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LJP dumps Nitish, to go solo

LJP to fight against JD(U) candidates, but remains part of NDA

NAVIN UPADHYAY ■ NEW DELHI

The ambition of LJP chief Chirag Paswan to emerge as a major player in Bihar may change the political landscape of the State as the Lok Janshakti Party (LJP) on Sunday decided to go it alone in the Assembly polls starting month-end.

"Due to ideological differences with the Janata Dal (United), a member of the alliance at the national level and in the Assembly polls, the LJP has decided to fight the elections in Bihar separately from the alliance," a party statement said after its parliamentary board meeting chaired by Chirag.

The decision is seen as a "surgical strike" on Chief Minister Nitish Kumar since the LJP will field its candidate against every single JD(U) candidate while contesting close to 140 seats in the 243-seat State Assembly contest.

The LJP said it will remain part of the NDA and its winning candidates will help form a BJP-led Government in Bihar. "We will not accept Nitish Kumar as Chief Minister at any cost," said an LJP leader.

The move will give better bargaining power to the BJP post-elections and may adversely impact its relationship with the BJP if Ram Vilas Paswan were to continue as a Union Minister in the Cabinet. Ram Vilas has undergone heart surgery in the national Capital and will remain hospitalised for



Lok Janshakti Party chief Chirag Paswan, along with party leaders, after the meeting ahead of Bihar Assembly elections in New Delhi on Sunday

a few weeks. Sources said the LJP will remain part of the NDA at the Centre and Ram Vilas will retain his position in the Union Cabinet.

In the resolution, the LJP said it will not fight the election under Kumar's leadership of the ruling alliance in the State, but insisted its MLAs will work to strengthen the hand of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The meeting was chaired by its president Chirag.

A section of the JD(U) leaders suspect that Chirag's decision may not have been

- The decision is seen as a "surgical strike" on Chief Minister Nitish Kumar
- The LJP said it will remain part of the NDA and its winning candidates will help form a BJP-led Government in Bihar
- A section of the JD(U) leaders suspect that Chirag's decision may not have been possible without tacit support of the BJP
- The LJP is likely to field a number of JD(U) rebels and strategically utilise caste factors to inflict maximum damage on the JD(U) candidates
- JD(U) and BJP are likely to contest 119 seats each and leave five seats for Jitan Ram Manjhi's Hindustani Awam Morcha

possible without tacit support of the BJP. "How can Chirag dare to do this without the support of the BJP? It's clear they

want to remove Kumar post-elections," said a JD(U) leader. Chirag's decision will throw open interesting possi-

bilities after the elections in case the BJP gets more number of seats than the JD(U). It is expected that since Kumar is facing serious anti-incumbency his strike rate will be much lower than the BJP. The presence of LJP candidate will also harm the prospects of JD(U) candidates. The LJP is likely to field a number of JD(U) rebels and strategically utilise caste factors to inflict maximum damage on the JD(U) candidates. In such a scenario, Nitish may struggle to retain his chair post-elections even if the NDA were to form a Government in the State. "Given the situation, the JD(U) will be far behind the BJP, and that will open interesting possibilities," said a BJP leader from Bihar. However, he warned that the confusion among the cadre of the BJP and the JD(U) and distrust at every level could also hurt the prospects of the alliance and may help RJD-led Mahagathbandhan on several seats.

In 2015, the LJP had contested 42 seats and won two. The JD(U) was then part of the Opposition alliance which decisively defeated the NDA.

Chirag sent an unmistakable message on Saturday about his future move when he posted a message on a social media, saying, "I am proud that I got an opportunity to work as an MP with a Prime Minister whose skillful leadership is known across the world."

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Cong Govts in States to bring Act to put farm laws on hold

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In no mood to accept the Centre's controversial farm Bills, the Congress has asked its State Governments to convene a special Assembly sessions to pass Bill to defer implementation of the NDA Government's farm Bills cleared by Parliament during the Monsoon Session and approved by President Ram Nath Kovind last month.

The draft version of the farm related Bills sent to the Congress-ruled States allows the State Governments to decide on the date of implementation of the Centre's laws and ensure that contract farming between the farmer and any company, or aggregator, cannot take place below a minimum support price (MSP).

The Modi Government's new farm laws have triggered massive protests across the country by the Congress, Opposition parties, farmers' associations. Significantly the Bills passed by the States will also have to be cleared by the President of India, who can either approve or refuse to give them his assent.

The proposed Bills address the two of the Congress grievances about the new laws — it disallows MSP for farmers and opens them up (particularly the more vulnerable small and marginal farmers) to the predatory instincts of corporates and large-scale private players. Former party chief Rahul Gandhi hit out at the "black

Party calls for special Assembly sessions



laws" and said the Congress would repeal them when in power and on Sunday he protested in Punjab.

The Congress, along with other Opposition parties, has launched countrywide protests against the Bills. The Congress sources said the party will also request the States to pass the new Bills where it is in alliance in Maharashtra and Jharkhand. "Besides we will also request States ruled by non-Congress and non-BJP Governments such as Kerala and West Bengal," said the AICC sources.

The Centre has already clarified that the laws give farmers the ability to sell their produce at markets and prices of their choosing. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has verbally assured farmers they can continue to avail of an MSP

and that the Government will buy food grains at that price.

Farmers, however, remain unconvinced and have called for clauses that guarantee MSP and protect weaker members of their community against the dangers of contract farming.

Congress chief Sonia Gandhi recently asked party-ruled states to "explore possibilities to pass laws... which allows state legislatures to... negate the anti-agriculture central laws".

"This would enable the states to bypass unacceptable anti-farmers' provisions in the three draconian agricultural laws... would also alleviate the farmers from the grave injustice done by the Modi government and BJP," the Congress said in its statement.

Continued on Page 2

CAPSULE

2 NAVY MEN KILLED IN KOCHI GLIDER CRASH

Kochi: A Navy glider on a routine training sortie crashed here on Sunday, killing two crew members, a Defence spokesperson said. The power glider took off from INS Garuda, a Naval air station here, and crashed near Thoppumpady bridge close to the naval base at around 7 a.m.

PERSONAL DATA PROTECTION BILL

New Delhi: The Personal Data Protection Bill, which proposes to put restriction on use of personal data without explicit consent of citizens, is likely to be tabled in the next year's Budget session of Parliament, according to a source. The draft of the Bill, approved by the Cabinet in December 2019, proposes a penalty of up to Rs 15 crore and up to three-year jail term for company executives for violating privacy norms.

'GREAT GOLDEN CIRCUS ONLY RECOGNISED ONE'

New Delhi: The Central Zoo Authority (CZA) has told the Delhi High Court that the Great Golden Circus in Gujarat is the only circus in the entire country which is recognised under the Wildlife Protection Act.

TRIBAL GIRL'S BODY IN RAJ FOUND HANGING

Kota: The body of a 16-year-old tribal girl was found hanging from a tree outside her house under Kelwada police station area in Rajasthan's Baran district, officials said. The police suspect it to be a case of suicide, but no suicide note has been found, they said.

Caste-based meet organised at former BJP MLA's house in Hathras

PNS ■ HATHRAS

Around 700-800 people on Sunday held a caste-based meeting at the residence of former BJP MLA Rajvir Singh Pehalvan here on the issue of the death of a Dalit woman after she was sexually assaulted.

The meeting was held a day after UP Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath ordered a CBI probe into the incident. Heavy police force was deployed in the vicinity of the former BJP MLA's house, located around 8-9 kilometres from the victim's village. One of the organisers of the meeting and Pehalvan's son Manveer Singh, however, denied that the gathering comprised members from the so-called upper castes and said they were from "different sections of society".

"We welcome the CBI enquiry ordered by the Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister.

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Bhim Army chief visits Hathras, seeks Y security for rape victim's family

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Bhim Army chief Chandrashekhar Azad on Sunday travelled to Hathras to meet the family of the 19-year-old gangrape victim just a day after Congress leaders Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi visited Uttar Pradesh.

Meanwhile, police lathicharge Samajwadi Party and RLD workers for defying the curfew orders imposed in the village. Azad, who has been raising his voice against the incident, marched toward the district this afternoon along with his supporters but was stopped about 20 km before Hathras.

The Bhim Army chief was later allowed to meet the family. "I demand 'Y security' for the family or I'll take them to my house, they aren't safe here. We want an enquiry to be done under the supervision of a retired Supreme Court judge," Azad said after meeting the victim's family.

Continued on Page 2

If Cong comes to power, will axe farm laws: Rahul

Cong leader holds tractor rally in Moga, hits out at Govt for haste in passing 3 Bills

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH/MOGA

Standing up for the farming community in their agitation against the Centre's three contentious farm laws, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Sunday hit out at the BJP-led Central Government, while declaring that the "anti-farmer" legislations would be revoked if the Congress was voted to power.

Rahul, who joined Punjab's farmers in the heartland during the ongoing protests on Sunday as a part of his three-day tractor rally 'Kheti Bachao Yatra', minced no words to blame that the Narendra Modi Government wanted to destroy the three pillars of Indian agriculture — MSP, food grain procurement and mandis — by passing these three black laws.

He questioned the Central Government's "hurry" in bringing these laws in the times of

Covid, while also blaming it for "snatching land and bread from the farmers".

That was not all. Rahul also went on to dub the BJP-led Central Government "a kathputli (puppet) Government whose strings are in the hands of the Adanis and Ambanis".

Addressing a rally, Rahul said, "I guarantee you, the day the Congress Government is formed (at the Centre), these three black laws would be scrapped and consigned to wastepaper basket." He added, "And if farmers are happy with these laws, then why are they agitating across the country? Why is every farmer of Punjab agitating?"

"What was the need to implement these laws amid Covid-19? What was the haste? If you had to implement, you should have discussed in Lok Sabha-Rajya Sabha. The PM says laws are being framed for



Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, Punjab Chief Minister Capt Amarinder Singh and other leaders during a tractor rally in protest against the new Farm Bills 2020 in Punjab's Moga district on Sunday

farmers. If it's the case, why didn't you discuss openly in the House?" Rahul said.

Heavily criticising the BJP Government-led policies and laws for the farmers, Rahul said, "People of Punjab provide

food to the country, you are the backbone of our country. Why is Modi breaking this backbone to benefit a few people? The Congress will never let this happen."

Rahul made it clear that the

Congress party will not let farmers' interest to get hurt by the new farm laws and assured the farmers that the laws will be scrapped the day the Congress comes to power at the Centre.

Continued on Page 2

Delhi schools to remain closed till Oct 31: Govt

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Keeping safety of children in mind amid raging Covid-19 pandemic, the Delhi Government on Sunday announced all schools in the national Capital will continue to remain closed till October 31. The Delhi Government had earlier extended the school closure till October 5, though the Centre had permitted calling students of Classes 9 to 12 to schools on voluntary basis from September 21.

"During this Covid-19 cri-



sis, it would not be appropriate to take any risk regarding children's health. Therefore, the Delhi Government has decided to continue the closure of schools till 31 October. During this period, online education will continue in all schools," a Delhi Government official said Sunday.

Continued on Page 2

Centre to give 25 crore people Covid vaccine shots by July

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Government will try to receive and utilise 400 to 500 million doses of the coronavirus vaccine to cover around 25 crore people by July 2021, Health Minister Harsh Vardhan said on Sunday.

The Minister was replying to questions from his social media followers on the fourth episode of Sunday Samvaad. Pointing out that a high-level expert body was looking into all aspects of the coronavirus vaccines, the minister said, "Our rough estimate and the target would be to receive and utilise 400 to 500 million doses covering approximately 25 crore people by July 2021."

"Our utmost priority is how to ensure vaccine for each and everybody in the country," Vardhan said, adding, "Our topmost priority in coronavirus immunisation to be given to frontline healthcare workers."

Detailed Report on P4

Next 48 hours critical for Trump's Covid care, says White House chief

AP ■ ST CHARLES (US)

President Donald Trump's startling Covid-19 diagnosis serves as a cruel reminder of the pervasive spread of the coronavirus and shows how tenuous of a grip the nation has on the crisis, health experts said. With US infections rising for several weeks, Trump became one of the tens of thousands of Americans who test positive each day.

He went through a "very concerning" period Friday and the next 48 hours "will be critical" in his care, White House chief of staff Mark Meadows said Saturday. That differed dramatically from the rosy assessment by Trump's staff and doctors, who took pains not to reveal the president had received supplemental oxygen at the White House before he went to a military hospital.

Some of Trump's top advisers and allies also have tested positive recently. "No one is entirely out of the virus's reach, even those supposedly inside a



protective bubble," said Josh Michaud, associate director of global health policy with the Kaiser Family Foundation in Washington.

Eight months after the virus reached the United States, worrying signals mounted of what's ahead this fall. The NFL has postponed two games after players on three teams tested positive. Some hospitals in Wisconsin have run low on space, and experts warned of a likely surge in infections during the colder months ahead.

Some economists said it could take as long as late 2023 for the job market to fully recover.

Continued on Page 2

Covid-19 IN INDIA

TOTAL
CASES: 66,22,136
DEATHS: 1,02,714
RECOVERED: 55,83,414
ACTIVE: 9,35,077

STATES	TOTAL CASES	DEATHS	RECOVERED
Maharashtra	14,43,409	38,084	11,49,603
Andhra Pradesh	7,19,256	5,981	6,58,875
Karnataka	6,40,661	9,286	5,15,782
Tamil Nadu	6,19,996	9,784	5,64,092
Uttar Pradesh	4,14,466	6,029	3,62,052
Delhi	2,90,613	5,510	2,60,350
West Bengal	2,70,331	5,194	2,37,698
Odisha	2,32,713	960	2,02,302
Kerala	2,29,887	837	1,44,471
Telangana	1,99,276	1,163	1,70,212
Bihar	1,87,951	915	1,75,109
Assam	1,86,200	749	1,50,773
Gujarat	1,42,699	3,499	1,22,465
Rajasthan	1,41,846	1,530	1,19,241
Madhya Pradesh	1,35,638	2,434	1,13,832
Haryana	1,33,878	1,470	1,20,341



Tribal girl's body found hanging from tree in Baran

PTI ■ KOTA (RAJ) The body of a 16-year-old tribal girl was on Sunday found hanging from a tree outside her house under Kelwada police station area in Rajasthan's Baran district, officials said. The police suspect it to be a case of suicide, but no suicide note has been found, they said. According to the police, the girl belonged to Bheel tribal community. "She was unschooled and lived with her father and elder brother. Her mother had passed away," DSP and Circle Officer, Shahabad, Kajodmal said. "The girl's father and brother had gone out to guard the fields on Saturday night. She was alone in the house," Circle Inspector at Kelwada police station Laxmichand Verma said. The police said there was no mark of injury or assault on the victim's body. A case has been registered in this regard and investigation is on, they added.

Great Golden Circus only recognised circus in India: CZA to High Court

PTI ■ NEW DELHI The Central Zoo Authority (CZA) has told the Delhi High Court that the Great Golden Circus in Gujarat is the only circus in the entire country which is recognised under the Wildlife Protection Act. However, a notice has been sent to the circus to show cause why its recognition should not be cancelled for alleged violation of the provisions of the Act with regard to maintenance and display of captive elephants, the CZA has told the high court. The submissions were made by the authority in its affidavit filed before a bench of Justices Vipin Sanghi and Rajnish Bhatnagar in response to PILs by the People for Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) and the Federation of Indian Animals Protection Organisation (FIAPO). PETA India, represented by advocates Aman Hingorani and Swati Sumbly, has claimed in its plea that due to the COVID-19 outbreak and resultant lockdown, circuses are finding it difficult to feed the animals which at various stages of starvation. It has sought a direction to the Centre to immediately notify the Performing Animals (Registration) Amendment Rules of 2018 which expressly prohibit training and exhibition of performing animals in circuses and "mobile entertainment facilities". FIAPO, which is a group of 100 organisations and works towards the protection of animal rights for over a decade, has challenged the constitutional validity of sections 21 to 27 of the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act so far as they permit exhibition and training of animals in relation to circus acts. It has contended in the plea that circuses with animals performing tricks often use wild animals, including elephants, hippos, and exotic birds. It has said these animals are very often used without requisite paperwork certifying their fitness and added that on account of the COVID-19 pandemic, there have been numerous reports of animals being stranded as part of these circuses all over the country and being abandoned by their owners.

Budget 2021: Personal Data Protection Bill likely to be tabled in Parliament

New Delhi: The Personal Data Protection Bill, which proposes to put restriction on use of personal data without explicit consent of citizens, is likely to be tabled in the next year's Budget session of Parliament, according to a source. The draft of the bill, approved by the Cabinet in December 2019, proposes a penalty of up to Rs 15 crore and up to three-year jail term for company executives for violating privacy norms. "The time for the joint committee on the Personal Data Protection Bill has been extended to the second week of the winter session. The final bill is expected to be tabled in Parliament in the Budget session after incorporating the suggestions of the committee," the source told PTI. The bill was introduced in the Lok Sabha in February and has been referred to a Joint Parliamentary Committee of both the Houses, headed by BJP MP Meenakshi Lekhi, for examination and report. The draft approved by the Cabinet in December mandates storage of critical data of individuals by internet companies within the country while sensitive data can be transferred overseas only after explicit consent of the data owner. The bill has been drafted following a Supreme Court judgement in August 2017 that declared 'Right to Privacy' a fundamental right. The need for a strong personal data protection regime was further highlighted by the apex court in its judgement in September 2018 in which it held Aadhaar as a constitutionally valid scheme but struck down some provisions in the Aadhaar Act. As per the provisions of the bill, all internet companies will have to mandatorily store critical data of individuals within the country. However, they can transfer sensitive data overseas after explicit consent of the data owner to process it only for purposes permissible under the proposed legislation. Agencies

Maha toll crosses 38K-mark with 326 more fatalities

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI: The Covid-19 toll in Maharashtra crossed 38,000-mark on Sunday, as 326 more people succumbed to Coronavirus, while a relatively low 13,702 people tested positive for the pandemic in various parts of the state. A day after the daily fatality tally dropped to 278, the state witnessed an increase of 48 deaths to take the daily figure to 326 and trigger a jump in the number of total deaths in the state from 37,758 to 38,084. With 13,702 fresh infections, the total number of infected cases in the state rose from 14,30,861 to 14,43,409. On a day when 15,048 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 11,49,603. The recovery rate in the state rose from 79.3 to 79.64 per cent. Of the total 326 deaths reported on Sunday, Mumbai and Satara accounted for a maximum of 48 deaths each, while there were 41 deaths in Pune, 33 in Thane, 26 in Nagpur, 11 in Sangli and 10 deaths in Beed. In the lower range, there were eight each deaths in Raigad, Nashik, Kolhapur, Jalgaon and Gondia, seven

each deaths in Ahmednagar and Jalgaon, six each deaths in Aurangabad, Solapur and Amaravati, five deaths in Yavatmal, four deaths each in Palghar, Ratnagiri, Jalna and Latur, three deaths each in Sindhudurg, Parbhani and Nanded, two deaths each in Osmanabad, Bhandara and one death each in Hingoli and Akola. In addition, three from outside the state died in Maharashtra. With 48 deaths, the Covid-19 toll in Mumbai went up from 9,060 to 9,108, while the number of infected cases rose by 1192 taking the total number of infections from 212,462 to 213,652. Meanwhile, the mortality rate in the state stood at 2.64 per cent. The number of "active cases" in the state dropped marginally from Saturday's figure of 2,58,108 to 2,45,281. Pune district, which continued to be the worst-affected city-district in Maharashtra, saw the total number of cases to up to 3,03,138, while the total number of deaths in Pune increased from 5931 to 5972. Thane district remained in the third spot - after Pune and Mumbai - with 1,93,992 total cases, while the pandemic toll rose from 4973 to 5006. Out of 71,11,204 samples sent to laboratories, 14,43,409 have tested positive (20.29 per cent) for COVID-19 until Sunday.

10 lakh more families in Gujarat to get food grains at low cost under NFSA

Ahmedabad: The Gujarat government on Sunday said it will provide food grains to additional 10 lakh families in the state at concessional rates under the National Food Security Act (NFSA), which will benefit around 50 lakh individuals. These 10 lakh families will be able to avail all the benefits provided to the beneficiaries under the NFSA, the state government said in a release. At present, 3.5 crore people are getting food grains under the NFSA in the state, it said. "All divyangs (differently-

abled), widows, beneficiaries of Vridh (elderly) Pension Assistance Scheme will also get the benefit of this food distribution scheme. BPL families not covered under the NFSA will also get the benefit under the Food Security Act," it said. The decision taken by Chief Minister Vijay Rupani will ensure distribution of food grains at concessional rates to auto and mini tempo drivers living in cities and villages as well as to registered construction workers and other daily wagers, the release said. The chief minister has instructed authorities con-

Coronavirus: Odisha crosses 2L recoveries

Bhubaneswar: The number of recovered Covid-19 patients crossed 2 lakh in Odisha after 4,108 patients recuperated from the disease, said the health department on Sunday. The total recovered cases of the state now stand at 2,02,302. The number of Covid-19 positive cases rose to 2,32,713 in the state as 3,326 more persons were infected with the virus in the last 24 hours. Of the total fresh cases, 1,945 have been reported from different quarantine centres while remaining 1,381 are local contacts. IANS

Next 48 hours...

