highlight the life and works of a few dissenters and how society has responded to them. I make it clear in my book that I don't agree with many of the things the dissenters are saying. And yet, I believe, it is important to hear them out if only so that we can improve our own understanding of issues and hence the functioning of our institutions. The book is not so much a celebration of particular dissenters as of dissent itself.

In writing it, I went through the books and articles of these personalities and also articles written about them. It took just under two years to complete.

You have written that the personalities in the book are not necessarily the most effective dissenters but their ideas must be known. How did you decide to feature these seven dissenters?

Yes, they are not effective in the sense that they have not been able to change things the way they wanted. However, in some areas, their dissent has triggered useful responses. For instance, Arundhati's campaign against large dams has helped improved rehabilitation and resettlement of displaced people and Oliver got people thinking deeply about the Vietnam war and the assassination of John F. Kennedy.

I wanted to cover personalities from different societies and different fields — social activism, films, economics, spirituality, history, sociology and journalism. I thought I would focus on people whose



LET ALL FLOWERS BLOOM

In his book, *Rebels with a Cause*, Professor T.T. RAM MOHAN profiles well-known dissenters and says that without allowing questions to challenge the way we view the world, there can be no answers to our problems. By SAKSHI SHARMA

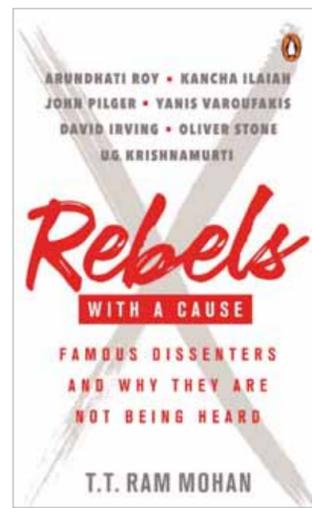
ideas are not very well known to a large audience. For that reason, I left out more prominent dissenters, such as Noam Chomsky.

All of them have done various works that reflect defiance and question authorities. How did you compile some of their works to capture the flavour of dissent? How challenging was it?

All the personalities have a formidable body of work and each one would be a fit object for a whole book. I have not attempted to be comprehensive in covering their work. Rather, I chose to focus on material that captures the essence of their dissent. Even a limited survey of their work involved a substantial amount of reading and, in some cases, watching of documentaries. So, yes, the project was quite a challenge.

How does this subject have to be discussed now, given the current political scenario of the country?

The subject is not specific to India, much less the present political scenario.



It is applicable to all societies. If you examine things carefully, you will find that even supposedly free societies, such as the US and the UK, allow dissent to happen only within a narrow framework. If you step out of the framework, you may find yourself paying a steep price. And it's important to remember that lack of tolerance of dissent is not confined to the political sphere. There isn't much tolerance of dissent in the corporate world either or, for that matter, in most organisations. Most people in positions of authority are not willing to tolerate a different point of view, even where it is not personally threatening to them. Authority and tolerance of dissent don't seem to go together and this is something we need to deeply ponder.

While reading about them and their works, there must have been several instances where you would have wanted to interview them and question various subjects personally...

Yes, I would have certainly liked to interview all of them, except for U.G. Krishnamurti who is no more. I did not have any luck except with Kancha Ilaiah. Either the person was not reachable or he or she did not respond. Yanis Varoufakis did get back to me but he was available far too late in the writing of the book.

You pointed out, "if you want to express serious dissent, make sure that you're rich and famous enough to be able to afford it." What would you say about it?

You see, it is okay if you criticise monetary or fiscal policy or the new education policy and things like that. However, if you challenge the fundamentals of the existing order of things, the consequences can be quite severe. There are serious professional costs and one could even find oneself in jail. If one is a serious dissenter, one needs to have the financial and legal resources to battle authority, especially the state. It also helps if you are a celebrity because if authority cracks down on you, it will make a splash in the media here and abroad, and the possibility of that happening helps to restrain the powers. That is why most people think

very hard about expressing serious dissent. The ordinary person is not the stuff of which martyrs are made.

People don't like to question authority because they know there's a price to be paid for doing so. Personally, did you go through any such circumstance for writing a book that celebrates dissenters?

Anybody who has worked in any organisation and has dared to differ from those authorities or expressed serious dissent would know that there is a price to be paid for doing so. I am sure many people have had this experience and have learnt over time to be careful about expressing dissent.

We need resistance to generate ideas and solve problems. It is through the clash of ideas that the best solutions emerge. But even then dissent is always taken negatively...