From page 1 The U.S. leads the world in numbers of confirmed infections, with more than 7 million, and deaths, with more than 208,000. Only a handful of countries rank higher in COVID-19 deaths per capita. "The statistics are so mind-boggling, they make us numb to the reality of just how painful, unacceptable and absurd this is," said Dr. Reed Tuckson, board chairman of the nonpartisan Health Policy Alliance in Washington. "Every single American must double down on their vigilance. If we don't, then we are being foolhardy and irresponsible." Wallace Clark, 50, of Springfield, Illinois, said he was flummoxed by the president's diagnosis but hopes it makes

people realize they need to take the pandemic seriously. "Some people probably think they're immune or can't get it, but it is possible. It does send a message," Clark said Saturday. The president's infection occurred as the nation has reached a crossroads in its response to the virus. The U.S. is averaging 40,000 cases a day. The situation is improving in Sun Belt states that were hot spots in the summer, and many loosened restrictions this week. Mississippi's governor ended a mask requirement, South Carolina's governor said he would ease capacity restrictions on restaurants and New Orleans bars got the greenlight to sell carry-out drinks. Florida has moved ahead with an aggressive reopening that gives bars and restaurants latitude to allow as many customers as

they choose. The outlook is gloomier in the Midwest. Wisconsin reported a record daily death toll Wednesday, and hospitals in multiple cities said they were running out of space. A 530-bed field hospital that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers built on the state fairgrounds in the city of West Allis in April could be used if the situation worsens. Iowa reported more than 1,000 new cases for the third consecutive day Friday as the virus continued to aggressively spread, but the governor said bars in the two largest college towns could reopen Monday after a five-week closure. South Dakota officials reported record highs in deaths and cases Thursday. In Missouri, several people waving Trump signs and

American flags at drivers in the St. Louis suburb of St. Charles on Saturday said the president and Republican Gov. Mike Parson getting infected recently won't change their behavior. Of the roughly two dozen Trump supporters who gathered, most didn't wear masks. Arlene Mathis, 65, was one of several Black volunteers at voter registration event where nearly everyone wore masks. "I don't know that we would have to have the president affected by this to be awakened by it, because so many people have died and continue to die every day," Mathis said. She was hopeful, however, that Trump's illness would change behavior. "It's an indication that nobody is immune," Mathis said. "It goes high, it goes low, it goes everywhere. So hopefully, them being affected by it will have an impact." Dr. William Schaffner, an

infectious diseases expert at Vanderbilt University, said Trump's diagnosis "reinforces the notion we need a national policy and we need everyone to participate in the basic preventions." Instead, Schaffner said, the response "has been subcontracted to the governors, which has left us with a crazy quilt of approaches. For months, Trump has downplayed the virus, rarely wearing a mask, holding large campaign rallies and urging businesses and schools to reopen. Masks have not been mandatory for White House staff, despite evidence they help stop the spread. "Now, tragically, this experiment has shown, at the highest office of the country, it ain't working. It didn't work," Schaffner said. It has George George, 63, worried. (AP)

percentage of deaths due to COVID-19 was 44.96 while remaining 55.04 per cent had comorbidities. The state continued to see more recoveries than the daily count of positive cases. During the last 24 hours ending 8 pm on Saturday, 2,366 more patients recovered, taking the total recoveries to 1,70,212. The state's recovery rate improved to 85.41 per cent against the national average of 83.84 per cent. Of the new cases, 291 were recorded in Greater Hyderabad. IANS

1,949 new corona patients in Telangana, total active cases 27,901

Hyderabad: Telangana reported 1,949 new coronavirus cases on Sunday, taking its active cases to 27,901 and the total tally to 1,99,276, even as the death toll climbed to 1,163 with 10 more fatalities during the last 24 hours. For the second consecutive day, the state reported less than 2,000 cases in 24 hours. Of the 27,901 active cases, 22,816 patients are in home or institutional isolation. The state's fatality rate stands at 0.58 per cent against the national average of 1.56 per cent. Officials said the per-

If Cong comes...

From page 1 Accompanied by Punjab Chief Minister Capt Amarinder Singh, Punjab Congress chief Sunil Jakhar, State party affairs general secretary in-charge Harish Rawat, Cabinet Ministers, MLAs among others, Rahul on Sunday kick-started a three-day Kheti Bachao Yatra'. Lambasting the Prime Minister for lying to the people and misleading the nation for the past six years to serve the interests of two-three large corporate houses of his "billionaire friends", Rahul cited the examples of demonsti-

sation, GST and the debt and tax waiver of big industrialists amid Covid, while not giving a rupee's aid to the poor and the farmers. "This is about your land and your money," Rahul warned the farmers, recalling the Land Acquisition Bill which the UPA Government had amended to protect the farmers but the Modi Government had scrapped, with the support of the Akalis, soon after taking over the country's reins. "The Adanis and the Ambanis want to take over the land and money of the farmers without giving anything in return and the Prime Minister is helping them in exchange of 24X7 media coverage

in his favour," he said. Extending his, and the Congress party's full support to the farmers, Rahul said that he stood with the farmers in this fight for their survival and livelihood, which the Modi Government was trying to destroy with these draconian laws. "Together we will change these laws," he told the farmers, adding that the Congress will stand with the farmers in their fight and will not move back an inch. Notably, President Ram Nath Kovind has given assent to the Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Bill; Farmers' (Empowerment and Protection)

Agreement of Price Assurance and Farm Services Bill; and Essential Commodities (Amendment) Bill, which were passed by Parliament last month. Out of the three laws, farmers and farm leaders have expressed grave concerns over the first one that they claim was a roundabout way to eliminate procurement of wheat and paddy under minimum support price (MSP) programme. As a part of his programme, Rahul will hold massive public meetings and tractor rallies across Punjab and Haryana for three days. After finishing his tractor rallies in Punjab's Patiala, he is scheduled to enter Haryana through Pehowa on October 6.

8K corona patients...

From page 1 As many as 331 women, who tested Covid-19 positive, have given birth in the hospital, also the highest in the country. Of these 149 were cesarean deliveries, they said. According to the hospital's Medical Director Suresh Kumar, LNJP was declared a dedicated COVID-19 facility on March 17 and since then 11,415 patients were admitted there. These included people who suspected they had the disease but their test reports came out negative, he said. "As many as 7,919 coronavirus patients have been discharged from the hospital after recovery. Besides, around 2,700 people who got admitted to the hospital with COVID-like symptoms were sent home after they tested negative," Kumar said. Around 1,450

coronavirus patients have received dialysis at LNJP so far. Also, 59 COVID-19 patients have undergone successful surgeries related to orthopaedic problems, gallbladder stone, piles, liver and lung abscess at the hospital, Kumar said. The total number of recoveries in the hospital since March include 420 children. Around 10 per cent of them were severe cases, according to Dr Urmila Jhamb a paediatrician at the hospital. Most children show mild symptoms such as diarrhoea and vomiting. But those suffering from other diseases such as tuberculosis, cancer and kidney issues become severely ill if they contract coronavirus, she said. The hospital authorities had last month set up a special COVID ward for children, the first-of-its-kind facility in the national capital, officials said.

Cong...

From page 1 The constitutional route Sonia Gandhi referred to in that statement allows state legislatures to enforce laws "repugnant to the parliament law" if they get the Presidential approval. "In 2015, then Finance Minister Arun Jaitley advised states to use the same route to bypass a land acquisition law passed by the Congress when it was in power - between 2004 and 2014," recalled a party leader.

Advertisement for 'The Pioneer' newspaper. Includes contact information for circulation and advertising, and a 'SEAL' logo.

LJP dumps Nitish, to go...

From page 1 Taking inspiration from PM Modi, the Lok Janshakti Party prepared the 'Bihar First, Bihari First Vision Document 2020' with the suggestion of four lakh Biharis so that Bihar and Bihari can be brought to the forefront. I not only hope but believe that you (PM Modi) will give your blessings to bring Bihar at the forefront and help return its lost identity and glory so that all my candidates can strengthen the hands of respected Prime Minister". Chirag has held several rounds of meeting with top BJP leadership including Home Minister Amit Shah and BJP president JP Nadda. Now that the LJP is out of the way, Janata Dal-United (JDU) and BJP are likely to contest 119 seats each and leave five seats for Jitan Ram Manjhi's Hindustani Awam Morcha.

Delhi schools to remain closed till...

From page 1 "All heads of schools have been authorised to call teachers and staff members for smooth conduct of online classes, teaching learning activities and any other work, during this period," the official added. The Directorate of Education (DoE) has also directed all Government and private schools that a message regarding wearing mask, following physical distancing and maintaining hand hygiene to be conveyed to the students as a way to combat COVID-19 situation before starting any online activity. Universities and schools across the country have been closed since March 16 when the Centre announced a nationwide classroom shutdown as part of measures to contain the spread of the novel coronavirus. On March 25, the Central Government had announced a nationwide lockdown to tame the spread of the virus. While several restrictions have been eased gradually in different phases of "Unlock" since June 8, educational institutions continue to remain closed. However, as per the latest Unlock guidelines, schools, colleges and other educational institutions can reopen outside containment zones after October 15. The decision on whether to reopen educational institutions has been left with States and Union territories.

Caste-based meet organised at former BJP MLA's...

From page 1 "We have faith in the investigation," Singh told PTI while claiming that the victim's family members were "changing their stand". "The entire scenario has been created to blame the government. The accused persons are in favour of any type of inquiry. But the victims are changing their stand every now and then. They do not want a narco test or a CBI probe. Now they want other kinds of inquiries," he claimed. He said an FIR should be registered by police against the complainants in the case. "Our demand is that a case should be filed against those people who had filed the case in the first instance," he said. Singh also said various legal options were being explored to defend the accused in the case. He asserted that the arrest of some of the accused persons from their homes was proof of their innocence. "Had they been guilty, they would have

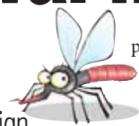
run away from their homes. Why would they be present in their homes," he said. He also alleged that the Congress and the Samajwadi Party were trying to influence the victim's family as they wanted to the issue to "linger on". The caste-based meeting assumes significance as it is being held a day after Congress leaders Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi Vadra visited the victim's house and met her family members at a village in the district, and the recommendation of a CBI probe by Adityanath. A fortnight after she was gangraped, the Dalit woman died of her grievous injuries in the early hours of Tuesday at a Delhi hospital. She was cremated in the dead of the night near her home on Wednesday. Her family alleged they were forced by the local police to hurriedly conduct her last rites. Local police officers, however, had said the cremation was carried out "as per the wishes of the family". PTI

Bhim Army chief visits Hathras, seeks...

From page 1 The 19-year-old, who was allegedly gang-raped by four men last month, died on Tuesday at a hospital in Delhi, sparking widespread outrage across the country. The Bhim Army chief has been demanding Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath's resignation over the incident. On Friday, he had joined a protest at Delhi's Jantar Mantar where a large number of people were gathered with placards and raised slogans against the incident. "The Hathras victim cannot get justice till UP CM resigns and the Supreme Court takes cognisance of the issue. These kind of culprits should be punished as soon as possible so that others get scared before committing such crimes. We will go to Hathras and till the time the matter doesn't come to Delhi, there is no chance of getting justice," Azad had said, addressing the protesters, PTI reported.

Kejriwal marks 5th Sunday of 10 Hafte 10 Baje 10 Minute

CM urges children to participate in anti-dengue campaign



STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI
The Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Sunday marked the fifth Sunday of the 10 Hafte 10 Baje 10 Minute campaign by replacing stagnant clean water at his home. The initiative was launched by the Chief Minister to contain vector borne diseases. In the fifth week of the cam-

paign, Kejriwal encouraged children to participate in the campaign by inspecting their houses for 10 minutes at 10 am every Sunday. The CM also encouraged the children to call their friends and motivate them to participate in the campaign by inspecting their houses. Kejriwal tweeted, "Delhi's campaign against dengue continues. Today, on the fifth Sunday of the campaign, I replaced the water at home and eliminated the possibility of breeding of dengue mosquitoes. I urge everyone to be a part of this campaign every Sunday. #10Hafte10Baje10Minute Har Ravivaar, Dengue Par Vaar." The campaign is witnessing huge participation from children. Yuvraj, a student in a Delhi Government school, has been enthusiastically supporting the campaign by replacing stagnant water at his home every Sunday. Yuvraj, who studies in Class 8th, said he has also been calling his friends to motivate them to check their houses for accumulated water and prevent the breeding of dengue mosquitoes. Kejriwal took to social



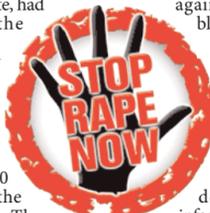
media to appreciate the children and said, "In this campaign against dengue, the children of Delhi are doing their homework well. Other students along with Yuvraj who study in the 8th standard, also checked their houses and replaced the stagnant water. I pray to God that our children remain safe from dengue, stay healthy, and do good in life." This year, the Delhi Government has also launched a telephonic helpline — 01123300012 and WhatsApp helpline — 8595920530 to assist the general public with dengue.

25-year-old woman gangraped in Ggm; 4 accused arrested

STAFF REPORTER ■ GURUGRAM

In yet another shocking incident, a 25-year-old woman who hails from West Bengal, was allegedly gang-raped and thrashed brutally by four men when she resided in a property dealer's office in the city's DLF phase-2 on Saturday late night. The accused, who were in an inhabited state, had smashed the woman's head. A security guard informed the police patrolling vehicle about the incident which was just 100 meters from the incident spot. The police team rushed the victim to a hospital and later arrested all four culprits from different parts of Gurugram. The woman conditions is said to be out of danger, the police said on Sunday.

Ranjan accompanied the victim and walked her to the property dealer's office in DLF phase-2 where he worked. The other three accused were already waiting there and they asked her to have sex with all of them. She resisted the offer and tried to leave the spot. The men then brutally thrashed and gang-raped her in turn. Her head was smashed against the wall and blood profusely came out from her head following which the accused fled the spot. A security guard of the society who was present outside the dealer's office informed the police PCR van which was 100 meter away from the incident spot. The police personnel immediately reached the spot and rushed her to a hospital by then the culprits had run away from the spot," said ACP (DLF) Karan Goel. The victim, in her complaint, claimed that she was forced to have sex the four accused, even though she had refused. "We immediately formed special raiding parties and managed to arrest all the culprits within hours from different parts of the city and Chakkarpur village while they were trying to flee. They are currently being interrogated. Further probe are on," Goel said.



DU likely to announce cut-offs for various UG programmes on Oct 10

New Delhi: The Delhi University plans to announce cut-offs for various undergraduate courses on October 10, two days ahead of the commencement of the admission process to allow students adequate time to choose courses and colleges. The varsity is holding the entire admission process online for the first time due to the coronavirus pandemic.

According to the schedule released by DU on September 25, admissions under the first cut-off list will begin on October 12 and end on October 14. The last day to submit fees will be October 16 and the new academic session will commence on November 18. Delhi University, Dean (Admissions), Shobha Bagai said the varsity will hold a webinar for applicants on Friday.

"We will be holding a webinar for students on how to calculate their cut-offs, choose courses and colleges on the dashboard. We will also be holding a meeting with college conveners. There is a need to sensitise anybody — from colleagues in colleges to candidates, who tend to get anxious," she said. Bagai advised applicants to read the notices uploaded on the website.

"We are aiming to release cut-offs on October 10 so that the applicants have a day to go through it and make themselves familiar. We have requested the principals to share the cut-offs with us in time. It will depend on when they give us the cut-offs," she said. Professor Balaram Pani, the dean of colleges, said all principals have been asked to share the cut-offs with the varsity by October 9.



CM invited to speak at prestigious forum 'Daring Cities 2020' on Oct 7

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal has been invited among five urban leaders from around the world to speak at a prestigious forum "Daring Cities 2020" on October 7 where he is expected to speak on Delhi response in responding to the existing climate emergency. The Chief Minister will also talk about the recent innovative solutions such as the Pusa decomposer and the first-of-its-kind Electronics Vehicle policy in India to tackle air pollution in the national capital. The conference is being hosted by ICLEI and the City of Bonn, Germany, with the support of the German Government. Daring Cities is a global forum on climate change for urban leaders tackling the climate emergency, especially in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic. "Kejriwal is invited alongside urban leaders and decision-makers from Bogota (Colombia), Sao Paolo (Brazil), Los Angeles (USA) and

Entebbe (Uganda) to discuss multilevel action to tackle the climate emergency and environmental sustainability," the government said in a statement. The distinguished urban and sub-national leaders from Latin America, Africa, North America, and Asia will also present their thoughts on the most essential changes that should be achieved in their respective city in the next five years so that their plans to tackle climate emergencies are accelerated. Speaking in the plenary session, Kejriwal will be addressing an international and multidisciplinary audience of over one thousand mayors and city councilors, urban thought leaders, national Government representatives, researchers, business leaders and community organisers from all around the world, it said. The plenary session will also include keynote addresses by António Guterres, UN Secretary General and HE Svenja Schulze, Federal Minister for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety (BMU), Germany.



Candidates arrive at an examination centre to appear for the UPSC prelims exam 2020 in New Delhi on Sunday. Ranjan Dimri | Pioneer



Covid-19 patients perform yoga asanas at Sardar Patel Covid Care Centre and Hospital at Chhatarpur in New Delhi on Sunday. PTI

2,683 new Covid-19 cases in city

New Delhi: The national Capital recorded 2,683 fresh Covid-19 cases on Sunday, taking the tally to over 2.90 lakh, while 38 more fatalities took the death toll to 5,510, authorities said. This is the third day in a row that the city reported less than 3,000 new cases. Authorities reported 2,258 new cases on Saturday and 2,920 fresh cases on Friday. Delhi reported 38 deaths on Sunday. The fatality count was 34 on Saturday, the lowest since September 25 when 24 fatalities were recorded. Forty-eight deaths were reported on September 29, the highest in a day since July 16, when the city reported 58

deaths. The Covid-19 case-load rose to 2,90,613 lakh with 2,683 more people contracting the viral disease. The death toll stands at 5,510, according to the Delhi Government's latest health bulletin. The national Capital reported 3,037 fresh cases on Thursday, 3,390 cases on Wednesday, 3,227 cases on Tuesday, and 1,984 cases on Monday. Of the total cases reported in Delhi so far, 2,60,350 have either recovered, been discharged or migrated out. As many as 50,832 tests were conducted to detect Covid-19 infection on Saturday, of which 8,963 were RTPCR/CBNAAT/TrueNat tests and 41,869 were rapid antigen tests.

The health authorities have conducted around 4.66 lakh tests in the last 10 days -- an average of more than 46,600 tests a day. The total number of tests conducted was 28,15,650 on September 25. It rose to 32,81,784 on Sunday. The case positivity rate during the last 24 hours was 5.28 per cent while the cumulative positivity rate was 8.86 per cent. The average death rate for the last 10 days stands at 1.29 per cent. The number of active cases decreased from 25,234 on Saturday to 24,753 on Sunday. As many as 38 containment zones were added in the last 24 hours. The number of red zones was 2,696 on Sunday. PTI



Delhi Police uses drones for effective surveillance of containment zones

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

To combat the threat of Covid-19, the Delhi Police has used drones for effective surveillance of containment zones in the national Capital. According to RP Meena, the Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP), Southeast district, during the lockdown period, police had hired drones from Aerodyne India and it helped the police in fighting the pandemic. "The drones helped policemen to monitor the situation from a safe distance, thereby ensuring some distancing. The drones carried both day and night day surveillance and successfully collected data in the form of images and videos," the DCP said. "The facility was used in the areas of all police stations of the southeast district, which proved to be effective in surveillance of the Covid situation and also helped us to take quick action to cut the risk of



the spread of the disease," the DCP added. Meanwhile, Arjun Aggarwal, Managing Director and CEO, Aerodyne India, said that these are unprecedented times and we want to do our part to keep the people safe. "Drones and data technology have emerged as an exceptional low-cost tool for police departments across the world to fight Covid-19," said Aggarwal. "Aerodyne India and the Delhi Police worked together to monitor the Covid situation. I feel immensely proud to see Aerodyne India's pilots serve on the frontlines alongside the Delhi Police officials, providing reliable, accurate and actionable intelligence," he added.

3 arrested for robbing man of his mobile phone after choking him

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Police has arrested three men for allegedly robbing a man of his mobile phone after choking him while he was waiting for some conveyance near a bus stand in national Capital. The incident occurred on the intervening night of Friday and Saturday. The accused were identified as Shavez (27), Rohit Prajapati (22) and Mohammad Nasir (32). Police said that they have also recovered the phone from the possession of the accused. According to Anto Alphonse, the Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP), North district, the incident took place on the intervening night of Friday and Saturday, when Neeraj, a resident of outer Delhi's Sultanpuri area, came to Old Delhi railway station to see off his sister who was leav-

ing for Patna. "Neeraj was waiting for some conveyance near a bus stand on SP Mukherjee Marg to return home. At around 3 am, he was accosted by three persons and one of them choked him. They robbed him of his mobile phone and fled towards T-Point, SP Marg," said the DCP. "When the man raised the alarm, the picket staff deployed at T-Point around 100 metre away chased and apprehended two of the accused, later identified as Shavez and Rohit and the robbed mobile phone was also recovered from their possession," said the DCP. "A case under relevant sections of Indian Penal Code (IPC) was registered at Lahori Gate police station and during the course of investigation, the third accused Mohammad Nasir, who had managed to escape from the spot, was also arrested," said the DCP.

38-year-old man held for supplying firearms, ammunition to criminals

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Police has nabbed a 38-year-old man for allegedly supplying illegal firearms and ammunition to criminals in Delhi and its neighbouring areas. Police said that they have also recovered five country made pistols from the possession of the accused. The accused has been identified as Ashok Kumar, a resident of Mathura district in Uttar Pradesh, who was arrested by the Delhi Police on Friday, they said. According to Atul Kumar Thakur, the Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP), South district, to curb smuggling of firearms from Uttar Pradesh into Delhi, a police team was formed to collect intelligence and gather information regarding such rackets. "On Friday, we received information that an illegal arms supplier, Ashok Kumar, would come to MB road here near Tughlakabad Fort to deliver a consignment of illegal firearms.



Accordingly, our team laid a trap and he was nabbed," said the DCP. "Five country made pistols along with eight live cartridges were recovered from his possession and a case was registered against him at Sangam Vihar police station," said the DCP. "On interrogation, Kumar told police that he was earlier into farming but after shifting to his uncle's village, he came

in contact with local criminals there. He was supplying arms and ammunition to criminals in Delhi-NCR for the last one year to make a quick buck," said the DCP. "On Thursday, he received the consignment of illegal arms and ammunition from another criminal in Aligarh, Uttar Pradesh and was supposed to deliver it in Delhi-NCR," the DCP added.

India, China to hold 7th round of military-level talks on Oct 12

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

As stalemate continues at the tense Line of Actual Control (LAC) in Ladakh, senior military commanders will hold the seventh round of talks on October 12. Besides reviewing the current situation, the two Corps Commanders will also discuss ways to speed up disengagement leading to ultimate de-escalation.

The sixth round of military level talks since the stand-offs started in early May was held on September 21. For the first time, both the sides then issued a joint statement in which they agreed to "stop sending more troops to the frontline" and "refrain from unilaterally changing the situation on the ground."

The two delegations also agreed to hold the seventh round of commander-level talks "as soon as possible, take practical measures to properly solve problems on the ground, and jointly safeguard peace and tranquility in the border area."

As of now more than one lakh soldiers from both the sides are deployed at the 1,700 km long LAC in Ladakh. Moreover, the two countries have positioned heavy weapons and long range guns besides missiles closer to the border. Also, China has shifted more than 150 aircraft to the airbases in the Tibet region. It forced India also to take countermeasures and most of its frontline



jets including SU-30, Rafales, Jaguars and MIG-29s are now operating from forward airbases all along the LAC stretching from Ladakh in the west to Arunachal Pradesh in the east.

On the forthcoming talks, sources said here on Sunday, the Indian side will be led by Lehn based 14 Corps chief Lt General Harinder Singh while the other side will be headed Major General Liu Lin. Singh is scheduled to take over as the commandant of the Indian Military Academy (IMA) and will be replaced by Lt General PGK Menon in mid-October.

Menon was present in the last round along with senior officers of the ministry of external affairs and the Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP). The October 12 round will also see a joint team of military and external affairs discussing modalities to defuse tension, they said.

Incidentally, the two sides had held the diplomatic level parleys under the aegis of the Working Mechanism for

Consultation and Co-ordination (WMCC). The Indian delegation in the virtual meeting was headed by Naveen Srivastava.

As regards the position on the ground, additional troops of India and China are deployed at various locations on the North and South banks of the Pangong Tso (lake) in Eastern Ladakh. These two points are the most sensitive at present since the Indian army preempted a Chinese aggressive move to dominate the hilltops in the region.

However, relative calm now prevailed on the border since two hour talks between External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar and his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi in Moscow on September 10. Both the ministers rolled out a mutually agreed five-point action plan to bring peace and tranquility to the LAC. Indian Air Force chief Rakesh Kumar Singh Bhaduria had last week described the situation as "not war, not peace."

Plans afoot to procure 400-500 million doses of Covid-19 vaccine by July 2021: Harsh Vardhan

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Union Health Minister Dr Harsh Vardhan on Sunday said that plans are afoot to procure 400-500 million doses of Covid-19 vaccine to cover upto 25 crore people by July 2021. He said even as States have been advised to send details of priority population groups by October ends, frontline healthcare workers will be given top priority in Covid-19 immunisation.

"Our rough estimate will be to receive and utilise 400-500 million doses, covering approximately 20-25 crore people by July 2021. All this is still under various stages of finalisation. The Government is already looking at immunity data for covid-19 disease while States have been asked to provide the list of health workers to be given vaccines," the minister said in his weekly 'Sunday Samvad' session.

"The list of frontline healthcare workers includes government sector as well as private sector doctors, nurses, paramedics, sanitary staff, Asha workers, surveillance officers and many other categories of frontline workers who are involved in facing, testing and treatment of patients," the minister said.

The Centre has also asked the States to come up with a list of cold chain facilities for storage and distribution of vaccine doses down to the block level, he said. AIIMS Director



of Virology, are indigenously developed vaccines that are in a seamless phase 1/2 trial.

Apart from these three, Serum Institute is also expected to start

Randeep Guleria had recently said that if everything goes as per plan, the vaccine will be available by January 2021.

"The Centre is also working on plans for building capacities in Human Resources, training, supervision etc on a massive scale and roughly estimates to receive and utilise 400-500 million doses covering approximately 20-25 crore people by July 2021. The Government is also keeping an eye on immunity data with regard to COVID-19 disease while finalizing these plans," said the Minister.

Currently, three vaccines are undergoing human trials in India, with Serum Institute of India conducting a seamless phase 2/3 trial of the candidate jointly developed by the University of Oxford and AstraZeneca plc. The other two vaccines, by Zyudus Cadila and another jointly by Bharat Biotech International and Indian Council of Medical Research's National Institute

of the phase 2/3 trials of Novavax's vaccine candidate in the second half of this month, while there are about half a dozen more indigenous vaccine in pre-clinical stage.

The Government is also keeping an eye on talks of the Russian Direct Investment Fund (RDIF) and Gamaleya Research Institute of Epidemiology for mass manufacturing of their Sputnik V vaccine by Indian companies.

Harsh Vardhan said that the government is open to introducing foreign-developed covid-19 vaccine in India, provided they prove they are safe and efficacious for the Indian population.

"All vaccines that are shown to be safe, immunogenic and efficacious in clinical trials outside India need to undergo bridging studies to prove their safety and immunogenicity in the Indian population as well. Such studies are conducted with much smaller sample size and end quickly," he said.

NCB on verge of unravelling larger nexus behind narcotics supply in Mumbai



RAKESH K SINGH ■ NEW DELHI

The Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) that is probing the drugs angle in the Sushant Singh Rajput case is in the process of busting the larger nexus involving "influential circles" besides Bollywood behind the supply chain of narcotics in Mumbai.

Top sources said the influential circles could include politicians, bureaucrats, corporate honchos, businessmen and even police officials controlling or aiding the narcotics supply networks in Mumbai.

Phones and emails' analysis of the peddlers has pointed to a larger syndicate behind the drugs trade involving those engaged in procuring the contraband and distributing them to the high profile end users.

The Bollywood figures have spilled the beans and analysis of their phones and emails has provided several leads to the federal probe agency, they said. The agency has already identified the peddling network and the film world celebrities who procured the substances from them.

Actor Deepika Padukone and her manager Karishma Prakash have been questioned by NCB in connection with the drugs probe related to Rajput. Kshitij Ravi Prasad, a former Dharmatic Entertainment executive producer, arrested earlier by the NCB in Bollywood-drugs case, was on Saturday remanded to judicial custody till October 6.

Prasad was arrested by the NCB after questioning in the drugs case linked to Rajput's death. The NCB had told the court earlier that Prasad had procured drugs from another

accused, Karmjeet, and his associates.

Another actress Sara Ali Khan has also been grilled by the NCB.

The agency had earlier arrested actor and late Rajput's girlfriend Rhea Chakraborty, her brother Shovik and others in connection with the Bollywood-drugs probe.

The CBI is separately probing Rajput's death case, in which Chakraborty and her family members were originally booked by Bihar police under the charge of abetment to suicide.

Officials have not ruled the penetration of drug mafia in some top educational institutions across the country.

Meanwhile, Pakistan's Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) in a late night raid on Saturday in F-10, F-11 and G-12 neighbourhoods of Islamabad arrested seven members of a major drug syndicate suspected to be patronised by Pakistan army and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf party headed by Imran Khan.

The Pakistan army is facing funds crunch in Covid times and revival of Taliban in Afghanistan, a number of officials are re-establishing the drugs trade network.

Interestingly, one of the Bollywood actresses under NCB gaze is a relative of a top former bureaucrat of Pakistan. The ANF arrested seven persons during the raids, including a woman and seized Pakistani Rupees 300 million worth drugs like heroin, hashish and cocaine. This syndicate was engaged in supplying drugs to educational institutions, important personalities in the Government and the private sector.

Indo-French satellites to trace illegal spillage of oil by ships: French space agency

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The constellation of maritime surveillance satellites for the Indian Ocean Region, to be jointly launched by India and France, will be able to trace illegal spillage of oil by ships, a senior French space agency CENS official said on Sunday.

In August last year, CNES and ISRO committed to developing and

building a constellation of satellites carrying telecommunications and radar and optical remote-sensing instruments, constituting the first space-based system in the world capable of tracking ships continuously.

The monitoring centre will be based in India, the official added.

"With a revisit capability (of the satellites), this makes possible to task acquisitions several times a day. It will also be able to detect oil slicks and trace their origin," the official said.

The main purpose of this is to trace illegal spillage of oil by ships. The Indian Ocean Region has several Sea Lanes of Communication (SLOC) and used by many ships every



day. The satellites will be operated jointly by France and India to monitor ships in the Indian Ocean.

The system will also cover a wide belt around the globe, benefiting a broad range of French economic interests, the official said.

Parts of the satellites will be built in both the countries and launched from India, he added.

CNES and the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) are also operating a number of climate-monitoring satellites together.

'Trishna', a highly precise thermal infrared observer, will also be part of the fleet of Indo-French satellites.

After a successful design phase led by a joint team of ISRO-CNES, the satellite is now set to enter its development phases in the coming months, the official said.

"It will provide continuous thermal monitoring at high resolution, its unmatched capabilities serving precious applications ranging from sustainable agriculture to drought forecasting and monitoring of urban heat islands," the official said.

France and India are also collaborating on the Gaganyaan, India's first manned space mission.

France will also be part of ISRO's mission to Venus, the official added.

Modi pays tribute to freedom fighter Shyamji Krishna Varma

'SHYAMJI KRISHNA VARMA WAS FEARLESS AND SELFLESS'

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday paid tribute to revolutionary freedom fighter Shyamji Krishna Varma on his birth anniversary, and said he devoted himself towards India's freedom and inspired many nationalists.

"Shyamji Krishna Varma was fearless and selfless. He devoted himself towards India's freedom and inspired many nationalists. India bows to him on his Jayanti. We shall always work hard to realise his vision for our nation. Visit this site to know about him. Krantiteerth.Org," he tweeted.

The website notes that Varma, who was born in 1857, had set up a revolutionary centre in 'India House' at London and propagated the cause of India's independence through his writings in a publication journal called 'The Indian Sociologist'.

For first time annual DGPs, IGP's meeting to be held virtually

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

For the first time in its history, the annual conference of the country's top police brass will be held virtually next month amid the coronavirus pandemic, officials said on Sunday.

About 250 officers in the rank of DGP and IGP from all states, Union Territories and central government will take part in the two-day virtual meeting to be attended by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union Home Minister Amit Shah, NSA Ajit Doval among others.

The key role played by police during a disaster and pandemic, new-age crimes like cyber terrorism, radicalisation of the youth and the Pakistan-sponsored militants in Jammu and Kashmir will be discussed during the conference, to be held in multiple sessions, a Union Home ministry official told PTI.

The conference will be held in the last week of November, the official said.

As the role of police during the ongoing pandemic came under wholesome praise from all quarters, the meeting is expected to discuss how to enhance their knowledge and capabilities to handle natural disasters and such health crisis, the official said.

The state police chiefs will share their experiences in handling pandemic and how the police have helped the distressed people and the migrant workers during the nationwide lockdown.

The prime minister is likely to make special mention about the exemplary work done by the police personnel while fighting the coronavirus, the official said.

According to an estimate, about 75,000 police and paramilitary personnel were infected by coronavirus in the country and about 600 of them succumbed to the virus.

Among those infected include about 32,500 paramilitary personnel and 24,000 policemen in Maharashtra, the worst hit state in India.

WHO calls on vaccine makers to submit EOI for its evaluation

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

As the race for manufacturing the Covid-19 shot gathers pace, the World Health Organization (WHO) has called on vaccine makers to submit an expression of interest (EOI) for its evaluation.

Priority will be given to candidate vaccines that are expected to meet all or most of the WHO-published Target Product Profile (TPP) characteristics, said the WHO in a statement, adding that those EOIs that are considered acceptable to proceed with the submission of a dossier, will be assessed according to either the Emergency Use Listing (EUL) procedure or Prequalification.

Interested manufacturers can submit expressions of interest for vaccines evaluation by a letter to the vaccines and immunisation devices assessment team. "The letter should include name of the product, contact person, email address, description of the vaccine, presentation, indication, current phase of clinical trial, date of initiation and completion, high level details of interactions with national regulatory authorities, agreement in principle to allow national regulatory authorities to share con-



fidential information with WHO to facilitate collaboration, status of interactions with COVAX," as per the statement from the global health agency.

Manufacturers that meet the criteria and have submitted a complete EOI will be contacted to schedule a pre-submission meeting to discuss the assessment procedure to be used (EUL/PQ), assessment pathway, date of submission of the dossier, readiness of submission package, upcoming availability of supplemental data and other important information that will help the manufacturer make decision on the submission and will help WHO coordinate resources to assess the dossier within the shortest possible timeline, details of rolling submissions and general requirement for data to be

submitted. The purpose of the WHO prequalification assessment is to provide assurance that candidate vaccines meet the WHO recommendations on quality, safety and efficacy, including compliance with WHO recommended good manufacturing practice (GMP) and good clinical practice (GCP) standards; and meet the operational specifications for packaging and presentation of the relevant United Nations (UN) agency.

"This is to ensure that vaccines provided through the UN for use in national immunisation services in different countries are safe and effective, and are suitable for the target populations, at the recommended immunisation schedules, and with appropriate concomitant products," the WHO added.

Nitric Oxide can be effective in curing SARS-CoV-2-Virus: Study

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Researchers have found that Nitric Oxide (NO), a compound with antiviral properties which was widely used for treatment of coronavirus in 2003 SARS epidemic, can be effective in curing SARS-CoV-2-Virus causing Covid-19. The study is published in the journal Redox Biology.

"To our knowledge, nitric oxide is the only substance shown so far to have a direct effect on SARS-CoV-2," said Åke Lundkvist, a professor at Uppsala University, who led the study.

Since there is still no effective cure for COVID-19, the main emphasis in the treatments tested has been on relieving symptoms. This can shorten hospital stays and reduce mortality. To date, however, it has not been possible to prove that any of these treatments has affected the actual virus behind the infection.

Nitric oxide (NO) is a compound produced naturally in the body. Its functions include acting like a hormone in controlling various organs as per the study.

It regulates, for example, tension in the blood vessels and blood flow between and



within organs. In acute lung failure, NO can be administered as inhaled gas, in low concentrations, to boost the blood-oxygen saturation level. During the SARS (severe acute respiratory syndrome) coronavirus epidemic of 2003, this therapy was tried out with success. One key reason for the successful results was that inflammation in the patients' lungs decreased, said the scientists.

This property of nitric oxide - the protection it affords against infections, by being both antibacterial and antiviral - is the very one that now interests the researchers.

Their study builds further on a discovery about the coronavirus that caused the first SARS epidemic. In 2003, NO released from S-Nitroso-N-acetylpenicillamine (SNAP) proved to have a distinct

antiviral effect. The researchers from Uppsala University and Karolinska Institute have now investigated how the novel coronavirus involved in the current pandemic, SARS CoV-2, reacts to the compound. And SNAP was shown to a clear antiviral effect on this virus, too - and an effect that grew stronger as the dose was raised.

"Until we get a vaccine that works, our hope is that inhalation of NO might be an effective form of treatment. The dosage and timing of starting treatment probably play an important part in the outcome, and now need to be explored as soon as possible," Åke Lundkvist said.

The research group are now planning to proceed by investigating the antiviral effects of NO emitted in gas form, the study said.

Dry weather likely to be over in most parts of northwest India during next five days

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) on Sunday said dry weather is likely to be over most parts of northwest India during the next five days. According to the IMD, a low-pressure area is lying over northwest and adjoining west central Bay of Bengal off Odisha-north and Andhra Pradesh coasts. Under its influence, widespread rain and moderate thunderstorm with lightning is very likely over Odisha, Jharkhand, Gangetic West Bengal during the next 3-4 days. Heavy rainfall is very likely over Odisha during October 4 to 6 and over Gangetic West Bengal and Chhattisgarh during October 5 to 6.

IMD has declared a watch for a monsoon depression in the Bay of Bengal, the first in the post-monsoon season, from a new low-pressure area materialising around October 9 after an incoming 'pulse' from the upstream South China Sea matures in stages.

In the post-monsoon season, it is usual for the Bay of Bengal and the upstream South China Sea to rhyme in unison as south-westerly monsoon flows gradually ebb and are replaced by the north-easterly to easterlies conjured up by the seasonal anticyclone over the Tibetan highlands. Rainfall may increase over Odisha and coastal Andhra Pradesh from October 11-13 as the fresh low forms. Squally winds speeding to 40-50 km/hr may prevail of the North Andaman Sea, East Central and adjoining South-East Bay on October 9 and 10. Wind speeds could accelerate to 50-60 km/hr over the Central Bay on October 10 and 11 over North Coastal Andhra Pradesh and Odisha coasts and adjoining North Bay on October 11.

The IMD said that withdrawal of the monsoon from North-West India stays stalled as a prevailing low-pressure over the Bay of Bengal consolidates its grip on the opposite side over East India.

8,353 more afflicted in Kerala, 5,489 in TN

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI
Kerala on Sunday diagnosed 8,353 new Covid-19 cases while the total number of patients reached 84,497. The State also confirmed 23 deaths due to Covid-19 taking the total fatalities till date to 836. Neighboring Tamil Nadu diagnosed 5,489 new patients on Sunday while the total number of Covid-19 patients in the State stood at 46,120.

The Kerala Government Medical Officers Association has threatened of an indefinite agitation as the Government suspended on Friday a Covid nodal officer who is a senior doctor and two veteran nurses from Medical College Hospital, Thiruvananthapuram on charges of mistreating a patient

suspended on Friday a covid nodal officer who is a senior doctor and two veteran nurses from Medical College Hospital, Thiruvananthapuram on charges of mistreating a patient.

entering a phase of uncertainty and disarray. The Kerala Government Medical Officers Association has threatened of an indefinite agitation as the government

This gave rise to a series of chain reactions as seven doctors of four Medical Colleges in the State resigned from the post of Covid Nodal Officer. Kozhikode tested 1,164 new cases while the capital city of Thiruvananthapuram tested 1,119 new patients. Now Kerala has overtaken Tamil Nadu in the total number of active cases as well as the number of new patients diagnosed on a daily basis.

2 Indian Navy officers killed in glider crash

KOCHI: A power glider of Indian Navy crashed near the BOT Bridge at 7.15 am on Sunday. Both the crew members died on the spot. They have been identified as Lieutenant Rajiv Jha (39) and Petty Officer Sunil Kumar (29).

While Jha was from Dehradun, Kumar hailed from Bhoj in Bihar. The glider was on a routine training sortie when it developed technical glitch and crashed down. The glider and the staff belonged to INS Garuda, the naval air station of the Southern Naval Command.

The debris of the glider has been taken to the Southern Naval Command headquarters at Kochi and a board of inquiry has been ordered by the Indian Navy.