I couldn't agree more. While most people would accept this at an abstract level, they find it difficult to internalise it and practise tolerance of dissent in their own lives. It is okay to criticise people who disagree with you but trolling, which is being offensive, rude or threatening, certainly is an indicator of lack of tolerance of dissent.

How can we design a system that protects and fosters dissent?

This is very important. I think that is what the institutions of democracy are all about — elections, judicial redress, a constitution that guarantees fundamental rights, freedom of the press, etc. It's all about allowing a thousand flowers to bloom. The tragedy is that the outcomes fall far short of the tolerance of serious dissent. We need to examine how attitudes are shaped within the family and in our educational institutions, to what extent parental and other forms of authority contribute to creating attitudes that are inimical to dissent.

Anybody who has studied in the West would know that the relationship between teacher and taught is very different there as compared to that in India. It is far more collegial. In a book I wrote a few years ago about shortcomings in the corporate world, I argued that allowing divergent views to emerge can lead to better performance and that is why those at the top should encourage it. But, more broadly, it's important for each one of us to see just how much dissent we are capable of expressing and how much tolerance for dissent we have in our own spheres.

Do you think the book can shape public perception on dissent and views related. What do you aim to achieve through the book?

Well, that is for you and the wider public to judge! By carefully examining and often refuting the views of the personalities in the book, I am trying to tell people, 'we don't have to accept what these people are saying but that doesn't mean we have to condemn them'. In the process of refuting their views on particular matters, we get a chance to think through issues and clarify our own understanding. For that reason, dissenters deserve to be heard, not hounded

STUDIO CHAT 30 MINUTES

'Feeling accepted'

Actor SABA SAUDAGAR talks about getting true recognition and appreciation for her work in the web series *Crackdown*

Director Apoorva Lakhia's *Crackdown* is being well received by the audience for its storytelling and cinematography.

Actor Saba Saudagar, who is known for her stint in ALTBalaji's *Booo Sabki Phategi* and *Gandii Baat*, has now impressed her fans as Fawzia. Playing a completely different character in the show, Saba has showcased her acting skills in this thrilling yet interesting series.

Fawzia is a naive sweet domestic help at Zorawar Kalra's, the RAW Chief residence. She has a sweet family that includes her husband and a newly born baby. Although it seems like cooking tasty food and looking after her own family and her employer Zorawar's home is what Fawzia's whole life revolves around, the truth is not just different but deceiving as well.

Commenting on the overwhelming response Saba shares, "An actor's true recognition is when she is appreciated for her work. It is encouraging to get accepted as a good actor, especially when the entire ensemble is of



actors par excellence. The love that I have received from the audience is the biggest honour I could have asked. Also, it was a great learning experience to work in this show alongside actors like Saqib, Iqbal and Shriya. My director has also appreciated me for portraying the character beautifully."

The web series is a spy thriller, based on the working of intelligence agency RAW. It is a fast-moving with lots of twists and turns. The series has been shot at various different locations across the world.

(The series is streaming now on Voot Select.)

CELEB TALK 30 MINUTES

ROTG AN UNUSUAL STORY: CHANDAN

Riding on the success of *Aashram*, actor Chandan Roy Sanyal has interesting projects on his slate. While appreciation for his portrayal of Bhopa Swami in the Prakash Jha directorial is still pouring in, his latest venture in ZEE5's four-film anthology, *Forbidden Love* has grabbed eyeballs.

The most interesting bit about the anthology is that it has been spearheaded by National Award-winning filmmakers who depict the themes of love, relationships and marriage. One of the four films of the anthology — *Rules Of The Game* stars Chandan and Aahana Kumra and has been directed by Aniruddha Roy Chowdhury of the *Pink* fame.

In this film, the actor is seen essaying the role of a husband, eager to revive the spark in his married life. As Chandan carries on with experimenting with genres and roles, his performance is being reviewed positively.

Excited about the reviews, Chandan says, "*Rules Of The Game* intensified the thrill of acting for me. I was excited to have the opportunity to work with Aniruddha. Anybody who has seen the film will agree that it is an unusual story. Props to our director, who envisioned the screenplay in a way that takes the suspense up by many notches. A big thanks to viewers and critics for their appreciation."

Chandan's latest outing is a suspense thriller that revolves around a couple in their thirties, who



want to jazz up their relationship with role play but one of them takes it too far. The other projects on the actor's slate is Buddhadeb Dasgupta's untitled outing, *Kaali Season 2*, a Bangla film titled, *Deep Six* and *Rawkto Rawhoshyo*.



IMMERSIVE 45 MINUTES



with meditation, yoga, then exercise for two hours and rehearsals further. Our diet and resting hours are also scheduled accordingly.