Centre calls meeting on Gorkhaland issue

Send letters to Bengal Govt, all stake holders for Oct 7 meet

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA
In a curious development, the Central Government has sent letters to the Bengal Government and other stake holders in the Darjeeling Gorkhaland movement asking them to attend a meeting in Delhi, sources said.

According to sources in the State Government, the Union Home Ministry has written letters to Principal Secretary Gorkhaland Territorial Authority and the GTA chairman Benoy Tamang inviting them in a meeting to be held at North Block on October 7.

Apart from the State Government and Tamang, letters have also been sent to the Bimal Gurung faction of Gorkha Janmukti Morcha, sources said adding the letter has been addressed to Gurung

the former GJM chief and GTA chairman until his party witnessed a split in the wake of a violent movement a few years ago in Darjeeling giving rise to a second pro-State Government faction led by Benoy Tamang.

With Gurung and his deputy Roshan Giri since then going into political hibernation and a near-total peace returning in Darjeeling hills the timing and purpose of the letter has raised many an eyebrow.

The letter has also evoked concerns because of the fact that it for the first time refers to the specific term called "Gorkhaland" which thus far has been consciously and carefully avoided by both the Left Front and the Trinamool Congress Governments.

Earlier there had been no meeting with any agenda on

the specific term of Gorkhaland," said a Trinamool Congress leader and MLA from North Bengal wondering whether the State Government would at all participate in the meeting.

"There seems to be a specific agenda on the part of the BJP to create a fresh ruckus ahead of the Assembly elections so that they can pocket the Gorkha votes in the Gills and Terai regions of North Bengal but if they want to once again open the Pandora's Box then they would suffer heavily in southern part of the State," said IK Lahiri a political observer.

For now however there was no communication from the pro-State Government Benoy Tamang faction on whether it would attend the meeting or not.

Pak resorts to heavy shelling on LoC at Poonch

Jammu: Pakistan resorted to heavy shelling and firing on Sunday at Indian positions on the Line of Control (LoC) in Jammu and Kashmir's Poonch district.

At about 3.20 a.m., Pakistan initiated the unprovoked ceasefire violation by firing with small arms and intense shelling with mortars along the LoC in Mankote sector, Defence Ministry Spokesman Colonel Devender Anand said. "Indian army retaliated befittingly," he added. Since the beginning of this year, Pakistan has been violating with impunity the bilateral ceasefire agreement signed by the two countries in 1999. In over 3,190 such ceasefire violations since January 2020, 24 civilians have been killed and over 100 injured.

Maha Cong to stage satyagraha today to demand justice for Hathras family

PN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI
As part of its ongoing protests against the "insensitive" manner in which the BJP's Yogi Adityanath Government handed the Hathras gangrape incident, the Maharashtra Congress will hold a State-wide Satyagraha on Monday to demand justice for the victim's family in Uttar Pradesh.

its head in shame, but the BJP's Yogi Adityanath government continues to remain insensitive. This case was handled in a very irresponsible and dictatorial manner. Instead of giving justice to the victim's family, the Uttar Pradesh government threatened them. Our fight will continue till the victim's family gets justice.

Maintaining that women and girls are not safe in the BJP-ruled states, the State Congress demanded to know as to why Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who chanted the slogan of 'Beti Bachao' is silent even today. Thorat said that his party would hold a state-wide

satyagraha tomorrow to demand an answer from the "egoistic and insensitive" BJP government in Uttar Pradesh ensure that the victim gets justice. He said the satyagraha would be held at all the district headquarters in the state. Thorat said he would participate in the Satyagraha to be organised in Mumbai.

Demanding a Supreme Court-monitored inquiry into the Hathras incident, Thorat rooted for the suspension of Hathras district collector "Why did the police burn the body of the victim by dousing it in petrol? Why was the victim's family threatened and misled

body that was burnt was of the victim? The victim's family has the right to know the answers to these questions and the Yogi Adityanath government will have to answer these questions," the state Congress chief said.

Thorat charged that the "arrogant and dictatorial" Yogi Adityanath had dismantled the democracy in his State. He said this after Congress MP Rahul Gandhi and General Secretary Priyanka Gandhi were stopped on their way to Hathras and manhandled.

by the UP administration? And what is the guarantee that the

expressed their anger in protest against the repression from the Uttar Pradesh government. "Finally, the UP government came to its senses and allowed Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi to visit the victim's family. But on the way, the Congress workers were beaten with sticks and the male police officers went to the extent of touching the clothes of AICC general secretary Priyanka Gandhi. This shows the cheap mentality of the Yogi Adityanath government towards women. Public will not forget this incident and will pull the BJP and its arrogance down," Thorat said.

Situation tense from Hing Nagri to Talanagari

PRADEEP SAXENA

A spark emanating from Hathras, a city of literature lovers known as Hing Nagri, is reaching Talanagari.

On one hand in Hathras, there is a tense situation after the protest against the upper castes, the same situation has started arising in Talanagari.

Till now only Scheduled Caste people were protesting, but now people of Swarna society (especially Kshatriyas and Brahmins) are also joined this protest.

Uncle rapes 4-yr-old girl

Aligarh: In a village in Khair Kotwali area of Aligarh, a case of rape of a four-year-old innocent by a relative has come to the light.

The accused first raped the innocent and then escaped leaving her in the tube well. The family was shocked to see a girl child soaked in blood.

On the information, CO and SP reached the spot and filed a case against the accused uncle and one more person. Several police teams led by Khair Inspector have been searching for the accused culprit.



BJP workers during a protest rally from Sabe village to Diva railway station, demanding to fill the potholes, in Thane on Sunday

10,000 women, groups worldwide seek justice for gangrape victim of UP

PN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

More than 10,000 people from all walks of life, cutting across caste, religion, gender, occupation and communities from almost every state in India and more than a dozen countries on Sunday condemned the Hathras incident and demanded justice for the heinous rape, brutalising attack and murder of a young Dalit woman there.

The people from across the country and the countries like the US, UK, Canada, Australia, UAE, Hong Kong, Japan, to Nepal, Netherlands, Sweden and Slovenia said in a joint statement said: "Despite a continuing saga of countless other cases of brutal sexual assault and murders especially of young Dalit women the conscience of this nation does not seem to be shaken enough to do anything serious to stop the systematic targeting of women, Dalits and the poor." "While there is a historicity to these inci-

dents, under CM Yogi's rule, Uttar Pradesh has only gone from bad to worse. Crimes against women and Dalits have increased, and police have been given unlimited powers without any accountability. Today UP tops the charts for atrocities against Dalits, it also tops the charts for crimes against women," they said in their joint statement.

The signatories to the statement said that even as the tragic news of the death of the victim from Hathras was coming in, more cases of sexual violence on Dalit women have come up from Balrampur, Bulandshahr, Azamgarh, all in UP. "The growing support base for Thakurs, the fact that no official visited the girl's family even once after her death, tells us the facts as they are, nobody cares and caste solidarity remains one of the ugliest and strongest kinship performances of the modern Indian State and one that must be challenged and broken.

Parents responsible if daughters raped, says BJP MLA from UP

BALLIYA

In a bizarre statement, Surendra Singh, BJP MLA from Balliya, has said that incidents like the alleged gang-rape and murder of a 19-year-old Dalit girl in Hathras can be stopped only if parents inculcate good values in their daughters.

Talking to local reporters in Balliya, the BJP MLA said neither governance nor use of weapons can prevent such crimes. "Incidents like these can be stopped with help of good values - 'na shashan se, na talwar se'. All parents should teach their daughters good values. It is the combination of governance and good values that can make the country beautiful," he told a news agency.

Surendra Singh has been known for making controversial statements. Singh had earlier stoked a controversy by comparing government

officials with prostitutes. "Prostitutes are better than officials. They take money and dance all night. But these officers despite taking money from the public, don't do their work," he had said.

He also landed in controversy when he stated that "Muslims who have many wives and children in large numbers have an animalistic tendency." "In the Muslim religion, you know that people keep 50 wives and give birth to 1,050 children. This is not a tradition but an animalistic tendency. In society, giving birth to only two to four children is normal," the BJP leader was quoted as having said.

He has also made objectionable remarks on Congress president Sonia Gandhi and BSP president Mayawati.

Pregnant Bulandshahr teen claims rape; 3 booked in UP

IANIS ■ BULANDSHAHR (UTTAR PRADESH)

A 16-year-old girl has forwarded a complaint of gang-rape to the police on WhatsApp after she was found pregnant. The teen has claimed she was raped multiple times by three men during a course of over one-and-half years.

A team led by a woman circle officer was sent to the girl's home where her statement was recorded and an FIR under suitable sections was registered.

Three people have been booked for rape case, including a 72-year-old man. "The family of the rape survivor got to know about the ordeal of the girl after her condition deteriorated recently and she was taken to a local hospital where the family was informed about her pregnancy," Senior Superintendent of Police (SP), Bulandshahr, Santosh Kumar said.

"In a statement to the police, the rape survivor said she was sexually harassed by one of the accused, Shrichand, a 72-year-old man. The second accused in the case is Balveer, 52, younger brother of Shrichand who allegedly raped the girl on several occasions. Third accused Mahesh, a milk vendor, is also accused of raping the girl," the SSP said.

Police also claimed Balveer had facilitated a loan of Rs 1.5 lakh to the family and there was a brawl recently when he confronted the family for its repayment.

"Over a year ago, the rape survivor's brother had sustained severe injuries in a train accident. Balveer had facilitated a loan from a Noida farm house owner to the family. The accused claimed that a brawl ensued on Thursday when he approached them for its repayment," the SSP said.

UP BJP youth leader arrested on rape charges

IANIS ■ PRAYAGRAJ (UTTAR PRADESH)

The Prayagraj police on Sunday arrested Shyam Prakash Dwivedi, vice president of BJP Yuva Morcha, who was absconding after charges of gang-rape by a student.

The Kashi Prant or Varanasi unit leader was arrested from near Bakshi Dam. Another accused, Anil Dwivedi, has already been arrested.

According to reports, a B.A student had alleged about a fortnight ago that she had been gang-raped by Shyam Prakash Dwivedi and Anil Dwivedi at gun point.

The victim claimed that the accused had led her to his hotel and raped her there with his friend. She stated that earlier in March,

the two accused had barged into her house and had raped her. The family was afraid of the consequences and asked her not to report the incident.

The Colonelganj police had registered the case and started investigations. The medical examination of the victim was also done and her statement was recorded in the presence of a magistrate.

The opposition parties even put up posters of the BJP leader at the Subhash crossing to highlight the police failure in arresting the main accused. Anil Dwivedi was arrested last week.

SP City, Dinesh Singh said that the charge sheet in the matter would be submitted at the earliest so that the accused get punishment.

42 security personnel among 123 new Covid patients in Nagaland

Kohima: Nagaland's COVID-19 tally rose to 6,552 on Sunday as 123 more people, including 42 security personnel, tested positive for the infection, a health official said.

Seventy-four fresh infections were reported in Dimapur district, 48 in Kohima and one in Longleng, Health Minister S Pangnyu Phom said. Fifty-one more people have been cured of the disease, he said.

Nagaland now has 1,221 active coronavirus cases, while 5,258 people have been cured of the disease so far. Additional Director of Health Department, Dr Denis Hangsing, said in a COVID-19

bulletin. The recovery rate among the COVID-19 patients in the state stands at 80.22 per cent, he said.

A total of 22 coronavirus patients have died so far, of whom five due to comorbidities, while the cause of death of five others is being investigated, the official said.

Fifty-one COVID-19 patients have migrated to other states so far, he said. Dimapur has the highest number of active coronavirus cases at 743, followed by Kohima (358), Mon (75) and Tuensang (31), the official said.

A total of 81,989 samples have been tested for COVID-19 so far, he added.

J&K's Covid tally breaches 79K-mark

Srinagar: J&K reported 878 Covid cases on Sunday, pushing the Union territory's tally to 79,106, health officials said.

A statement issued by the Information and Public Relations department said: Out of the 878 fresh infections, 456 are from Jammu division and 422 from Kashmir division. So far, 62,404 people have recovered completely.

As many as 1,242 patients have succumbed to the virus, which includes 11 people on Sunday. The number of active cases is now 15,460, out of which 8,810 are from Jammu division and 6,650 from Kashmir division.

AP Covid tally at 7.19 lakh; East Godavari crosses 1L mark

PTI ■ AMARAVATI

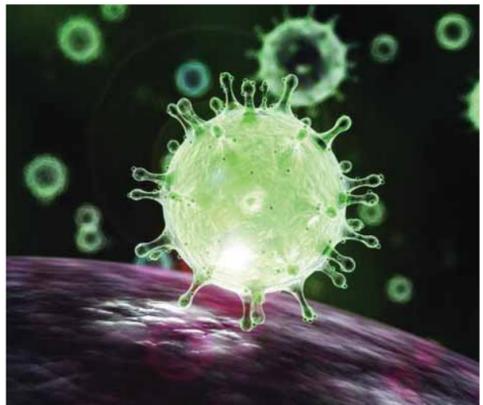
Andhra Pradesh's COVID-19 tally rose to 7.19 lakh on Sunday as East Godavari crossed the one-lakh mark, becoming the sixth district in the country to register cases in six digits.

The State saw an addition of 6,242 new coronavirus cases in 24 hours ending 9 AM on Sunday, taking the aggregate to 7,19,256.

The latest bulletin said 7,084 patients had recovered and another 40 succumbed to the infection in 24 hours.

The number of active cases dwindled to 54,400 after a total of 6,58,875 recoveries and 5,981 deaths so far, the bulletin said.

East Godavari district's COVID-19 tally stood at 1,00,785 total cases after 826



were added afresh. It is now behind Pune, Mumbai, Thane, Bengaluru Urban and Chennai in having over lakh COVID-19 cases. "The infection has now

spread to other parts of the district.

Initially, there were more cases in Rajamahendravaram (urban and rural) and Kakinada (urban and rural), but now more cases are being reported from the Konaseema region of the district," Special Chief Secretary (Health) K S Jawahar Reddy pointed out.

During most of August and September, the daily addition of cases in East Godavari was as high as 1,500, but in the last couple of weeks the number has fallen to 1,000 and now to around 800.

Its neighbour West Godavari crossed the 70,000 mark on Sunday, making it the second district in the state with the highest caseload.

The active cases in the West is 6,706.



Idols of Goddess Durga for the upcoming Durga Puja festival, at Kumartuli in Kolkata on Sunday

Tunnelling new heights

The Atal Tunnel that will bypass Rohtang pass will ensure year-round connectivity to Ladakh at a time we need it more than ever



The Chinese misadventure in Ladakh over the summer deeply disappointed a class of people who view a driving or riding trip to Ladakh as an essential step to manhood. They thought that if the Chinese were successful in their ingress and held on to their newly-acquired positions, summer road trips would never be the same again. Thanks to a ferocious counter by the Indian Army, not only can we still keep our summer tryst with Ladakh but now with the inauguration of the new Atal Tunnel, built between Manali and Leh, we can access Ladakh by road all-year-round. The nine-kilometre tunnel will

reduce 46 km between Manali and Leh and since motorists will not have to go through the daunting Rohtang Pass anymore, they will save an incredible five hours and not worry about the route being snow-bound or how to avoid rockfalls. However, for full all-weather connectivity, additional tunnels need to be built on the Manali-Leh route as the high passes — Baralacha pass (16,040 feet), Lachung La pass (16,800 feet) and Tanglang La pass (17,480 feet) — on the axis will impede movement during heavy winter snow.

The story of the longest highway tunnel in the world at 3,000 metres, envisioned by Atal Bihari Vajpayee after Pakistan's sneaky attempt to cross the border in Kargil in the summer of 1999, was a long and tedious one. Building a tunnel at Rohtang became necessary after the Kargil conflict as Pakistan tried to break the link between Kashmir and Ladakh by disrupting activity on the Srinagar-Leh road. Given its geographic positioning close to the Line of Control (LoC), this road is exposed to Pakistani firing. The Manali-Leh link could then become a secondary conduit for our forces in Ladakh and our supply line to frontline garrisons would be uninterrupted. The tunnel's foundation stone was laid by United Progressive Alliance (UPA) Chairperson Sonia Gandhi on June 28, 2010, in the Solang Valley near Manali, some 570 km from the national capital. Even though construction started in 2010, a combination of geological challenges, particularly tectonic faults in the Himalayas, as well as a lack of political will to push construction, led to inordinate delays. That ennui has changed after this summer's attempts by China to unilaterally change the status quo in eastern Ladakh. The opening of this tunnel will ensure that both troops and supplies can make it to the border much faster and will not have to depend on tenuous air supply lines of the snow-bound Rohtang Pass route in winter. It will also be a big boost to locals and the tourism sector. There are a number of technical firsts in this project. The horseshoe-shaped, single-tube, double lane tunnel with a roadway is an adaptation of the latest Austrian tunnelling method for construction. Taming the glacial-fed Seri rivulet inside the tunnel was one of the biggest challenges for the engineers. It has been designed to carry a traffic density of 3,000 cars and 1,500 trucks per day. And each can travel at a maximum speed of 80 km per hour. In case of an emergency, which may leave the main tunnel unusable, it has an overhead clearance of 5.525 metres. A fire-proof emergency egress tunnel has been built into the main tunnel itself. It is fully ride-safe with telephones every 50 metres, emergency exits every 500 metres and air quality monitoring every 1 km. Also, an automatic incident detection system with CCTV cameras has been installed every 250 metres. This is a great example of engineering as it is the world's longest highway tunnel above 10,000 ft but we need hundreds more of these projects if we are to really stand up and compete with China. Not just militarily but also economically. If India is to become a manufacturing and production hub, such projects are essential for faster movements and seamless connectivity.

It was suicide

AIIMS report rules out murder or foul play in Sushant Singh Rajput's death. Let's admit that he had a mental health issue



Finally, the nation may get closure over the sudden death of actor Sushant Singh Rajput and his family may find peace with confirmation that he did, indeed, commit suicide. An AIIMS panel led by Dr Sudhir Gupta, which has re-evaluated the actor's post-mortem report, has ruled out murder and has submitted its findings to the CBI. According to the experts, there were no injuries on the actor's body other than those caused by hanging and there were no marks of struggle or scuffle on the body and clothes to indicate that somebody had forced him into the act. So we have to accept that for all his outer

success, he was a deeply troubled and broken personality who couldn't handle the pressures of living very well and tragically chose to give up on life. Hopefully, we can accept his frailties with as much grace and dignity he deserves as his success. Hopefully, we can honour his work as an actor/social entrepreneur. Hopefully, we can respect his memory enough and not milk it for ruthless politicisation, blame games, running pointless news cycles and spinning conspiracy theories. Most importantly, we need to stop beating around the bush and look at facts as they are — that he had a history of severe depression and though a "hero" in public perception, was too fragile, vulnerable and weak inside. One that made him take an anti-hero plunge into death. This should have been the real conversation all along, that of mental health issue becoming a new pandemic of our times and unsparing in its grip on individuals, from the ordinary to the extraordinary. His death should also open up a debate on performance pressure in the entertainment industry where a slew of actors took the extreme step as they ran into financial difficulties during the lockdown. In fact, the post-millennials are more prone to depression given they are facing the worst doom and gloom of our lifetime. We need a dedicated mental health policy and must think about healing and coping mechanisms in our societal structures.

What was initially reported as suicide — and duly confirmed by the autopsy report given by qualified doctors who are expected to know what they are doing — quickly turned into a murder conspiracy involving the actor's family, embezzled money, black magic, an allegedly exploitative live-in partner, a political bigwig, Bollywood mafia and nepotism, insider-outsider debate, a media circus and what not. But above all, this tragedy was weaponised by political parties to settle scores among themselves, using his stary aura. For Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar, who has a severe image deficit, the case of a "son of the soil" exploited in faraway Mumbai couldn't have come at a more opportune time. Since the *aam* Bihar considers Sushant his "hero", Sushant was iconised as "the pride of Bihar" though none of these politicians are known to have had an association with him. As for the BJP in Maharashtra, it spares no effort to pull down the Shiv Sena-led alliance Government on some pretext or the other. In Sushant's case, its troll army played up an alleged association his girlfriend had with Sena scion Aaditya Thackeray, raking up more muck than prof. And finally, we must stop the witch-hunt against his girlfriend Rhea Chakraborty for pushing him over the edge. Let us accept that Sushant may have been a recreational drug user like others in the industry and though her confession and complicity in procuring drugs for Sushant may help trace the drug racket in the industry, there is no need for further character assassination. Let us stop the venom and instead focus on the devil in our minds.

opinion

The rape of conscience

We as a society have not moved beyond the culture of caste domination and consequently failed to generate a rigorous critique of caste-based atrocities



RINKU GHOSH

Are we, the self-professed aware society — the presumptuous lot who believe we have a right to shape discourse in this country and consume it ourselves for our own satisfaction — equally guilty of ignoring the Hathras gang-rape of a Dalit woman by upper caste men? Have we been conscionable enough or just wished her away with the smoke from her pyre, having exhausted all our concerns and candles about women's rights on Nirbhaya, just because she was closer to our kind, a working woman in Delhi? Or have we given into the fatigue and helplessness of justice that came seven years too late? Or in these days of all kinds of distancing, simply thought that the dust bowl of Hathras was too geographically and psychologically distant to merit our attention? Why did we have to wait for Nirbhaya's mother to take real and concrete action, asking her lawyer to take up the case for another wronged and abused daughter and fight legally? Where were activist-lawyers who are ever ready to move the courts? We never forgot to wish the Prime Minister on his birthday but why did we not use our hashtag power to force a comment out of him at that very blighted moment or ask him how his slogan of *beti bachao beti padhao* had been trampled upon and demonised as *beti daraao, beti hataao*?