Has this experience changed you as an artiste and as a person?

A lot. This experience taught us that we should never give up in life, no matter what the circumstances are and always hope for the best. When our audition was released, the video went viral and everything seemed so positive but then came the novel Coronavirus, which almost made us believe that it's hard for the show to start again. That made us a bit sad because it was a great opportunity for us. But we were told to hope for the best and eventually everything turned out so well.

Tell us about the judges and if you had any favourites?

The judges were too sweet and encouraging. We got some of the best comments in our lives from the panel. Simon sir is our favourite but sadly he couldn't be on the whole show. Howie sir, Heidi mam and Sofia mam are all too lovely. They loved us and were fond of our dancing.

What was your family's reaction after you reached the finale?

They were proud when they heard that we had reached the finals. They insisted us to perform the best and enjoy ourselves while doing so. They always supported us like bass in a melody.

Any memorable anecdotes from the show?

There are many. One has to be when Simon sir said, "Without people like you, we have no show." We travelled for 22 hours to get there and had to perform the very next day. There are a lot to mention in an answer.

What's next for you?

We want to become dancing stars in the world whom people could look up to for inspiration. We will be dancing for the next 10 to 15 years. We want to perform in every possible corner of the world and represent our country. We strive to be one and do the undoable every time we are on the stage.

We come from a background where things were not smooth. We didn't have that resources and exposure to be able to come this far. We broke barriers and never gave up. There are a lot of people who don't have this exposure to showcase their talent, we want our voice to reach them. Bivash Sir owns a Gurukul where students from different parts of India come, stay and learn dance education. We want to gather people with talent who need exposure to train them to their best and help them explore themselves.

What were the on-ground challenges on the sets of America's Got Talent?

The crew members on this show were very nice. There were some dance floor issues but we felt really comfortable throughout our set time.

(Watch America's Got Talent S15 on Voot and Colors Infinity.)



ART KNOWS NO BORDERS

SUMANTH MAROJU and SONALI MAJUMDAR — who form a dancing duo called *Bad Salsa* — feel blessed to be appreciated by the global audience for their performance at *America's Got Talent*. By TEAM VIVA

Kolkata based dancers Sumanth Maroju and Sonali Majumdar were part of the premiere episode of the show *America's Got Talent* season 15 and received a standing ovation from a panel of celebrity judges comprising Howie Mandel, Heidi Klum, Sofia Vergara and Simon Cowell along with the audience.

Part of Bivash Academy of Dance (BAD), the two travelled all the way from Kolkata to Los Angeles to participate in the reality show and took everyone by surprise with their electrifying performance which was a mix of acrobats and salsa. They danced to the song *Dhating Naach* from the Bollywood film *Phata Poster Nikhla Hero*.

The video of their performance has gone viral on the internet. It has garnered over 4.2 million views on Facebook and over 6.5 million views on Youtube. Excerpts:

How different did it feel to perform and reach the finale of one of the biggest talent shows of the world?

It was a dream come true for us. We always wanted to perform on such a platform that is internationally recognised and celebrated. Finally we did that and won millions of hearts. It felt very new and blessed to be seen and appreciated by the world audience.

After your *Tattad Tattad* and *Top Lesi Poda* performances, you've taken over the internet. How does it feel to be a viral sensation?

We never expected or thought of this. Good performance is everything that we can do, getting such positive comments and so much of love is really a feeling of greatness. We are gratified by the response. Being a viral sensation is one of the greatest achievement of our lives.

Tell us about your rehearsing schedule?

We train for six to eight hours daily. When there are reality shows, we increase that to 10 to 12 hours. We start our day

VOGUE 30 MINUTES

Transforming fashion

With the first ever digital edition, Lakmé Fashion Week will put the spotlight back on futuristic trends and celebrate the rich heritage of Indian handloom



Lakmé Fashion Week is back with a digital-first, season-fluid, virtual avatar. Launching the interactive fashion destination in India, it is set to put forth a promising lineup of shows, designers, webinars and ideas.

The forthcoming season will host an amalgamation of fresh, emerging talent and the established names in the fashion industry opening newer and innovative ways of sustainability and creativity. Designers like Pankaj and Nidhi, Kunal Rawal, Amit Aggarwal, Sanjay Garg, Aneeth Arora, JADE, Anushree Reddy, Jayanti Reddy, Gaurang, Disha Patil, Hemang Agrawal among many others will present a combination of collection shows and fashion films this season.

Moreover, this season's interactive virtual venue has been specially designed to host state of the art curated shows with technology, e-commerce, engaging digital content and cyber networking.

HIGHLIGHTS THIS TIME:

Virtual hub

This time LFW will reside as an online hub with customised elements for every type of audience tuning in. Audiences can expect a showcase area called the 'runway' for all designer showcases, fashion film and webinars; a library to access show content ranging from action behind-the-scenes to snippets of shows; a media conference area that will exclusively give Indian and international media direct access to interact with designers and celebrities; as well as an interactive lounge by Lakmé that will allow viewers to engage with its latest beauty collection. Audiences will also enjoy a 'See Now, Buy Now' feature that will allow viewers to directly connect with the designer and purchase an outfit immediately after the show.

Virtual showroom

LFW will launch the 'Virtual Showroom' – a first of its kind concept with an aim to support designers, artisans and the business of fashion. The virtual showroom will be a marketplace platform for designers and artisans to showcase their past and current collections to consumers, enabling B2C sales for inventories that have been stuck due

to the pandemic. It will also serve more importantly, as a B2B platform for designers to showcase their future collections and directly get orders from buyers of multi-designer stores across the world.

Gen next show

The show aims to recognise new and emerging talent through home-grown platforms like the GenNext programme that will give three new designers the chance to showcase their creations this season. GenNext, for the first time, will be showcasing a fully sustainable collection on day 1 as 'Sustainable Fashion Day'.

Kickstarting the five-day virtual fashion extravaganza, the three winning labels Dhatu Design Studio by Anmol Sharma, MISHÉ by

Bhumika & Minakshi Ahluwalia and The Loom Art by Aarushi Kilawat will make their debut at Lakmé Fashion Week presented by INIFD.

Additionally, this season several initiatives have been announced to support the GenNext alumni as well. The platform will be providing free stall space to all GenNext designers in the LFW virtual showroom. These designers will also get the opportunity to be a part of the schedule through a look book format of showcase without any designer fees.

Sustainable fashion days

It is a property that celebrates the rich heritage of Indian handloom and indigenous craft season after season. Since 2012, there have

been conversations on preserving and promoting Indian handlooms and textiles, championing sustainable fashion as the fashion of the future. Every season, the platform takes pride in reviving indigenous crafts and bringing artisans to the fore through strong and powerful initiatives and programmes. This season, two days will be dedicated to celebrate the craft of sustainable fashion. Some of the showcases include:

'All About India' Showcase, a collaboration of leading designer labels coming together for a multi-designer showcase to promote craft as the backbone of their design principals. Six designers, namely, Abraham & Thakore, Rajesh Pratap Singh for Satya Paul, Anavila, Suket Dhir, Payal Khandwala & Urvasi

Kaur will be presenting key pieces from their collections to spotlight crafts like Ikkat, Block prints, Jamdani, Brocade, Khatwa & Shibori techniques, while also talking about the artisans and the clusters they work with as a tribute to their constant support and dedication to their work.

Day two will also see six enterprising start-ups chosen through the Circular Changemakers programme. The winner of the Circular Design Challenge –MALAI, will be showcasing their collection this season in collaboration with Reliance's R|Elan 'Fashion For Earth', Lakmé Fashion Week and United Nations Environment Programme.

High tech Japanese fiber AsahiKASEI Bemberg meets Indian Handlooms with Hemang Agrawal to showcase his sustainable collection – Tattva, representing the harmony between 12 elements of the universe.

Designer Pankaj and Nidhi are set to showcase their breathtaking collection on Sustainable fashion day presented by R|Elan.

Well-known labels such as Raw Mango, Gaurang, Pero, Kaveri and more are set to showcase environment-friendly creations.

Speaking about the forthcoming season, Ashwath Swaminathan, Head of Innovations, Lakmé said, "With the first-ever digital edition, we will continue to create new experiences for audience and put the spotlight back on the future of fashion. This year the grand finale too will focus on the future of fashion and the details will be shared soon."

Sharing his views, Jaspreet Chandok, Head — Lifestyle Businesses, IMG Reliance Ltd said, "Every year we strive to make it a platform that encourages and elevates talent and creativity. With a digital platform, we will bridge gaps between national and international audiences while continuing to support and nurture the design community. We are glad to present to fashion enthusiasts the first-ever digital edition of the platform with the best of talent gracing the virtual runway."

(The show will stream online from October 21 to 25 on a high-tech virtual platform created for the event.)