If Nirbhaya was an overnight shocker, the Hathras girl wasn't. The news was doing the rounds though we chose not to register it. The first reports that the 19-year-old had been gang-raped, bruised, battered and left to die in the fields, where she had gone to graze the cows, surfaced in the middle of September. Local media was aware of it but exploitation of Dalit women by upper caste men is so common in the heartland that it isn't considered newsworthy or human enough to follow up on. This despite the fact that the rapists tried to strangle her, cut off her tongue for fear she could testify against them and almost broke her spine that left her paralysed. Now, it turns out, the girl had been stalked by these men for quite some time but for all the helplines and women's cells, in a tiny hamlet of about 15 Dalit families surrounded by upper caste headmen, such democratic tools stand no chance. She writhed in excruciating pain for 15 days in hospital, fight-



ing like a warrior for her dear life. Still, nobody, least of all the media, probed a gruesome murder of womanhood. Or even asked crime diary questions, like why wasn't an FIR registered, why were the FSL samples not taken immediately but days later when sperms are not to be found anyway to establish rape?

What were we, the literati, busy with then? Precious news hours on actor Kangana Ranaut's insult by the Shiv Sena, the demolition of her office and the stereotyping of the woman as a victim despite her privilege and power. The nation had to give her justice; who cared about a poor Dalit woman or the other Dalit women who are being violated even as we write this but will never be heard or talked about, snuffed out before they can make a sound? The girl had to die to make the national news. Besides, we mindlessly devoured the interrogation of Deepika Padukone on her old recreational habit of using party drugs. And "awwwd" at how her caring husband was a real man, worried about the "anxiety attacks" she allegedly suffers from. Simply because the guilt was not on us but a set of pretty, powerful people who we may desire to be but knowing we won't, are happy to just pass the burden of sin and resultantly feel smug about our moral order. We could hold a relentless media trial on actor Sushant Singh Rajput's death but not on the Dalit girl. It mattered little that the Hathras girl, when alive, just rippled along the margins of our consciousness but since she was not upper caste, she didn't threaten our peace or stir our conscience enough. All we had to do was stand by her when she had the spirit to fight, campaign with her.

But as thinking people, we chose not to react. Selective crusades are egoistic, not altruistic. An afterthought is a bitter consolation prize. Rather debt.

The fact of the matter is that for all our claims of diversity and plurality, we do not live it. We are deeply casteist and hegemonic and, therefore, territorial and protectionist about our kind. We like to read about and watch excesses on Dalits but never feel the need to own their problems as our own. Or fight to stop them as we did during Nirbhaya. We have allowed more offenders to act with impunity. Had we felt guilty and not pitiful, the Hathras case wouldn't be seen as another case of a Dalit woman who was raped and murdered in the fields, her use only worthy enough to satisfy the lust of dominant caste men, who didn't have societal sanction to do this with their own women. This hypocrisy is one social custom that has survived like a stubborn medieval vestige. I remember working on a special supplement on the Dalit millennium for this paper in 2000 and travelling to a village somewhere near the Haryana-Rajasthan border. Since the Dalits were cast-aways, they had been allowed a settlement in the fringes. Though social interaction was considered abhorrent, it didn't stop the upper caste men from going there for sexual pleasures, more by force, less as seeking a service. The Dalit men were either paid off handsomely to remain silent or allow access to their women. The women were not even asked, they were considered "available." For young upper caste men, a visit here was the rite of passage before they became worldly-wise. One of the upper caste men had then gloated that at least no

sex crimes had happened in the village or the youth hadn't turn deviant. As for Dalits, he reasoned, they got the money to run their lives. What has changed in 20 years as we claim to reform revisionist ways?

For a mindset to change, we, as civil society, haven't fought enough to make every case of gender and caste violence against Dalits a collective societal threat and give them prime time attention. We have confined Dalit issues to an activist sphere rather than making them the day's talking point. We have a Corona death tracker running on our devices every day. Do we have a tracker on excesses against women to remind ourselves what we need to do to stop them? How else can one explain the spiral in the crimes against Scheduled Castes and Tribes by seven per cent and 26 per cent in 2019, according to the National Crime Record Bureau (NCRB) figures. Uttar Pradesh tops this list of excesses. One just has to scan news reports of the last few months to find a repetitive pattern of violence against Dalit girls. They are usually attacked in fields when they are out on their chores and unescorted, they are brutally raped and killed and then left hanging from a tree, like a trophy in a bestial war, and a warning that more girls would meet a similar fate if their families sought remedial means. At other times, they are strangled. Some statistics show that at least four Dalit women are raped in India every day. The truth has got to be uglier considering the coercion by upper caste perpetrators, their hold on tools of governance, particularly the police. In the Hathras case, they left no trace of the victim at all. So that medieval

powerplay of the hunter and the hunted, that masochistic intimidation of the vulnerable prey and the patriarchal domination continue. As for the caste brotherhood, it is a societal phalanx and an insurance for political capital. So if journalists are asking why an upper caste congregation was allowed in Hathras to shield the criminals, as if it was a shocking discovery, this clannish protectionism is not new. Take the Unnao rape case. The girl survivor was raped in 2017 by then BJP MLA Kuldeep Singh Sengar. Her complaint was not registered by the local police, her family was threatened and her father died in police custody after being beaten up by the accused MLAs brother. No media, civil society or activist helped the girl till she threatened to immolate herself in front of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath's residence. She created her own media-grab moment which finally led to Sengar's sentencing in 2019. Had there been a justice campaign immediately after the victim's plight came to light, the tolerance threshold would not have been stretched limitlessly.

Worse, women are failing their own kind. The National Commission of Women, which was so quick to come down on the hurt caused to Kangana and sought the Shiv Sena leader's arrest, waited to craft a response and then wrote a letter to the UP DGP seeking an explanation on why the police rushed through the cremation of the girl without her parents' consent. Ruling BJP women members, irrespective of their ideological commitment and no matter who they are beholden to, should have spoken out against this brutal rape. Union Minister for Women and Child Development Smriti Irani had no statement to make on the Hathras episode but had time to defend our laws at the UN. "Several of our legislations such as those pertaining to sexual harassment of women at the workplace, protection of women from domestic violence, protection of children from sexual offences, and our criminal laws' amendments, have been strong enablers of women empowerment...over the past six years," she said. Nothing could be a bigger lie. And as for all the educated and free-thinking people around us, who are ever ready to create a digital wave on wearing a handloom sari or putting red and black dots for all kinds of human rights excesses around the world, from Kashmir to Syria to Black Lives, we didn't have time to consider Hathras as our day of reckoning. The shame is on us. The guilt is in our delay.

(The writer is Associate Editor, The Pioneer)

SOUNDBITE

Non-violence for Mahatma Gandhi meant many things. We need to practise non-violence as a potent weapon for truth and to cleanse our own outer and inner selves.

UN Secretary-General
—Antonio Guterres



Sometimes, I get surprised by my willingness to change myself, to adapt with changing patterns of performance, changing its very definition.

Actor
—Manoj Bajpayee



The funny thing about Punjab is that it has claimed that the Agricultural Produce Marketing Committee and MSP would be done away with. But both still exist.

Union Minister
—Prakash Javadekar



When the lockdown started, I took 20-25 days off, but I pushed myself to utilise all the things I had which were needed for practice.

Cricketer
—Mohammed Shami



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

A political stunt?

Sir — The news of US President Donald Trump and the First Lady Melania having tested positive for Coronavirus has shocked many, mainly because the Presidential election is due in November. Badly lagging behind in the polls against Democratic challenger Joe Biden, many believe it to be a political stunt. Stunt or not, Trump testing positive should be a warning sign to all those who believed what he said last week: "The end of the pandemic is in sight." In an interview with *The Telegraph*, Dr Richard Hatchett, chief executive of the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (Cepi) said, that, although he expects the first doses of COVID vaccine to be available from the first half of 2021, the demand is likely to outstrip supply for a successful vaccine until at least 2022. So, as we continue living with the virus with no vaccine in sight, it is imperative that people realise that everyone is equally vulnerable. Hence, we need to follow WHO's COVID protocols and stay safe. We cannot afford to be lax in the foreseeable future.

Bhagwan Thadani
Mumbai

The case that didn't matter

The lukewarm reaction of the political class to the verdict in the Babri Masjid demolition is on expected lines. Given that the demolition of the Masjid involves the religious sensitivities of the majority community, the main political parties have been cautious about their response while prominent Muslim and Left leaders from south India came down heavily on the verdict. All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen (AIMIM) president and MP from Hyderabad Asaduddin Owaisi said this judgement was given only to satisfy the Hindutva ideology. This puts a spotlight on the fact that political parties are concerned more with political gains than with moral principles.

After a series of lengthy delays, the verdict was pronounced after 28 years. Despite the importance the case carried, no Government, be it the Centre or the State, was interested in fast-tracking the case. Their disinterest in seeking justice in the demolition case shows that they did not want to alienate the Hindus.

As the construction of Ram Mandir is under way,



the demolition of the Babri Masjid continues to be a festering wound for Indian democracy and its constitutional values. It is a reminder of the ignominious failure of Central and State Governments to prevent the monstrosity. Truth and justice lie buried deep under the debris. The social evil called communalism rages on.

Venu GS
Kollam

Rules only for public

Sir — Madhya Pradesh Home Minister Narottam Mishra was in Indore to participate in a programme for distribution of assistance under the State Government's *Sambal Yojana*. However, he was in the news for a different reason. Mishra wasn't wearing a mask and when asked about it, he said, "I don't

wear a mask at any programmes". So are rules only for the people? Or maybe Mishra wasn't aware that Indore is among the worst-hit districts in Madhya Pradesh. Either way, it is time that people in power respect the rules laid down for the safety of the people because unlike them, the virus isn't biased.

Shahin Ahmed
Mumbai

Too little too late

Sir — Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath's decision to suspend Hathras SP Vikrant Vir and four other policemen over the rape-murder case of the 19-year-old Dalit woman was too little too late. From cremating the victim's body in the dead of night to preventing journalists from meeting

the family by erecting barricades to block all paths leading to the village, and manhandling the Opposition leaders on the pretext of imposition of Section 144, the UP Government has dealt all possible cards to isolate the victim's family and shield the accused. The sorry attempt to settle the growing unrest hasn't helped. On the contrary, it shows how rape and caste atrocities have been normalised in UP and to what extent the Yogi Government can go to hide it.

Bikash Barpujari
Guwahati

Witch-hunt

Sir — Any non-governmental organisation perceived "uncomfortable" has been put under the Government's scanner and Amnesty International has been the latest victim. Amnesty has closed its operations in India after the Government had its accounts frozen as they released reports on the human rights violations in Jammu and Kashmir and Delhi Riots.

Ganapathi Bhat
Akola

Send your feedback to:
letterstopioneer@gmail.com

FIRST COLUMN

Which revolutions will succeed?

Earlier, non-violent movements to overthrow illegitimate regimes used to succeed half the time, now they win only once in three attempts



GWYNNE DYER

The old calculation was simple and brutal: If you want to overthrow a tyrant, you must use violence. There was an occasional exception, like Mahatma Gandhi's use of non-violent protests to gain India's independence, but people wrote that off as being due to the fact that the British empire, being ruled by a democratic Government, was too soft. Tell that to the descendants of the tens of thousands of Irish, Kenyans, Malaysians, Yemenis, Iraqis, Egyptians and Afrikaners who were killed for trying to leave the British empire. It would be truer to say that the Gandhian non-violence obliged the British to avoid massive violence in India (and Pakistan got a free ride out on the same ticket).

And then, after bubbling underneath for four decades with a few partial successes like the American civil rights movement, non-violent tactics exploded into a kaleidoscopic range of peaceful revolutions in the late 1980s. From South and South-East Asia (the Philippines, Taiwan, Thailand, South Korea, Bangladesh) to Iran and the Communist-ruled countries in Eastern Europe, the technique seemed unstoppable. Though peaceful protest was drowned in blood in China in 1989, it kept notching up victories elsewhere: The Soviet Union, most of France's sub-Saharan colonies, South Africa and Indonesia in the 1990s; Serbia, Georgia, Armenia, Ukraine and Lebanon in the 2000s; and Egypt, Tunisia, Syria and Sudan in the 2010s. But all the non-violent uprisings of the 2010-2011 "Arab Spring", except Tunisia's, ended up being crushed by military coups or civil wars. And none of the current crop, in Belarus, Thailand and Algeria, is heading for a rapid or easy victory. Indeed, they might all fail.

What is happening to this technique that once swept all before it? It's more than three decades since this new technique started the world and dictators are not usually fools. They saw what happened to their former colleagues who got overthrown and started working out counter-strategies that would weaken the determination and cohesiveness of the protesters. For example, all but the stupidest dictators now know that while violence can scare individuals and small groups into silence, it is almost always a mistake to use it against very large groups. It just makes them angry, and they'll usually be back the next day in much larger numbers. Your real objective, as a dictator, should be to trick the protesters into using violence themselves. Then the thugs who love a street-fight will rise to leadership positions in the protests while most other people withdraw, disgusted by the violence. Then you can use massive violence against the violent protesters who remain. Dictators have also learned to block the internet and mobile phones at the first sign of protest, or to mine electronic communications between the protest organisers to stop small groups from uniting into an unstoppable big crowd. Keep that up long enough and you may just wait them out.

Harvard political scientist Erica Chenoweth is the go-to expert on this, and she has two very useful numbers for us. The first is that whereas non-violent movements to overthrow illegitimate regimes used to succeed half the time, now they win only one in three times. The other, more encouraging, finding is that if they can get 3.5 per cent of the population out in the streets, they almost always win. By this measure, the Belarus movement is still within reach of success as 3.5 per cent of Belarus's population is about 3,00,000 people, and demonstrations since early August, including those in cities outside Minsk, probably come close to that figure on most weekends. People are not yet bored, cowed, or in despair there as is evident by the protests on September 26, which saw 500 people being arrested.

The protests in Thailand against former general and coup-leader Prayut Chan-o-cha have not yet spread significantly beyond Bangkok and the mostly student protesters are certainly not even one per cent of the population. The movement continues to expand but its long-term prospects are doubtful. As for Algeria, the recent election of a new President closely linked to the last one (whom the protesters forced to resign last year) has brought the students back out into the streets in force. The COVID-19 lockdown robbed the movement of its momentum, however, and it is unlikely to regain it.

So maybe one success in three for regime change, just as Erica Chenoweth predicts. But her most important insight is that the 3.5 per cent number probably applies to any popular protest movement, including those in democratic countries. The goals of those movements need not be limited to overthrowing dictators. As she told the *Harvard Gazette* last year: "Through this (3.5 per cent) sounds like a really small number, but in absolute terms it's really an impressive number of people...Can you imagine if 11.5 million (Americans) were doing something like mass non-cooperation in a sustained way for nine to 18 months? Things would be totally different in this country." (Gwynne Dyer's new book is *Growing Pains: The Future of Democracy and Work*)

IF THIS GANDHI JAYANTI THERE IS ONE IDEAL WE WOULD LIKE OUR CHILDREN TO FOLLOW, IT SHOULD BE HEAR NO BAD...SEE NO BAD....SPEAK NO BAD!

—ACTOR
SHAH RUKH KHAN



GANDHI ALSO TAUGHT US TO SPEAK UP FOR THE TRUTH, THE DOWNTRODDEN, THE EXPLOITED, FOR OUR DALIT BROTHERS AND SISTERS. SAY SOMETHING.

—ACTOR
SAYANI GUPTA

Hope at the end of the tunnel

Built at an altitude of over 3,000 metres in the Pir Panjal Range, the Atal tunnel will not only provide all-weather connectivity but give our forces a strategic edge in troop movements



NAREESH KUMAR

We often express hope by saying, "There's light at the end of the tunnel." But in Himachal Pradesh, this adage is going to change to, "There's Lahaul-Spiti and Ladakh at the end of the tunnel." The long-awaited Atal tunnel was inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on October 3. Its south portal is located at a distance of 25 km from Manali at an altitude of 3,060 metres, while its north portal is near village Teling and Sissu, in Lahaul Valley.

The 9.2 kilometre long tunnel is going to open new horizons for the people of Lahaul, Spiti and other far-flung areas of Himachal Pradesh in the true sense of the word. At 10.5 metres wide and 5.52 metre high, this corridor was constructed at a cost of around ₹3,200 crore. It has state-of-the-art electro-mechanical systems, including the semi-transverse ventilation system where large fans would separately circulate air throughout the tunnel's length, plus the SCADA-controlled fire-fighting, illumination and monitoring system.

Built at an altitude of over 3,000 metres (10,075 feet) in the Pir Panjal Range of the majestic Himalayas, the Atal tunnel will provide the region with much-needed connectivity, round the year, with the rest of the country. It is a horse-shoe shaped, single-tube, double lane tunnel with a roadway of eight metres. It has been designed for traffic density of 3,000 cars and 1,500 trucks per day with a maximum speed of 80 kilometres per hour (kmph). This new-found connectivity with the rest of India will open up many livelihood opportunities for the 32,000 tribal residents of Lahaul and Spiti and the adjoining areas, too.

This strategically-important and extremely challenging tunnel has been built in the tough and hostile terrain and weather of the Himalayas by an expert team of engineers of the Indian Army's Border Road Organisation (BRO), who overcame the toughest infrastructural and engineering challenge to execute this project. The tunnel has consumed 12,252 metric tonnes of steel, 1,69,426 metric tonnes of cement and 1,01,336 metric tonnes of concrete, and a whopping 5,05,264 metric tonnes of soil and rocks were excavated during its construction by adopting the latest Austrian tunneling method. The engineering team also faced impediments from the fast-flowing water from Seri Nullah on top of the tunnel, thereby making it one of the toughest projects to be executed by the BRO.

The world's longest highway tunnel at an altitude above 10,075 feet, the Atal tunnel will reduce the distance between Solang Valley near Manali to Sissu in Lahaul by around 46 km. This will cut the travel time from around two-three hours to just 15 minutes, depending on the traffic flow. The project also gains importance as such infrastructure can translate into rapid and efficient delivery of supplies the whole year round.

Situated on the border of two nations, the tunnel will ensure swift movement of troops, speedy transportation of rations, weapons and other logistics, the need for which has been felt for a long time. In fact, given its strategic location, particularly for the defence forces, the feasibility study of the project was done in May 1990 and the geological report was submitted in June 2004, followed by a design and specification study that was prepared and finalised in December

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 THOUGH THIS TUNNEL WILL OPEN UP A WORLD OF OPPORTUNITIES FOR HIMACHALIS, CREATE MORE JOB OPPORTUNITIES, BOOST TRADE, TOURISM AND SALE OF FARM PRODUCE, IT WILL ALSO THROW UP A FEW CHALLENGES FOR THE LOCAL POPULATION OF THE REGION. ONCE THE INFLOW OF TOURISTS BEGINS, THEY WILL HAVE TO DO THEIR BIT TO PROTECT THE FRAGILE ENVIRONMENT, PRISTINE BEAUTY, CULTURE AND INNOCENCE OF THE PEOPLE. THE STATE GOVERNMENT AND THE TOURISM BOARD WOULD BE WELL-ADVISED TO REGULATE TOURIST FLOW



2006. The project received final technical approval in 2003 and tenders were floated in 2007. The foundation stone of the tunnel, which was at that time called the Rohtang tunnel, before it was changed to Atal tunnel by the NDA Government, was laid in July 2010 by UPA chairperson Sonia Gandhi. Though the project was scheduled to be completed by February 2015, it got delayed due to some unforeseen problems.

Now, that it is completed, the tunnel will ensure that the people of Lahaul Valley are no longer held hostage to the vagaries of nature as earlier the area used to be cut off from the rest of the country for about six months every year due to heavy snowfall.

Plus, the low temperatures also affected the power and communication infrastructure apart from disturbing life in general. Due to six months of snow, agricultural supplies from the area could not reach markets in northern India. The valley, known for the best potato production in the country, is also famous for its delicious cauliflower, peas, *kuth*, hops and fruits, especially apples. The all-weather connectivity to Lahaul Valley will now make it easier for the people to sell their produce throughout the year. Though the Spiti Valley will still be inaccessible in the winters beyond the Kunzum pass, the 117 km distance from Manali to Keylong, which used to take about five-six hours of travel time, will be reduced.