JUKEBOX 15 MINUTES

Batman Unburied to be first DC Comics podcast



Spotify, Warner Bros and DC recently announced that acclaimed film and television writer, producer and director David S Goyer (*Batman Begins*) will return to Gotham City with the new audio drama *Batman Unburied*. Goyer originated the story for the series and will shepherd the project as executive producer. The series is the first project from the companies' multi-year agreement to produce and distribute an original slate of narrative scripted podcasts. It will be developed and produced by Goyer's Phantom Four production company in association with Warner Bros' Phantom Four's Keith Levine will also serve as an executive producer alongside Goyer. The series will explore the darker aspects of Bruce Wayne's psychology. "I've been a fan of narrative podcasts for some time and was looking for the right story — returning to *Batman* seems like the perfect opportunity," said Goyer. He added,

"We'll be using the unique advantages of audio to dig into the more nightmarish members of the Dark Knight's Rogues Gallery."

"Goyer is an exceptional talent and we can think of no better leader to leverage the infinite possibilities of podcasting to bring the nearly 300 million Spotify users around the world a Batman saga for the ages," commented Dawn Ostroff, Chief Content and Advertising Business Officer, Spotify.

Batman Unburied continues Goyer's long and highly successful association with DC television series and feature films. He is currently executive producing the upcoming Netflix, Warner Bros television drama series based on Neil Gaiman's *The Sandman*. He previously was a writer on *The Dark Knight* trilogy, co-wrote *Batman v Superman: Dawn of Justice* and wrote *Man of Steel*, all from Warner Bros. Pictures. (The series is expected to debut on Spotify in 2021.)

Mayank Agarwal | 246 runs
Mohd Shami | 8 wickets

Batting or bowling first does not matter. It is just for the team to go there and do its best and play good cricket. Best team on the day will come out victorious

Another bowling option would be nice — an all-rounder option who can bat and bowl well. We will be sitting with the coaches to decide if we want to play an extra bowler

It wasn't going to be easy with the ball against KXIP's batting line-up. We knew we had to get early wickets and everything went to plan, credit to the bowlers

We have a lot of faith in big-hitting skills of Pollard & Hardik. Pollard almost took us to the victory in against RCB. They are in good form and they can finish games in any situation

DHONI FAILS TO FINISH



MS Dhoni shake hands with Sunrisers Hyderabad players at the end of IPL match on Friday

PTI ■ DUBAI

There was no end to Mahendra Singh Dhoni and Chennai Super Kings' woes as former India captain yet again struggled to take his side past the finish line, falling short by seven runs against Sunrisers Hyderabad in an IPL match, here on Friday.

CSK controlled the first innings for a large part before youngsters Priyam Garg (51 not out) and Abhishek Sharma (31) lifted SRH to a competitive 164 for five after electing to bat.

Their top guns not contributing much, former India U-19 World Cup skipper Garg scored his maiden IPL fifty and with Abhishek raised a 77-run stand for the fifth wicket. SRH collected 53 runs in the last four overs to make it a contest.

Playing a record 194th IPL game, the stage was set for Dhoni to silence his critics but all he could manage was 47 runs off 36 balls as CSK fell short.

Coming to bat at number five, Dhoni had enough balls at his disposal, a manageable target and trusted aide in Ravindra Jadeja (50) for company but again his attack came too late.

It was Jadeja who took CSK closer to the target before getting out while Dhoni struggled in their 72-run stand for the fifth wicket.

Except for a few hits, Dhoni struggled to time the ball. He also lost steam towards the end, having batted in hot conditions for over an hour. He hit Khaleel Ahmed for a massive six in the 19th over, which had to be completed by him because Bhuvneshwar Kumar hurt his leg after bowling just one ball.

CSK needed 28 runs from the final over and skipper David Warner handed the ball to 18-year-old J&K spinner Abdul Samad. It was a gamble which paid off. Samad started with a wide that yielded CSK a boundary but held his nerves to see his side through.

SRH spinners, specially Rashid Khan deserve the credit for the win. The Afghan was, as usual exceptional, as he choked CSK with his well-measured deliveries. He did not get a wicket but conceded only 12 runs in his four overs.

It was third defeat in a row

Mahi becomes IPL's most-capped player

Dubai: Former India captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni on Friday became the most-capped player in the history of IPL with his 194th appearance in the popular tournament, surpassing CSK teammate Suresh Raina.

Dhoni, who has played every edition of the League since its inception, is into his 11th season with CSK, a side he has always captained apart from playing two seasons for Rising Pune Supergiants.

As Dhoni took the field against Sunrisers Hyderabad on Friday, it was his 164th game for CSK. He had played 30 games for RPS during the 2016 and 2017 editions.

However Virat Kohli holds the record for most number of appearances for a single franchise with 180 caps for RCB in 13 editions. **PTI**



Royal Challengers Bangalore players train during team's warm-up session

Royal battle

PTI ■ ABU DHABI

The dew factor will go out of the window but the searing heat will be an issue when Royal Challengers Bangalore take on a better prepared Rajasthan Royals in the first of the 10 IPL double-headers on Saturday.

Having played their first two games at Sharjah, the smallest of the three venues, Royals got their strategy wrong in the game against Kolkata Knight Riders in Dubai.

The ground in Abu Dhabi too is on the bigger side and Royals' experience of playing in Dubai will help them take more informed decisions. RCB will also be making their first appearance at the Sheikh Zayed Cricket Stadium.

The Royals have now understood the perils of playing on bigger grounds and their leg-spinner Shreyas Gopal accepted the fear of unknown.

"We can't really estimate anything sitting here, we've practised during the day a few times in the ICC academy so we'll go there and take a call there itself. It shouldn't be too different."

"There might not be dew other than that I feel it'll be a really good wicket and a good contest," Gopal said on the eve of the match.

With the batsmen unable to hit through the line as consistently as they could do in Sharjah, Royals failed to chase 175 against KKR on Wednesday.

Since they have a settled overseas players' combination, one possible change in the eleven could be replacing pacer Ankit Rajpoot with Varun Aaron, who is yet to get a game.

The team has benched young opener Yashasvi Jaiswal after Jos Buttler's arrival but calls have been growing for his inclusion. With the top three picking themselves, the stylish southpaw can only play in the middle order.

Both Royals and the RCB go into Saturday's afternoon match with two wins in three games.

RCB have made a promising start but need to improve their fielding and death bowling. Navdeep Saini bowled a tidy Super Over against Mumbai Indians to get his team over the line after RCB leaked as many as 79 runs in the last four overs for the game to be tied.

The Bangalore franchise made three changes in the previous clash and are likely to give those players — Isuru Udana, Adam Zampa and Gurkeerat Mann — another go.

The move to open the bowling with Washington Sundar paid off as the offie returned with figures of 12 for one in four overs in a game where more than 400 runs were scored.

Ab de Villiers has shown ominous touch and it must be heartening for the team management to see Shivam Dube providing the big hits towards the end against Mumbai Indians.

Skipper Kohli is yet to set the tournament on fire and Saturday could be his day.

Doubts remain over the availability premier all-rounder Chris Morris, who picked up a side strain before the start of the tournament.

MATCHES	21
ROYAL CHALLENGERS BANGALORE	08
RAJASTHAN ROYALS	10
Stats: Faisel Features	

DUGOUT

MOTION PICTURE

Yuvraj Singh @YUVSTRONG12

Tough game for @lionsdenkxip last night as @mipaltan were the better team on the day But @klrahul11 getting bit of a flack for bowling an offie in last over I feel is a bit unfair ,We all make mistakes and as a new skip we should all look at the positives that he has brought on

Former Indian all-rounder Yuvraj Singh has said that KXIP captain KL Rahul getting flak for bowling an off-spinner in the last over against MI is unfair. "We all make mistakes and as a new captain, we should all look at the positives that KL Rahul has brought on," he added.

POLLARD'S FORM IS GREAT SIGN: ZAK

Kieron Pollard's blazing form at the onset of the IPL is a "great sign" for the Mumbai Indians as it has been the case over the years, says bowling mentor Zaheer Khan. In his element in the last two games, Pollard smashed an unbeaten 60 off 24 balls against RCB before producing an unbeaten 47 off 20 balls against KXIP. "It is great to have the big man in such form since tournament in Caribbean (CPL) and he is continuing with that form, which is very important and we are always banking on him," Zaheer said in a flash interview posted on MI Twitter handle. "Pollard, when he comes to the party early, it's always a great sign for us," Zaheer added.

WE KNOW SKY IS THE LIMIT: POLLARD

"We know sky is the limit in the last four overs," said MI all-rounder Kieron Pollard after adding 67 runs in 23 balls with Hardik Pandya in their IPL game against KXIP. After skipper Rohit Sharma laid the foundation with a 45-ball 70, Pollard and Pandya smashed fours and sixes at will, lifting MI to 191 for four from 83 for three in the 14th over. Pollard, who was adjudged the Man of the Match, said: "It's about what's there in front of you. Look at the bowlers and see how many you want to get, 15 off the over and then you try to go hard. Today Hardik had to come and swing and he showed his prowess. We know sky is the limit in the last four overs."