Given the tough terrain and the length of the tunnel, safety has been given top priority by the BRO. Consequently, there is a telephone facility every 150 metres of the stretch, a fire hydrant every 60 metres, emergency exits every 500 metres, a turning

cavern every 2.2 km, air quality monitors every one km, a broadcasting system and automatic incident detection system with CCTV cameras every 250 metres. It also has parking facilities in case of a vehicle breakdown. Meanwhile, avalanche control structures are being constructed to prevent future damage to the roads.

However, it is not just the specifications of the tunnel that are alluring. Its significance lies in the fact that it will be a harbinger of major social changes, denoting a difference in the outlook of the people who led a separate and cut-off existence from the rest of India for half of the year, consistently. The Atal tunnel will immensely fortify the horticulture and travel industry in the area, which are the main sources of livelihood for the people. It will also be a great boost for emergency healthcare in Lahaul Valley as critically ill patients had to be airlifted during the winters.

The opening of the route is good news for businesses hit by the pandemic. The hotels, homestays and tourism-driven businesses that used to operate only for six months in a year will get a new lease of life. Tourists stand to gain as well. Earlier, the establishments charged a premium from the tourists since they were open for a short period due to connectivity and weather issues. Now, with the opening of the tunnel, there is no longer a truncated tourist season of six months. Hence, there will be a major tourist flow throughout the year. Competition will increase and in the end this will benefit customers.

Imagine the growth this will bring in the number and variety of tourist facilities in Keylong and adjoining areas. Manali, the biggest tourist attrac-

tion of the State, may soon be just a stopover. According to Government data, 1.33 lakh tourists visited Lahaul in 2019 whereas a total of 1.72 crore people vacationed in Himachal Pradesh. This means that most of the tourists generally visited Kullu, Manali, Shimla, Dalhousie, Dharamshala and other famous destinations in the State which had greater accessibility and good infrastructure. However, Lahaul-Spiti had a low tourist footfall due to the rough terrain and connectivity issues and was just used as a stopover by people doing a road trip from Manali to Leh or vice versa. There are plenty of homestays and camping facilities at Jispa, Keylong and Sarchu in the Valley and these are mostly visited by tourists en route to Ladakh. This was a major source of revenue for locals as well as the State Government. However, the opening of the tunnel is expected to change all this and strengthen the local economy in every way.

Though this tunnel will open up a world of opportunities for Himachalis, create more job opportunities, boost trade, tourism and sale of farm produce, it will also throw up a few challenges for the local population. Once the influx of tourists begins, they will have to do their bit to protect the fragile environment, pristine beauty, culture and innocence of the locals. The State Government and the tourism board would be well-advised to regulate tourist flow. There will have to be a mechanism for the development of tourism infrastructure keeping in mind the need to preserve the beauty and environment of Lahaul and Spiti, which is still now known as the abode of gods.

(The writer is a columnist and senior communications professional)

Will 2020 end with a Third World War?

The world community will have to wait anxiously and watch the simmering conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan for the next few weeks



ANIL GUPTA

While the global community was glued to eastern Ladakh and the South China Sea (SCS) as flashpoints that may endanger global peace due to growing Chinese belligerence, another conflict has emerged in the Caucasus region. This area lies between the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea, mainly occupied by Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia and parts of southern Russia. The region is the lifeline of oil supply to neighbouring countries with major pipelines passing through here. It also serves as the border between Asia and Europe.

On September 27, a long-simmering conflict in the south Caucasus once again burst into open clashes between Azerbaijan and Armenia. The cause of the ongoing battle, which soon may

erupt into an all-out war since both nations have declared martial law, is the disputed enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh. The control of this enclave was ceded to Armenia in 1994 after a bloody separatist conflict.

Universally, Nagorno-Karabakh is accepted as part of Azerbaijan. Both countries have been fighting each other since then at irregular intervals. The latest provocation dates back to July this year when Armenia killed a general and other officers of Azerbaijan's military in a missile strike, leading to a big uproar in Baku which swore to take revenge soon. Azerbaijan was buoyed by the immediate Turkish offer to prepare for the response.

Nagorno-Karabakh proper has an area of about 4,400 square kilometres but Armenian forces occupy large swathes of the adjacent territory. Long-simmering tensions between majority Christian Armenians seeking union with Armenia and mostly Muslim Azeris began boiling over as the Soviet Union began to disintegrate in its final years. The USSR collapsed in 1991 and the republics became independent nations. In late 1991, a majority of Armenian inhabitants declared inde-

pendence from Azerbaijan with Armenia's support. It led to the emergence of the Republic of Artsakh, which to date remains unrecognised.

The efforts of Azerbaijan to reimpose its authority led to a fight for ownership, soon converting into the bloodiest war between the two neighbours. The war saw atrocities on both sides. A 1994 ceasefire left Armenian and Azerbaijani forces facing each other across a demilitarised zone, where clashes are frequently reported. The region has since been under the control of Armenian forces, though it is still internationally recognised as part of Azerbaijan, as stated earlier. International mediation, including United Nations resolutions, have failed to resolve the crisis.

The new flashpoint has one thing in common to the other two, and that is the expansionist ambitions of another ultra-nationalist leader, the Turkish President, Recep Tayyip Erdogan. Ever since his ascendancy to power, he has embroiled Turkey militarily in neighbouring countries like Iraq, Syria and Libya, including the eastern Mediterranean region. He is on the opposite side of Russia in both Syria

and Libya, leading to regional rivalry. Turkey is also pressing territorial claims in disputes with Greece and Cyprus, thus creating alarm among its North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) allies. It has a powerful military, which has also led Erdogan to view himself as the future leader of the Muslim world, displacing the traditional royal house of Saud. This is just like Chinese President Xi Jinping, who is dreaming to be the world leader replacing the US President. Erdogan is also preparing a non-Arab Muslim alliance with the active connivance of Pakistan. His growing assertiveness in the region has changed his nation's power dynamics.

While all other nations like India, China, the US, France, Iran and the European Union (EU) have asked both countries to refrain from a full-fledged war and return to the negotiating table to resolve the issue through dialogue, Turkey and Pakistan have offered open support to Azerbaijan and egged it on to liberate the disputed enclave from Armenian control.

French President Emmanuel Macron has warned Turkey to refrain from sending jihadists as mercenaries

to the troubled area. It has also been reported that Pakistan has already sent Al Qaeda and Taliban jihadists to the area along with one unit of regular soldiers. Pakistan, which is already known as the fountainhead of terror, wants to convert this region into another epicentre of jihadist terror like Afghanistan. The majority jihadists, despite being Sunnis, are willing to fight alongside the Shiite Azeris against Armenians because they consider it as a holy war between the Muslims and the Christians. While Vatican has also called for restraint, both Pakistan and Turkey are encouraging Azerbaijan to continue the fight and have expressed their solidarity towards Muslim brotherhood. Pakistan is also keen to develop the area into another zone of Muslim liberation like Palestine and Kashmir. Whether this has the covert support of China is not yet clear but both Turkey and Pakistan enjoy good relations with each other.

The geopolitics of the region is very complicated. Turkey and Pakistan have military alliances with Azerbaijan, while Armenia has a similar treaty with Russia, which has a military base in Armenia. Russia also enjoys good

relations with Azerbaijan and is its major arms supplier. Russia, France and the US jointly chair the Minsk Group, which was founded in 1992 by the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, now known as the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) to try and find a peaceful solution to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. All the three nations have close ties with Armenia. Turkey, being an important NATO member, has caused an imminent crack in the organisation with France and the US inclined towards Armenia.

Armenia has responded to the peace call by the Minsk Group but Azerbaijan's response is not yet known. Israel is an arms supplier to Azerbaijan but with Turkey openly supporting Azerbaijan and its newly-formed ties with Muslim nations in the Middle East, it has put Israel in a Catch-22 situation. Iran shares borders and is also friendly with both the nations. But in case of a religious war, it would have to decide to support Azerbaijan or stay neutral.

With global terror outfits moving into the area and more Muslim coun-

tries backing Azerbaijan, the situation is getting polarised. India, too, has a stake in the region. The North-South Corridor linking Mumbai to Moscow via Chababar passes through Azerbaijan. India will not like the region to become another jihadist terror hub.

Outright war could put key pipelines at risk. Any direct involvement by Turkey will push Russia into the war. France has already warned Turkey. A direct attack on Armenia would invoke its defence pact with Russia and draw it into the conflict. In case of a Muslim versus Christian fight, many countries, including the EU, are likely to join, splitting the NATO. This would have repercussions beyond the region as well. If China decides to join its friends, Pakistan and Turkey, it may lead to a Third World War. But with China tied down in a confrontation with India and US-backed Taiwan, it is less likely. The world will have to wait anxiously and watch the happenings of the next two-three weeks to determine if 2020 will end peacefully or not. Yes, world peace is at stake.

(The author is a Jammu-based security and strategic analyst)

Azerbaijan's No 2 city targeted in fighting

Prez Trump faces credibility crisis over health scare

Baku (Azerbaijan): The fighting between Armenian and Azerbaijani forces continued on Sunday over the separatist territory of Nagorno-Karabakh, with Azerbaijan's second-largest city coming under attack.



A building of a residential area burns after night shelling by Azerbaijan's artillery during a military conflict in self-proclaimed Republic of Nagorno-Karabakh, Stepanakert, Azerbaijan on early Sunday AP

Azerbaijani officials said Sunday that Armenian forces attacked Ganja, the country's second largest city.

Hikmet Hajiyev, an aide to the Azerbaijani president, tweeted a video depicting damaged buildings, and called it the result of "Armenia's massive missile attacks against dense residential areas" in Ganja.

It wasn't immediately possible to verify the authenticity of the video.

Hajiyev said in another tweet that attacks on Ganja and other areas in Azerbaijan were launched "from territory of Armenia."

Armenia's Defense Ministry said that "no fire of any kind is being opened from the territory of Armenia in Azerbaijan's direction."

But Nagorno-Karabakh's leader, Arayik Harutyunyan, confirmed on Facebook he ordered "rocket attacks to neutralize military objects" in Ganja.

His spokesman, Vahram Poghosyan, said the territory's army destroyed a military airport in Ganja, a claim Azerbaijani officials denied.

The attack on the city killed one civilian and left four others wounded, the Azerbaijani

Foreign Ministry tweeted. Harutyunyan said he ordered his forces to stop the attacks on Ganja to avoid civilian casualties.

Nagorno-Karabakh's leader added that "proportionate and crushing" strikes targeting the opponent's forces would continue, if Azerbaijan fails "to draw appropriate lessons."

The fighting, which broke out on September 27 and has continued for eight straight

days, is the biggest escalation in years in the decades-long dispute over Nagorno-Karabakh.

The region lies within Azerbaijan, but is controlled by local ethnic Armenian forces backed by Armenia.

Both sides said the hostilities have spread beyond the breakaway territory and accused each other of attacking areas outside Nagorno-Karabakh.

Ganja, with a population of more than 330,000, is located roughly 100 kilometers (about 60 miles) north of Stepanakert, Nagorno-Karabakh's capital.

"Opening fire on the territory of Azerbaijan from the territory of Armenia is clearly provocative and expands the zone of hostilities," Azerbaijani Defense Minister Zakir Hasanov said in a statement Sunday.

As the fighting resumed

Sunday morning, Armenian officials accused Azerbaijan of carrying out strikes on Stepanakert and targeting the civilian population there.

Nagorno-Karabakh's leader Harutyunyan said that in response, his forces would target "military facilities permanently located in major cities of Azerbaijan."

In a statement issued later on Sunday, Azerbaijan's Defense Ministry rejected accusations of targeting civilians and civilian infrastructure.

Nagorno-Karabakh officials have said nearly 200 servicemen on their side have died so far.

Azerbaijani authorities haven't given details on their military casualties, but said 22 civilians were killed and 74 others were wounded.

Nagorno-Karabakh was a designated autonomous region within Azerbaijan during the Soviet era. It claimed independence from Azerbaijan in 1991, about three months before the Soviet Union's collapse. A full-scale war that broke out in 1992 killed an estimated 30,000 people.

By the time the war ended in 1994, Armenian forces not only held Nagorno-Karabakh itself but substantial areas outside the territory's formal borders, including Madagiz, the village Azerbaijan claimed to have taken on Saturday along with several others.

This week's fighting has prompted calls for a cease-fire

from around the world. On Thursday, leaders of Russia, France and the United States — co-chairs of the so-called Minsk Group, which was set up by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe in 1992 to resolve the conflict — issued a joint statement calling for an immediate cease-fire and "resuming substantive negotiations... Under the auspices of the OSCE Minsk Group co-chairs."

Azerbaijani President Ilkham Aliyev said that Armenia's withdrawal from Nagorno-Karabakh is the sole condition to end the fighting.

Armenian officials allege that Turkey is involved in the conflict and is sending fighters from Syria to the region.

Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinian said earlier this week that "a cease-fire can be established only if Turkey is removed from the South Caucasus."

Ankara has denied sending arms or foreign fighters, while publicly siding with Azerbaijan in the dispute.

On Sunday, Turkey's Foreign Ministry condemned the attack on Ganja, saying it was proof of Armenia's disregard for the law.

Ankara accused Armenia of attacking civilian residential areas, and claimed that Armenia could commit crimes against humanity.

"Armenia is the biggest barrier to peace and stability in the region," the ministry said. AP

Washington: One month from Election Day, President Donald Trump is facing a credibility crisis as yawning as his health crisis, at a moment when he needs the public's trust the most.

The president's coronavirus infection, as well as the illnesses of several aides and allies, has imperiled the highest levels of the U.S. Government.

The White House's efforts Saturday to project calm backfired in stunning fashion, resulting in a blizzard of confusing and contradictory information about the health and well-being of the commander in chief.

It's a moment months in the making, the collision of Trump's repeated defiance of his own administration's guidelines for staying safe during the pandemic and his well-known disregard for facts.

The result: deep uncertainty for Americans over who and what to believe about the health of the nation's leader at a perilous moment in U.S. History.

"This is bigger than Donald Trump. It's about the institution of the presidency," said Robert Gibbs, who served as President Barack Obama's first White House press secretary.

For any president, credibility in a crisis is paramount — the ability to rally

Americans of every political persuasion around a commonly accepted understanding of the situation.

For a president on the brink of an election, particularly one held in as tumultuous a year as 2020, it could be the difference between serving one term or two.

Yet Trump has squandered widespread credibility from the very start of his presidency, spending his first full day in office disputing official tallies of the crowd size at his inauguration and asking Americans to disregard photographic evidence showing that he drew fewer people to the National Mall in Washington than his predecessor.

The episode set the tone for the rest of his administration, with Trump creating alternate realities around issues big and small, amplified by the help of friendly media outlets. He frequently touts records and milestones that don't exist.

He spreads baseless rumors about his political opponents, including declaring without evidence that Joe Biden, his Democratic rival in the 2020 presidential campaign, might be on drugs in their debate. AP

Biden says some might pay price for backing him

Washington: Joe Biden says he urged some governors who wanted to endorse his presidential campaign to refrain from doing so because the Trump administration might retaliate by withholding medical supplies critical to COVID-19 relief.

Addressing a virtual town hall of the Amalgamated Transit Union town hall from Wilmington, Delaware, on Saturday, Biden said, "I probably shouldn't say this."

"I told some governors, don't endorse me who wanted to endorse me. Don't endorse me because you'll pay a penalty," Biden said.

"You won't get what you need from the federal government in terms of COVID prep," He added: "Not a joke, my word."

Biden's campaign has drawn the support of some leading Republicans who have broken ranks against their own party and President Donald Trump. AP

Russia reports 10,400 new daily cases, a record

Moscow: Coronavirus infections in Russia hit a new record on Sunday, with the government reporting over 10,000 new confirmed cases for the first time since mid-May.

The 10,499 new cases reported on Sunday bring the country's total to over 1.2 million. Russia currently has the fourth largest caseload in the world and has so far reported over 21,000 deaths.

The Russian authorities insist there are no plans to impose a second lockdown in the country that has lifted most of the virus-related restrictions imposed in the spring.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Friday another lockdown is currently



not being discussed in the government.

At the same time in Moscow, which reported over 3,000 new cases on Sunday in the biggest surge in months, officials have recommended the elderly to self-isolate at home and have extended upcoming school holidays by a week.

On Thursday, Moscow mayor also ordered employers to have at least 30 per cent of their staff work from home. AP

Ready to take China-B'desh strategic partnership to new heights: Xi

Beijing: Chinese President Xi Jinping said he stands ready with Bangladesh leaders to better align the two countries' strategies and jointly promote the construction of his multi-billion dollar Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) to take the strategic partnership of the two countries to new heights.

Xi made the remarks in an exchange of congratulatory messages with his Bangladesh counterpart, Mohammad Abdul Hamid, on the 45th anniversary of the establishment of the bilateral diplomatic relationship on Sunday.

In his message, Xi hailed the steady and long-term friendship saying he is ready to work with Hamid to better align development strategies with Bangladesh, step up cooperation under the framework of the BRI and push forward the China-Bangladesh strategic, coopera-

tive partnership to a new level, official media reported.

With over \$26 billion Chinese investments and \$38 billion dollars funding commitments, Bangladesh is one of the largest recipients of China's massive infrastructure project.

China has also offered zero-tariff treatment to 97 per cent of Bangladesh's exports by adding 5,161 more items to the existing list of 3,095 duty-free products.

The BRI seeks to build rail, maritime and road links from Asia to Europe and Africa in a revival of ancient Silk Road trading routes.

The issues related to BRI, earlier known as One Belt One Road (OBOR), has been a major bone of contention between India and China as one portion of the corridor passes through Pakistan-occupied Kashmir. AP

Besides Pakistan, where China initiated over USD 60 billion as part of the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), China has stepped up its huge infrastructure investments in Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Maldives rising concerns of its growing influence in India's immediate neighbourhood.

The BRI is President Xi's top priority initiative, which aims firm up China's global influence.

The initiative has, however, attracted allegations, especially from the US, of debt-diplomacy after Sri Lanka handed over its Hambantota Port to a state-run Chinese firm in 2017 for a 99 years' lease in a debt swap amounting to \$1.2 billion. Malaysia has also deferred several projects under the BRI, citing cost revaluation. AP

Mecca reopens for limited 'umrah' pilgrimage

AFP ■ MECCA

Mask-clad Muslims circled Islam's holiest site along socially distanced paths on Sunday, as Saudi authorities partially resumed the year-round umrah pilgrimage amid extensive health precautions after seven-month coronavirus hiatus.

Thousands of worshippers entered the Grand Mosque in the holy city of Mecca in batches to perform the ritual of circling the sacred Kaaba, a cubic structure towards which Muslims around the world pray.

The umrah, the pilgrimage that can be undertaken at any time, usually attracts millions of Muslims from across the globe each year but it was suspended in March due to the coronavirus pandemic. It will be revived in three

phases, with Saudi Hajj Minister Mohammad Benteen saying last week that 6,000 pilgrims per day will be allowed in the first stage to perform the umrah "meticulously and within a specified period of time".

A raft of precautions have been adopted to ward off any outbreaks during the umrah, according to state media.

The revered Black Stone in the eastern corner of the Kaaba -- which it is customary but not mandatory to touch during the pilgrimage -- will be out of reach, while the Grand Mosque will be sterilised before and after each group of worshippers.

Each group of 20 or 25 pilgrims will be accompanied by a health worker and medical teams will be on the ground in case of an emergency, Benteen said. AP

Firebrand cleric-cum-politician appointed as head of anti-government alliance in Pak

Islamabad: Firebrand cleric-cum-politician Maulana Fazlur Rehman has been unanimously appointed as the chief of the newly-formed Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM), an anti-government alliance launched by 11 Opposition parties to oust Prime Minister Imran Khan.

The decision was taken on Saturday during a virtual meeting of the Opposition parties attended by Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) supremo and three-time former prime minister Nawaz Sharif, Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) chairman Bilawal Bhattu Zardari, Balochistan National Party chief Sardar Akhtar Mengal among other senior politicians.

According to PDM's steering committee convener Ahsan

Iqbal, Sharif proposed 67-year-old Rehman's name as the alliance president and it was endorsed by PPP chairman Bilawal and others, the Dawn newspaper reported.

Sharif had initially proposed that Rehman should be appointed as the president on a permanent basis, but the idea was opposed by Bilawal and Awami National Party (ANP) leader Amir Haider Hoti, who suggested that the office should be given on a rotational basis to leaders of the constituent parties, the paper reported, citing sources.

There was an agreement among the leaders that Rehman should lead the PDM in the first phase as he had already led a demonstration, dubbed as 'Azadi March', against the present Pakistan

Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) government last year.

"Since the Maulana has already done a rehearsal and his party is more disciplined and has the ability to effectively mobilise the masses, therefore, in the first and decisive phase, he is the best choice," said one of the participants in the meeting.

Commenting on Rehman's appointment, Science and technology minister Fawad Chaudhry said it was a sad day for Pakistan that an "extremist Mullah" with ties to terrorist groups is selected to lead the opposition movement.

"Sad Day for Pakistan An extremist Mullah considered Close to terrorist groups of Afghanistan is selected to lead opposition movement against Government," Chaudhry tweeted. PTI

New Caledonia votes on becoming independent from France

Noumea (New Caledonia): Voters in New Caledonia turned out in large numbers on Sunday to decide whether the archipelago in the South Pacific should get independence from France and break ties that were first established in the mid-19th century.

Sunday's independence referendum is part of a three-decade decolonization effort aimed at settling tensions on the archipelago between native Kanaks seeking independence and residents willing to remain in France.

More than 180,000 voters were invited to answer the question: "Do you want New Caledonia to gain full sovereignty and become independent?"

"Today is not a day like any other. Everyone woke up with the will to express oneself (through the vote). This is a historic day," Robert Wayaridri, 60,

told The Associated Press.

In Noumea, the capital, large lines of people waited to vote under the hot sun, sometimes for hours. Almost 80% of voters had already casted their ballots one hour before poll stations closed, according to the French ministry of the Overseas.

Across the archipelago, horns and cheers could be heard all day in the streets, and some people waved pro-independence flags in a relaxed atmosphere.

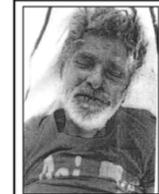
The FLNKS movement leading the independence campaign called on its supporters to stay "calm and respectful." Polling stations closed at 6 pm (9 am in mainland France). Results are expected later Sunday.

If voters choose independence, a transition period will immediately begin so that the archipelago can get ready for its future status. AP



Pro-independence supporters celebrate the results of the vote in Noumea, New Caledonia on Sunday AP

APPEAL FOR IDENTIFICATION



General public is hereby informed that an unidentified dead body of a male namely **Unknown, S/o: Unknown, R/o: Unknown was found at 01.10.2020 on Parking Near Bhairon Mandir, New Delhi. Dead body has been taken at Lady Harding Hospital where MLC No. 3093. Dead Body has been preserved at Lady Harding Hospital. In this regard DD No. 44A, dated: 01.10.2020 has been lodged at Police Station, Tilak Marg, New Delhi. Identification of an unidentified dead body of male is as under: Name: Unknown, Age: 58-60 Years, Height: 5'6", Complexion: Wheatish, Hair: Small Black & White, Face: Long, Build: Normal, Wearing: Red Black T-shirt, Black color Pant and Naked Foot. If anyone have any information or clue about this male deceased may kindly be inform undersigned.**

SHO
Police Station, Tilak Marg, New Delhi
DP/130/NDD/2020 Ph.: 011-23382100, 8750870526

South African coffin-maker saw Covid-19 at work and at home

Johannesburg: The coffin-maker knew death too well. The boxes were stacked in his echoing workshop like the prows of ships waiting for passengers. COVID-19 was turning his business upside down.

Then it moved into his home. Casey Pillay's wife was a midwife, delivering babies for coronavirus-positive mothers in Johannesburg, the epicenter of the pandemic in South Africa — once fifth in the world in number of cases — and on the continent.

That she would be infected, they knew, was a matter of time. When she fell ill during the country's surge in cases, she

retreated to the main bedroom. Pillay withdrew to a bedroom next door. Scared, he barely slept, managing a few hours before dawn as his wife wrestled with some of the worst days of her life.

"I'd literally be on eggshells listening to what she was going through," Pillay said Tuesday. "I would go in every now and then, fully kitted up, just to check vitals, when she needed oxygen. When she recovered, we sat down and had a chat. She was really scared because at one stage she thought she was gonna die."

It was a blessing in disguise, he said, to see someone with COVID-19 recover after so

much exposure to death through his work.

Pillay, a manager at the coffin-making business, said about 10 colleagues also were infected. All are now OK. Their survival reflects the relatively low death toll from COVID-19 in South Africa, and in Africa in general, as the continent appears to defy dire predictions that the virus would cause massive numbers of deaths.

Life has edged back toward normal after a surge in infections in South Africa in June and July that threatened to overwhelm public hospitals. Many of the more than 1 million graves that Gauteng province, home of

Johannesburg, once hurriedly mapped out have gone unused.

Still, the toll from COVID-19 — which has killed more than 16,000 people in South Africa, nearly half of the continent's over 35,000 deaths — has been painful, and the world surpassing 1 million confirmed deaths has again led to reflection.

"It has been a crazy, crazy, crazy couple of months," Pillay said. The need for coffins rose and fell as South Africa's lockdown levels changed, but overall, he said, "business went down." Under the strictest lockdown measures, so few people were driving in South Africa that the country's terrible rate

of vehicle deaths plummeted. And alcohol sales were banned, "so you weren't having people fighting, murdering each other," Pillay said.

"Unfortunately, our whole business thrives on people dying." As the lockdown eased step by step and people were "not being disciplined" and going around without masks, the number of virus deaths increased. Now, a sense of normalcy is returning.

But COVID-19 changed everything. The price of basic materials shot up as "every Tom, Dick and Harry became an essential provider," Pillay said. Suddenly, a box of gloves was changing hands five times,

with everyone taking a cut. What once cost 80 rand (USD 4.70) became 200 rand (USD 11.70) or 220 rand (USD 13).

Pillay scrambled to keep his workshop open and safe as orders rolled in. "The unfortunate part is, you've got so many workers and machines and can only do so much a day," he said. The workshop bustles with people carrying raw wood, sanding it and attaching polished handles.

And the entire nature of mourning in South Africa changed. The government said COVID-19 burials should happen right away instead of waiting for the usual weekend funerals. AP

GANDHI JAYANTI

Khadi India's flagship store records ₹1.2 crore sales

IAN S ■ NEW DELHI
Last year, the total sale at Khadi's CP outlet on October 2, stood at ₹1.27 crore

The soaring spirit of Khadi lovers got better of the Covid-19 fear on Gandhi Jayanti with the Khadi sales figure crossing the ₹1 crore mark at Delhi's flagship Khadi India outlet in Connaught Place. The overall sales of Khadi was recorded at ₹1,02,19,496 on Friday (October 2), which is significantly high given the prevailing Corona pandemic situation, said the Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises. Last year, the total sale at Khadi's CP outlet on October 2, stood at ₹1.27 crore. As many as 1,633 bills were generated throughout the day with an average purchase of ₹6,258 per bill. Customers belonging to different segments and age-groups queued at the Khadi India outlet since morning. Notably, Khadi and Village

ed appeals of the Hon'ble PM. Khadi has become a household name and the number of Khadi lovers is constantly growing. And despite a manifold increase in production, KVIC has ensured the highest quality of its product range that has kept our consumer base intact," Saxena said. He added although the sale figure this year fell just short of last year's mark because of the pandemic, the over ₹1 crore single-day sale figure was still quite satisfactory. The high sale figure of Khadi this year assumes greater significance. While almost all activities were closed during the Covid-19 lockdown, KVIC continued with its diverse activities across the country that includes the manufacturing of face masks and personal hygiene products like hand wash and hand sanitizers apart from a vast range of fabric and village industries products. Industries Commission (KVIC) has also launched its customary annual special 20 per cent discount on all products to celebrate the 151st birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi. KVIC Chairman Vinai Kumar Saxena attributed the massive sale figures to the frequent appeals of the Prime Minister Narendra Modi to buy Khadi and also its growing popularity among masses particularly the youth. "Despite the corona pandemic, a large number of people still came out to buy Khadi which is a result of the repeat-

Regional rural banks incur net loss of ₹2,206 cr in FY20

PTI ■ MUMBAI
Regional rural banks (RRBs) as a group reported net loss of ₹2,206 crore in the fiscal year ended March 31, 2020, as against Rs 652-crore net loss in FY19, according to data published by Nabard. During FY 2019-20, 26 RRBs earned profit of ₹2,203 crore, while 19 incurred losses of ₹4,409 crore, the data showed. The data on RRBs, recently published by the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (Nabard), is based on the data uploaded by the RRBs in the Ensure portal. As on March 31, 2020, there were 45 RRBs functioning in 685 districts of 26 states and three union territories (UTs). These RRBs were sponsored by 15 commercial banks and operating through a network of 21,850 branches. Gross non-performing assets as a percentage of gross loans outstanding of RRBs marginally declined to 10.4

Gross non-performing assets as a percentage of gross loans outstanding of RRBs marginally declined to 10.4 per cent as on March 31, 2020

per cent in the previous year, according to the data. Total business of RRBs stood at ₹7.77 lakh crore as on March 31, 2020. Deposits and advances of RRBs increased by 10.2 per cent and 9.5 per cent, respectively during FY2019-20. Gross outstanding loans stood at ₹2.98 lakh crore as against ₹2.80 lakh crore in FY19. Priority sector loans constituted 90.6 per cent or ₹ 2.70 lakh crore of the gross loans outstanding of RRBs as on March 31, 2020. Share of agriculture and MSME sectors in total loan outstanding stood at 70 per cent and 12 per cent, respectively, the data showed. As of end March 2020, 17 out of the 45 RRBs had capital to risk weighted assets ratio (CRAR) of less than 9 per cent, of which six RRBs had negative CRAR. System-wide CRAR of RRBs deteriorated to 10.2 per cent as on March 31, 2020 from 11.5 per cent in the previous year, the data showed. Share of standard, sub-standard, doubtful and loss assets stood at 89.6 per cent, 3.6 per cent, 6.5 per cent and 0.3 per cent, respectively, as of end March 2020. Eighteen of the 45 RRBs (as against 20 out of 53 RRBs as on March 31, 2019) had GNPA above 10 per cent as on March 31, 2020. RRBs, at aggregated level, achieved a growth of 8.6 per cent in their business in FY20 compared to a growth of 9.5

Intel expands 5G networking solutions in \$25bn market

IAN S ■ NEW DELHI
Eyeing a bigger pie of the E-growing 5G networking market, chip giant Intel has announced an expanded line-up of hardware, software and solutions for network infrastructure. As the telecommunications industry transitions to 5G, the next wave of network transformation represents a \$25 billion silicon opportunity by 2023. "When you consider the collective impact of the proliferation of fully virtualized cloud architectures combined with the commercialization of 5G, the rise of AI and the growth of the edge, it truly has a multiplier effect that makes each more impactful than it would be on its own," said Dan Rodriguez, Intel corporate vice president and general manager of the Network Platforms Group. "It's an enormous opportunity for us and our cus-

RBI affirms currency notes potential corona carriers: CAIT

IAN S ■ NEW DELHI
The Confederation of All India Traders (CAIT) on Sunday said that the RBI had affirmed the possibility of currency notes as potential carriers of novel coronavirus and demanded government incentives for digital payments. The development comes after CAIT wrote a letter to Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on March 9, 2020 seeking clarification whether or not currency notes are carriers of bacteria and viruses. However, the letter was forwarded to the Reserve Bank of India, which replied to CAIT and hinted that currency notes could be carriers of bacteria and viruses, including coronavirus, and therefore more and more usage of digital payments should be done to avoid handling of currency, the confed-

UK, India joint operation targets online fraud scams

PTI ■ LONDON
A recent joint operation against computer software service fraud offences between the UK and Indian security forces has led to raids on 10 suspect offices in six cities of India, according to UK authorities. The City of London Police, the UK's national lead force for fraud, revealed this week that it confirmed people in the UK had been defrauded by these companies to its counterparts in India, the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI). They provided vital witness statements, detailing the victim's dealings with the companies concerned, evidence which is a key requirement to enable the police in India to take action against fraudulent companies. "We welcome this enforcement action on the part of the Central Bureau of Investigation and will support their efforts to bring offenders to justice through the Indian courts," said Alex Rothwell, Temporary Detective Chief Superintendent at the City of London Police. "At the time of the lockdown in India, we saw a sharp decline in reports of computer software service fraud in the UK, but we know that criminals adapt quickly to continue to try to defraud people. As more people work from home, the need to prevent fraud of this nature has become more urgent," he said. The companies are alleged to have displayed pop-up messages on victims' computers warning them about serious technical problems with their device including the presence of malware infection. Victims were then advised to call a helpline to gain assistance and were charged a premium fee for the "fix" and "on-going support". Victims were then made to pay this fee online or over the phone, meaning their financial details were shared with criminals. On September 17, officers from the CBI conducted raids on 10 premises based on this information across six Indian cities. Some home addresses of people associated with the various companies were also visited. According to the City of London Police, the CBI investigation into the case remains ongoing. The latest operation follows previous joint operations, resulting from a partnership between the City of London Police, American tech giant Microsoft and Indian police forces to tackle such online fraud, which the UK authorities said has led to action against 37 call centres and resulted in 88 arrests.

India Inc expects steady recovery in Oct-Mar FY21: CII CEOs Poll

IAN S ■ NEW DELHI
The business fraternity expects a steady recovery in the Indian economy during the second half of the financial year 2020-21, shows a poll of CEOs done by CII. A statement by the industry body said that India Inc is estimating a capacity utilisation of over 50 per cent during October-March in FY21. "A steady recovery of the Indian economy is on the anvil as corporate India restarts business and economic activity with lockdowns being increasingly relaxed in many parts of the country. For the first time since the advent of the pandemic in the country in early 2020, India Inc is now estimating a capacity utilisation of more than 50 per cent in the second half of this financial year," it said. CEOs of top 115 companies who met at CII's National Council recently, indicated revival of positive business sentiment and gradual rise in expected corporate performance. The CEOs of top companies who took the poll included representatives across sectors from metals and mining to manufacturing, auto, pharmaceuticals, health, energy, infrastructure, construction and leading services sectors including ITes, health, hospitality, tourism and e-commerce. The apex body also had a large representation of the medium and small sector apart from start-ups, it said. The statement said that the unlocking of almost all economic activities, along with the reform and revival measures announced by the government and the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) have contributed to the gradual improvement in business sentiments in the second half of the current financial year. "While in most cases, the performance - revenue or capacity utilisation - is estimated to be lower than the comparative figures in 2019-20, a large percentage of the CEOs polled have shown confidence in the days ahead indicating that the worst may be behind," it said. On consumer demand, while 32 per cent of the CEOs are hoping for better prospects, another 27 per cent of them expect no change when compared to the second half of the last financial year. However, only 31 per cent of the CEOs expected their revenue growth to be in the positive territory in the second half of the current financial year compared to last year. Regarding exports, 40 per cent of the CEOs expect better prospects on exports and 24 per cent of them expect no change in prospects during the second half of the current fiscal when compared to the same period last year.

Stormy GST Council meet likely on Monday

NON-BJP STATES TO OPPOSE CENTRE'S BORROWING OPTION
PTI ■ NEW DELHI
The GST Council meeting on Monday may turn into a stormy affair, with non-BJP ruled states still being in disagreement with the Centre on the compensation issue. While as many as 21 states, mostly ruled by BJP or parties which have supported it on issues, had till mid-September opted to borrow ₹ 97,000 crore to meet the GST revenue shortfall in the current fiscal, opposition-led states like West Bengal, Punjab and Kerala have not yet accepted the borrowing option given by the Centre. Sources said in the 42nd meeting of the Council on October 5, opposition-ruled states would object to the Centre's borrowing options and demand alternative mechanism for funding GST compensation deficit. They feel that the constitutional liability of compensating states lies with the union government. In the current fiscal, the states are staring at a staggering ₹2.35 lakh crore Goods and Services Tax (GST) revenue shortfall. Of this, as per Centre's calculation, about ₹97,000 crore is on account of GST implementation and rest ₹1.38 lakh crore is the impact of COVID-19 on states' revenues. The Centre in August gave two options to the states to borrow either ₹ 97,000 crore from a special window facilitated by the RBI or ₹2.35 lakh crore from market and has also proposed extending the compensation cess levied on luxury, demerit and sin goods beyond 2022 to repay the borrowing.

CIL's coal allocation to power sector under e-auction rises 8% in Apr-Aug

PTI ■ NEW DELHI
CIL's coal allocation under special forward e-auction for the power sector registered a rise of 8.4 per cent to 7.94 million tonnes (MT) in April-August period of the ongoing fiscal. The state-owned company had allocated 7.32 MT of dry fuel in the corresponding period of the previous fiscal year, according to the monthly summary by the coal ministry for the Cabinet. However, in August there was no coal allocation under the scheme, Coal India Ltd (CIL) said. In August 2019-20, 0.62 MT coal was allocated to the power sector by the company, it said. Coal distribution through forward e-auction is aimed at providing access to coal for such consumers who wish to have an assured supply over a long period, say one year, through e-auction mode so as to plan their operation. The purpose of the scheme is to provide equal opportunities to all intending coal consumers to purchase coal for own consumption through single window services as per requirement and at a price determined by themselves through the process of online bidding. Forward e-auction is aimed at facilitating all the consumers of coal across the country with wide ranging choice for booking coal online, enabling them to buy dry fuel through a simple, transparent and consumer friendly system of marketing of the fossil fuel. CIL is one of the major suppliers of coal to the power sector. The company, which accounts for over 80 per cent of domestic coal output, is eyeing 710 MT output in 2020-21.

Global unified communications market hits \$11.5bn

Microsoft leads
IAN S ■ NEW DELHI
As businesses increased their spending on secure, scalable communications and collaboration solutions and apps to support work-from-home (WFH) employees, the global unified communications and collaboration (UC&C) revenue grew 25.1 per cent (year over year) to reach \$11.5 billion in the second quarter this year, according to a new IDC report. Microsoft's global revenue reached \$4 billion, up 19.5 per cent over the first quarter and representing 35.2 per cent of the total global UC&C market in the second quarter. With 11.1 per cent market share, Cisco's worldwide revenue was \$1.3 billion, up 11.7 per cent quarter over quarter.

India's recovery gains momentum on economic package: DEA

IAN S ■ NEW DELHI
The economic recovery of India has gained momentum due to the "Aatmanirbhar Bharat" economic package announced in May, said a report by the Department of Economic Affairs (DEA). The 'Monthly Economic Review' for September 2020 cited the estimated growth in the Kharif foodgrain output for 2020-21 to show a recovering economy. "The implementation of Aatmanirbhar Bharat (AB) package and unlocking of the economy have ensured that economic recovery in India has gained momentum. This is seen in agriculture with production of kharif foodgrains in 2020-21 estimated to go past the previous year's level," it said. It noted that the growth of demand in the rural sector is reflected in registration of two wheelers, three wheelers and passenger vehicles along with tractor sales reaching or surpassing previous year levels in August. Automobile sales largely recorded improvement last month compared to September 2019, a major reason being the low base -- low sales during the year ago. The report also said that other high-frequency indicators have also improved in sync with global activity. Increase in global demand has led to expansion of India's export at 5.3 per cent in September on YoY basis, it added. The recovery in rail freight enabled revenue earnings clocking positive year-on-year growth for the first time since March in the months of August and early September. The DEA report said that easing of inter-state movement restrictions, quarantine policy and unlocking were accompanied with recovery in rail passenger earnings as well.

Piyush Goyal inaugurates phoolbagan metro station

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI
Railways Minister Piyush Goyal Sunday inaugurated Phoolbagan Metro station in Kolkata. The total estimated project cost is ₹8574.98 Cr and its total length is 16.5 kms. The project will connect Howrah on the West bank of the river Hooghly with Salt Lake City on its East bank. The first-phase of the East-West Metro from Salt Lake Stadium to Salt Lake Sector five was inaugurated by Goyal on 13th February this year. Goyal also flagged off the first train from the newly inaugurated Phoolbagan station through video link. In his address, congratulating all for taking extra initiative to complete the work of Phoolbagan station in the midst of COVID-19 pandemic, Goyal said that this extension of services from Salt Lake Stadium to Phoolbagan (a stretch of 1.665 kms) will be a great help for the commuters more so because of its proximity to Sealdah station. Terming it a gift for Durga Puja, he also said that metro provides the safest, cleanest and fastest transportation system in Kolkata. He has further reassured that if land is made available and encroachments are removed then funds won't be a constraint for implementing any Railway project. Babul Supriyo, Minister of State for Environment, Forest and Climate Change congratulated Goyal for taking the initiative to commission this modern and beautiful Phoolbagan



FPIs pull out in September after inflow surge in August

IAN S ■ NEW DELHI
Persistent uncertainty regarding economic recovery and the surge in Covid-19 cases, led foreign portfolio investors (FPI) to pull out of the Indian markets last month after record investments in August. The recent outflows in equities indicates increased heightened volatility in the global markets, according to the Department of Economic Affairs. "While July and August witnessed record capital raising by leading domestic firms and low global interest rates, net FPI flows moderated to record an outflow of \$0.33 billion in September owing to uncertainty around the pace of economic recovery and rising Covid cases in Europe and other countries including India," said the Monthly Economic Review for September 2020. It also noted that India garnered the highest foreign portfolio inflows in the first half of 2020 compared to its emerging market peers. Noting that the recent outflows in equities signal heightened volatility in global markets, it said: "However, reversal of selling spree in debt markets in September is a welcome change possibly triggered by low global bond yields." The report said that on the financing side, net foreign direct investment (FDI) recorded an inflow of \$3.3 billion in July compared to an outflow of \$0.8 billion in June. Gross inflows increased from \$3.6 billion in June to \$4.7 billion in July. The report also noted that globally the financial markets witnessed sharp corrections during September after rallying in August. "Global stock market witnessed sharp correction during September after rallying in August, triggered by a marked gap between bullish investor sentiment and uncertainty about the recovery's strength," it said.