OFFIE'S LAST OVER WAS MOUTH-WATERING

Mumbai Indians all-rounder Hardik Pandya says the very sight of off-spinner Krishnappa Gowtham being handed the ball in the 20th over of his team's IPL clash against KXIP had him and his big-hitting partner Kieron Pollard excited before they hit him for 25 runs. Pollard (47*) hit three sixes while Hardik (30*) got one maximum in that over which took MI to 191 for 4. Interviewed by his elder brother Krunal, Hardik talked about how he felt when he saw Gowtham being handed the last over. "It was very intense, it was more like mouth watering that an off-spinner bowling the 20th over. Me and Pollard, whoever misses has to stand at the non-striker's end and just watch, and that was me today. I missed two balls but Pollard made up most of it," he said.

NO REASON TO PANIC FOR DC

Having suffered their first defeat of the IPL 2020 against SRH on Tuesday, Delhi Capitals' bowling coach Ryan Harris believes his team was not at their best in their last match, and is not in a panic situation at all. "Coming off an unlucky loss, we just weren't at our best for that game against the Sunrisers. But, there's no panicking by any means," he said. "When you look back at it, a couple of balls during our bowling were a little bit of a miss, and they (SRH) probably ran better between the wickets, we didn't run as well. But 15 runs is not a huge gap," said Harris on the 15-run loss against Hyderabad.

POINTS TABLE						
		P	W	L	NRR	PTS
1	MI	4	2	2	+1.094	4
2	DC	3	2	1	+0.483	4
3	KKR	3	2	1	+0.117	4
4	SRH	4	2	2	-0.084	4
5	RR	3	2	1	-0.219	4
6	RCB	3	2	1	-1.450	4
7	KXIP	4	1	3	+0.521	2
8	CSK	4	1	3	-0.719	2

Another six hitting contest on cards

PTI ■ SHARJAH

Andre Russell's brute power will meet Aits match in Rishabh Pant's fearless approach when Kolkata Knight Riders face Delhi Capitals with an aim to light up the Sharjah skyline in what promises to be another six-hitting IPL contest on Saturday.

Russell gave a glimpse of what is in store with three sixes at a big Dubai ground against Rajasthan Royals while Pant will be itching to throw caution to the wind and play his natural game — destructive edge of the seat hitting.

In fact, Pant needs it more than Russell as three of his peers, KL Rahul, Ishan Kishan and Sanju Samson have got runs under their belt, something that the beefy man from Roorkee so desperately needs.

This will be the first weekend of double-headers in the IPL and there couldn't have been a better ground for that than Sharjah, which has ridiculously short boundaries promising another run-feast.

If there is Shubman Gill, Andre Russell and Eoin Morgan on one side, there is Pant, Marcus Stoinis and Shreyas Iyer on the other end, all capable big-hitters and ever ready to add to the whopping 62 sixes that have been hit on this ground in the two games held

there so far. KKR have been slowly getting into the groove with some comprehensive performances while Capitals, after two fine victories, hit a roadblock against Sunrisers Hyderabad in their last outing.

For the Knights, their young pace attack of Kamlesh Nagarkoti and Shivam Mavi will have their task cut out on a batting paradise where their temperament will be put to test.

In Sharjah, a bowler is destined to go for runs and how the two manage that and try subtle variations will be key to KKR's success.

KKR are unlikely to tinker with their win-

ning combination even though Narine as an opener hasn't worked well for them in three games so far with only 24 runs scored by the Trinidad all-rounder.

However, he has bowled his full quota of overs in three games with a decent under 8 economy rate and two wickets.

There is Tom Banton as a reserve opener but keeping the dimensions of the Sharjah ground into equation, KKR will persist with Narine provided he can attack the weak link in the DC attack which obviously will be an Indian pacer — be it Mohit Sharma, Ishant Sharma or Avesh Khan.

Giving an update on Ashwin's injury, Capitals bowling coach Ryan Harris said: "He's doing excellent. He had a really good session last night with the ball, bat and in the field. So he might be available for selection for tomorrow, but we are still waiting for our medical staff's confirmation this evening."

In their batting department, Shimron Hetmyer is yet to fire but again the same formula that applies to Narine in KKR is also applicable on the former West Indies U-19 World Cup winning captain, provided he can take on Kuldeep Yadav and Varun Chakravarty.

Hetmyer has had some degree of success against Kuldeep in international games and it could be an engaging contest if he gets a chance to bat on a track where history always favours the top four from either side.

MATCHES	24
DELHI CAPITALS	10
KOLKATA KNIGHT RIDERS	13
Stats: Faisel Features	

Ansuper Fati

AFP ■ VIGO

Barcelona's new double-act delivered again as Lionel Messi and Ansu Fati led them to a 3-0 victory at Celta Vigo in La Liga on Thursday, despite Clement Lenglet being sent off in the first half.

After scoring twice in Barca's opening game of the season, Fati fired struck early at a blustery Balaidos, only for Lenglet to collect a second yellow card in the 42nd minute for pulling back Denis Suarez.

But even down to 10, Ronald Koeman's side were undeterred and Messi made the lead more comfortable shortly after half-time, his weaving run and shot diverted in for an own-goal by Lucas Olaza.

Celta hit the crossbar but never really threatened a comeback and when the ball spilled loose after another Messi dash in injury-time, Sergi Roberto made sure of the points.

"We did a great job," said Koeman. "I'm very proud of this team, we worked hard, played with a lot of discipline with a man less and even then we made the best chances. I'm very, very happy."

Celta hasn't lost to Barcelona at home in five years, with three wins and two draws in league matches.

Milan win 24-kick shootout

AP ■ MILAN

AC Milan reached the Europa League group stage after a nervy 9-8 penalty shootout win over Portuguese club Rio Ave, having netted a fortunate last-gasp equalizer in extra time.

Milan trailed 2-1 in extra time until Toni Borevkovic gave away a penalty in the 121st minute with a careless handball, allowing Hakan Calhanoglu to level from the spot. Rio Ave then had three chances to win the penalty shootout but missed each time, before Milan goalkeeper Gianluigi Donnarumma made the decisive save to send his team through.

The shootout featured 24 penalties in total, with both goalkeepers sending their efforts over the bar.

Tottenham had no such troubles as Harry Kane scored his first hat trick of the season in a 7-2 win over Maccabi Haifa. Tottenham's win came exactly a year to the day after losing 7-2 to Bayern Munich at home in the Champions League group stage.

However, last

Liverpool out of League Cup

AP ■ LONDON

Arsenal goalkeeper Bernd Leno saved two penalties in a 5-4 shootout win over Liverpool to reach the League Cup quarter-finals, while Aston Villa and Fulham were knocked out by lower-division clubs.

Joe Willock scored Arsenal's winning penalty to set up a home match against defending champion Manchester City in the next round.

Leno, who also kept a clean sheet through 90 minutes as the game ended 0-0, blocked penalties from Divock Origi and Harry Wilson on Thursday.

"It was a very tough game," the German told broadcaster Sky Sports.

"It is very good to save some penalties and see some laughing faces but I prefer next time to win the game before penalties. But the main thing is we won."

A first-half header from Sam Vokes gave second-tier side Stoke a 1-0 win at Aston Villa to set up a quarterfinal at home against Tottenham.

Also, Fulham lost 3-0 again — this time against second-tier side Brentford, who will next play at home against Newcastle.

Manchester United will travel to Everton in the other quarter-final.

Halep gets her revenge

AFP ■ PARIS

Simona Halep avenged last year's French Open loss to Amanda Anisimova by thrashing the American teenager 6-0, 6-1 on Friday to reach the last 16 at Roland Garros.

Top seed and title favourite Halep extended her career-best winning run to 17 matches and will meet another 19-year-old, Poland's Iga Swiatek, for a place in the quarter-finals.

Polish teenager Swiatek dismissed former Wimbledon finalist Eugenie Bouchard 6-3, 6-2 to seal a return to the last 16, matching her best result at a Grand Slam.

Anisimova knocked Halep out in the last eight in Paris a year ago, but the two-time Grand Slam champion made only seven unforced errors as she secured a resounding victory in just 54 minutes.



Simona Halep reacts after win

Bopanna loses

Paris: India's challenge at the French Open came to an end late on Thursday after Rohan Bopanna and partner Denis Shapovalov went down in the first round of the men's doubles.

The Indo-Canadian pair was beaten 6-2, 6-2 by former Wimbledon men's doubles champions Jack Sock and Vasek Pospisil. **PTI**

Stan Wawrinka in five sets.

Nadal, the three-time defending champion, secured a smooth 6-1, 6-4, 6-0 win over world number 74 Stefano Travaglia. The 12-time Roland Garros winner next faces American qualifier Sebastian Korda, ranked a lowly 213th, for a quarter-final spot.

France's Gaston won the rain-interrupted tie 2-6, 6-3, 6-3, 4-6, 6-0 to become the second-order player ranked outside the top 200 to reach the last 16 on Friday.

While Austrian third seed Thiem broke down early resistance from Norway's Casper Ruud to secure an impressive 6-4, 6-3, 6-1 victory.