Trend Blazer

'We need to raise better sons'

Actor **AYUSHMANN KHURRANA** said, "Shocked, shattered and devastated. After Hathras, another gangrape and murder at Balrampur! It's barbaric, inhuman and calls for the most severe punishment to the guilty. When will this stop? We are failing every single day to protect the women of our country. We have to do more than just protecting women. We have to raise better sons!"

The actor, who has been roped in by UNICEF India as a celebrity advocate, aims to work at ending violence against children.

He said, "My role is to further children's rights, use my voice and my influence to help violence against children end as it is absolutely unacceptable and preventable."



'So it takes a woman's death to register a case? What is happening to India? Why can't the Police protect us? Why is rape becoming a consistent crime? Why are the number of rapes increasing? Why aren't men more afraid of brutality and abuse against women? Why? I truly hope this happens and @Uppolice catches those sick men soon!'

—**Amyra Dastur**

Actor **TAAPSEE PANNU** took a jibe at certain news channels without taking names, saying these channels have entertained people on behalf of the actors till the time theatres were shut.



She said that with cinemas set to reopen, such channels should focus on real news now. "Now that theatres are allowed to open with 50 per cent occupancy, it's only fair to expect some 'news' channels to focus 50 per cent more towards 'real' news. Thank you guys, you held the fort of entertainment long enough on our behalf. We can take over from here on," Taapsee tweeted.

'Everyone can't be involved in drugs'

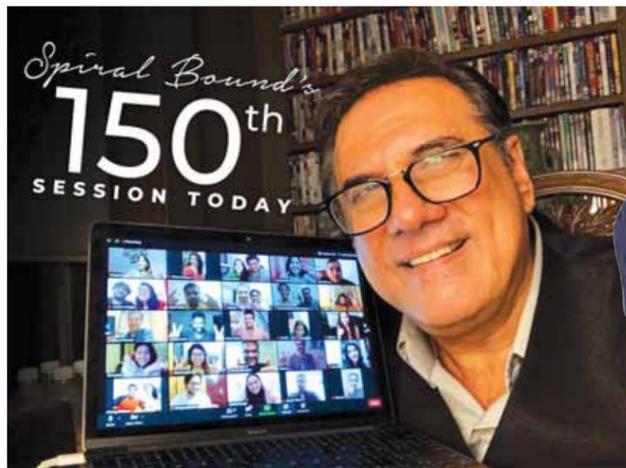
Actor **AKSHAY KUMAR** shared a video on his Twitter account on Saturday, defending the film industry against rampant allegations of drug abuse.

Akshay said posting a video on Twitter, "I speak to you with a heavy heart today. Although we are called stars, you've created Bollywood with love. For years we've tried to reflect the sentiments of the common people of our country through our films. So, if you are angry today, we understand and respect it. Today, narcotics and drugs are the most talked-about topics. I can't lie to you saying this problem does not exist. It does exist. But that doesn't mean every single person from the profession is involved. That's not possible."



BOMAN TURNS MENTOR

The actor-screenwriter has completed over 150 sessions of his online screenwriting series, *Spiral Bound*. He tells **CHAHAK MITTAL** how his skills evolved with each interaction and made him learn more in the process



How often have you seen characters from films come alive in reality? Well, when actor-screenwriter Boman Irani took to the online space to conduct screenwriting sessions during the lockdown, we could certainly remember his character, Viru Sahastra Buddha from *3 Idiots*.

In the pursuit to capturing and presenting the roots of cinema, Irani chose screenwriting to be his subject as it forms the very basis of cinema. The actor has been mentoring over hundreds of students and screenwriting enthusiasts and professionals. And today, as he completes over 150 sessions of the series, *Spiral Bound*, he tells us about his incredible journey of mentoring. Excerpts:

How did you conceptualise an online screenwriting series?

It began more than half a year ago when I was launching my production house, Irani Movietone. *Spiral Bound* was born at the launch party.

I called up my dear friend, Alexander Dinelaris, who is Oscar-award winning film *Birdman's* screenwriter, post the launch to take a workshop for some 280 screenwriters.

This was an extension of that workshop, which we were supposed to have a

second round of, this year. We couldn't due to the lockdown. However, later, the lockdown turned out to be a perfect opportunity to do *Spiral Bound* virtually. And since it took so long to reopen, we're now close to completing 160 sessions. Hitting 150 was certainly a landmark!

What was the research involved?

Some six to eight years ago, I had started writing my own script but even after working on it extensively, I constantly felt that it lacked something. So I took some help from my friend and became a student in New York for a year. There, I did a lot of reading, extensive writing and research. Today, eight to nine years down the line, thanks to my gurus, I feel that the knowledge that I may have acquired, it would be great if I could share that with my fellow writers and screenwriting enthusiasts and professionals. And why not? We need good screenplays and writers.

Why did you name the series, Spiral Bound?

When you finish writing your first draft of a script, and get it's first print, instead of putting it in a folder or stapling together, you always

prefer it to be spiral bound!

What was your approach while mentoring hundreds of students online?

Screenwriting was already on my plate, much before the lockdown. It's just that we got a lot of time and opportunity to do it then. We started with four students and young writers who had been in touch with me over the years and I'd share with them some problem-solving questions over the phone. At times, they'd come over and we'd discuss and deal with their queries. During the lockdown, I started hearing them out online when one of them said if one of his friends could join the session, and I was like 'sure!' This way, four became eight and 16 and now there are 200 of us!

Do you think actors/directors should engage more in such personal, live interactions about film subjects?

I have myself given it a thought many a times that actors and directors should engage in such personal and live interactions. I think it's important. I am not saying that I have an authority but yes, we do have a certain amount of experience working in films and why should we not share it. Apart from learning from my own guru, I have learned the best from all the experiences that I have had over the years. I have worked with the best directors and some of the finest writers and, along the way, learned from their experiences. I really feel mentoring young writers, directors and actors is important because through this, we're going to raise our own game. Even if it is good, it needs to be raised, everyday.

Well, art is about reinventing and telling stories in more modern and post-modern ways. Your experiences should be shared and should help others create their own and newer ones. It is definitely a great idea. And I hate to say that lockdown turned out to be a good thing, but if we do try to do something good, we can create opportunities for ourselves while staying at home, too.

Today, the focus has shifted to OTT platforms and content-driven projects... How did you address this in your sessions?

I agree that with the OTT platform, the attention has been shifted to content. However, I think the term 'content-driven' is very hyped and very loosely used. I think all films, even if you're making a commercial one, should have content even if they're just entertainers. The content should be understandable, engaging and entertaining.

I realise that we are talking about OTT platforms especially at a time when cinemas are shut, but when the cinemas open and we have the big screens available to us again, I think films should have, if not unusual story ideas, an entertaining story. It

should be far more thematic to say the least.

How do you think stories and themes for films will include this period in the future? Is COVID going to bring a major revolution in how films/series portray real life?

I genuinely feel that COVID time in our life is just a period, be it six months of lockdown, a summer, more than a summer, a year or even more than a year. Periods, events and incidences — these are just the backdrops, which are just tracing the trials and tribulations in a human being's life. That event could be war time or even of peace. But eventually, a human story is always about pursuit, about what s/he wants and thrives for constantly. S/he has to undergo a lot of hardship to achieve that and those accomplishments come in people's life in various ways. The story is only about that goal, no matter whether the backdrop is COVID, war or robbery or even circus.

The story that you should be following is the goal that a human is trying to achieve and the obstacles that he goes through to achieve it. That is what is called thematic. And COVID is just a force. The more important part is how human beings react to that.

Completing 150 sessions... How did you see the process evolve through each session?

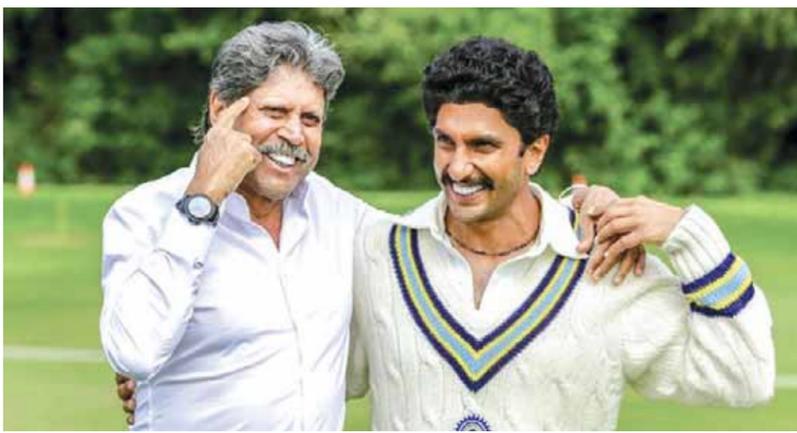
I never expected the *Spiral Bound* family to go on for so long. We have gotten together as a family and used this sacred time to learn. I don't know when people would be able to go out and learn to make up their careers for themselves. They wouldn't get a period like this to actually learn.

Even if we say that a person is always a student and learning something. For a statement, it is valid; we learn as we grow and from our experiences. But how often do we actually study something after we've finished off our school or college? How many times do we actually sit down and study post that? How often do we master a new subject or a discipline? No, we don't study all our lives.

But this has been literally people coming together and studying, making notes and learn something new. Whenever people are talking about their respective projects, I asked them to stop thinking about them for the time being. I just wanted them to imbibe something everyday and then apply to that to all the problems they wanted to overcome. Because it's not going to come back in our lives and I am not saying this with remorse, rather with happiness. I hope the lockdown period as it is doesn't come back again because I don't think we should be sitting at home. But again, now that we are, I think it would be incredibly stupid of us not to utilise this time learning something.

Anything about shooting during the current times, since you're working on *Jayeshbhai Jordaar*?

Well, *Jayeshbhai Jordaar* is almost complete. We didn't have to work a lot on it after the lockdown. There's just a little bit of dubbing that is left.



The wait isn't over

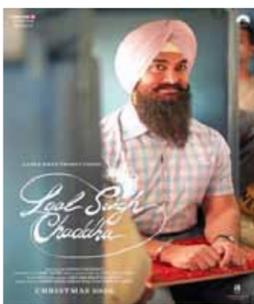
Even though cinema halls are opening soon, the big Bollywood films will take a little longer to release

Cinema lovers across the country are overjoyed as the Government of India announced the reopening of cinemas across the country from October 15. The decision has been hailed by the film fraternity, too, who are now waiting for all the state governments to give a green signal.

"This is a great announcement but we still have to wait for all the states to open up. Many states like Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu are yet to open up. *Sooryavanshi* and '83 have been ready for quite some time. *Sooryavanshi* was originally slated for a Diwali release, but it's not practical. Even if theatres open up in November, you can't release such a big film with 15 days promotion time," Reliance Entertainment Group CEO Shibashish Sarkar said.

While filmmaker Rohit Shetty's *Sooryavanshi* will bring Akshay Kumar back in the cop avatar, actor Ranveer Singh will be seen in the much-hyped Kabir Khan's '83 as the iconic Kapil Dev, who captained India's first-ever cricket World Cup victory campaign in 1983.

"As of now, '83 is slated for a Christmas release. Of course, we won't bring two films in December.



I still haven't had a chat with Rohit Shetty or Kabir Khan. But one thing is clear that we don't want to hold the films indefinitely. We would like to bring one film during Christmas and another between January and March, but we have to see when all the states open up," said Sarkar. Well, clearly, none of bigwigs want a clash at this point. Aamir Khan's *Laal Singh Chaddha* was originally set for a Christmas 2020 release. The film, based on the 1994 Tom Hanks blockbuster *Forrest Gump*, has now been moved to Christmas 2021.

have *Indu Ki Jaawani*, starring Kiara Advani, and the Parineeti Chopra-starrer *Saina Nehwal* biopic. "We are immediately starting work on these two films, and more films will follow. There is also *Madam Chief Minister*, starring Richa Chadha in the lead. It is also going into post-production. These three films would probably be the first few we plan to release once the theatres open. We are looking at November release dates, once we get clarity by mid-October. We will start the campaign accordingly and are hoping to have one or two releases during Diwali," said Bhanushali.

Shariq Patel, CEO, Zee Studios, said that their banner, too, has a few films ready to go off the block. "Cinema owners have continually highlighted safety and hygiene measures they are taking. It is time to bring back the audience to the theatre. We are extremely excited about the news, as the whole purpose of our job is to bring entertainment and joy to the audience. We have recently launched *Khaali Peeli* on Zee Plex. Yes, we have a few projects ready and are looking forward to bringing these to our audience in the theatres," he said.

Some of the forthcoming projects announced by the studio includes the Manoj Bajpayee and Diljit Dosanjh-starrer *Suraj Pe Mangal Bhari* and the Bosco Martis directorial *Rocket Gang*.

The lockdown saw many Bollywood films skipping the theatrical route and opting for a direct OTT release. Producer Anand Pandit's *The Big Bull*, with Abhishek Bachchan in the lead, and the Amitabh Bachchan-starrer *Chehre* are among the forthcoming films scheduled for OTT release, but Pandit hopes to re-release these films in theatres.

"The industry as a whole is relieved and excited at the prospect of cinemas re-opening, with safety precautions in mind. *The Big Bull* and *Chehre* are both scheduled for OTT release. However, we are definitely looking at the possibility of a re-release in theatres. In the meantime, I would like to release some of my previous releases for free to welcome the audience back to the theatres," said the producer, who has backed films like *Total Dhamaal* and *Sarkar 3* in the past.

—Agencies

WEBBED



DOLLY PARTON: HERE I AM

Dolly Parton leads a moving, musical journey in this documentary that details the people and places who have helped shape her iconic career. This deep dive into Dolly's historic career includes commentary from Jane Fonda, Lily Tomlin and more. It releases on Netflix on October 6.



THE FORTY-YEAR-OLD VERSION

Desperate for a breakthrough as she nears the big 4-0, struggling New York City playwright Radha finds inspiration by reinventing herself as a rapper. Starring Radha Blank, Peter Kim, Oswin Benjamin, the film releases on Netflix on October 9.



SIEMPRE, LUIS

The documentary tells the story of a proud American, Luis Miranda Jr, whose lifetime dedication to community and fatherhood has rendered him an unstoppable force of nature. The film premieres on HBO on October 6.



No end to learning

In a tribal village of Jharkhand, teachers and students overcome the challenges of Coronavirus by attending classes in open air spaces, following social distancing norms.
By AMRENDRA SUMAN

Schools and colleges, after being shut for over six months due to COVID-19, will now be allowed to open from October 15 albeit in a graded manner as announced by the Ministry of Home Affairs, MHA on September 30. While releasing the guidelines for phase five of the unlock, it allowed states and UTs flexibility to reopen schools and colleges. The decision, however, needs to be taken on a case-to-case basis, after consulting the institute management and assessing the situation, it said. Parental consent will also be required. Earlier, these institutes were allowed to partially reopen from September 21, 2020 as MHA had permitted students of classes nine to 12 to voluntarily go to schools for seeking guidance. Even during that time, many states had chosen not to reopen the school while the states that did allow students on voluntary basis, did not receive positive response from parents. Clearly, they were not ready to send children back to school even as education of 300 million students has been severely affected. In remote villages of the country, however, the picture is unexpectedly, a little different. In a tribal village in Dumka district of Jharkhand, which is inhabited by the Santhal tribal community, parents and students are showing positive response



to the efforts of the school administration to provide education in a safe environment to its students. In Bankati village, located just nine km from the district headquarters amid forests and surrounded by lush green fields, students can be seen studying under trees strictly maintaining the norms of social distancing. Teachers stand at a distance reading out lessons using a microphone and a sound system. "With imposition of nationwide lockdown, schools were shut, and teachers were advised to provide lessons online. Here, in this nondescript village, where people cannot afford two square meals, expecting them to have smart phones and internet was unrealistic,"

shared Shyam Kishore Singh Gandhi, Headmaster, Upgraded Middle School, Bankati. He further explained that parents in tribal villages seldom allow their children to return to school after a long break owing to the financial constraints. "The whole situation was understandable — the lockdown and suspension of the classes but I could not make peace with the fact that the effort of so many years of creating awareness towards education in this tribal village will go waste. Teaching is my religion, and I felt really uncomfortable sitting at home doing nothing about it. As I kept thinking of ideas to overcome the hurdles, the idea of teaching in open spaces ensuring appropriate distance between students struck me," shared an excited Shyam Kishore. What started as a tryout soon became a norm as students too showed interest and started attending classes regularly. Today, a total of 250 children from class one to eight are consistently attending classes in open air spaces, following social distance rules and maintaining cleanliness and hygiene. Wearing mask is mandatory for each and every student while regular sanitisation also takes place. Children come and sit on both sides of the road at a distance of one meter as villagers help organise the classes. The initiative is also backed by different members of the tribal groups. Community teachers Sarita Murmu and Murshila Tudu along with several other young teachers have contributed effectively to the task. These young, educated minds were sitting idle at their homes owing to unemployment. Their dedication to improve the quality of education for the younger generation was evident during these tough times as they chose to support the initiative without any financial interest. "Most of the villagers rely on agriculture for their income or are daily wage labourers. Due to low socio-economic status, villagers often involve their children in agriculture work during vacations or force them to quit education to work as labourers. Due to COVID, many parents had decided to discontinue the education of their children but since the beginning of these community classes under the trees, they have changed their mind," shared Sameer Marandi, Village Head. Masoodi Tudu, a senior officer from district administration, during his visit to Bankati village said that such creative adaptation by the teachers to face the challenges created by unprecedented circumstances will further strengthen the faith of students and parents in education. Certainly, the efforts of the teachers and enthusiasm of children speak volumes about their yearning to learn and grow. —Charkha Features



SOURCE OF SUFFERING

Even the best brains cannot sustain an economy if they do not comply with the rules of ethics and principles of spiritual wisdom, says RAJYOGI BRAHMAKUMAR NIKUNJJI

Since ages, ethics have always been an important priority for people all over the world. This is because it comprises of a number of good attributes — honesty, clemency, forbearance, kindness, bravery, chastity, commitment, redemption, reliance, charity, generosity, patience, longanimity, leniency, mildness, intelligence, tranquility, quietness, serenity, loyalty, admonition, complacency, modesty, shyness, altruism, goodness, generosity and so on. However, in present scenario, it is being widely believed and said that business and ethics do not go together and hence it is not possible for everyone to follow ethical way and earn money. It was quite astonishing when one of the world's most prestigious business school came out with an official statement that they won't be starting a course of Business Ethics even though they have been given a hand some grant by the government for the said purpose. The faculties from school explained that the business school, which had three professors as experts in teaching Business Ethics, tried their level best for a year to teach to teach the subject as a part of its regular curriculum but they failed to evoke any interest in students or gain any success. The authorities have, therefore, now decided not to keep any staff for teaching ethics to students of Business Management which clearly shows that most businessmen wish to earn money without being guided or controlled by any ethics. Evidently, there is an increasing trend in the present day society not to recognise the age-old truth that, sooner or later, the money earned without any ethical principles plays havoc in one's personal, family and public life. It becomes a source of sufferings of various kinds for not only does it generate a parallel economy but also an atmosphere of corruption, leading to moral breakdown of the society. These facts are not just true of businesses abroad but in our homes too we are familiar with this wide-spread evil. Isn't it? The recent IT raids on some top business houses and the press criticism of certain government deals present us a gloomy image. Leaving a wide margin for many of the scandals being untrue and much of the criticism being biased, it can be said that all is not well with business and state deals as far as ethics is concerned. Add to this, the widely prevalent practice of deficit financing that has had a very bad effect on the moral standards of the people and the currency-value of the country. The result of this has been that almost all nations, today are debtors with weak economies and almost all industrialists and rich men are, directly or indirectly, dependent on the borrowings from banks or through bonds or fixed deposits or savings of the middle class and poor people. The planned economy almost everywhere is near its exhaustion point and peak of resource crunch. This shows that even the best of brains cannot sustain an economy in a healthy state if it is divorced from the ordinary rules of ethics or principles of spiritual wisdom. The best thing, therefore is to observe moral norms and to base our economy on ethics, for without that, there cannot be peace and happiness in the world.



The pandemic and the lockdown restrictions have not only disrupted the education of the children but have also affected their psychological health. It is important to keep a check on thousands of children who are without parental care or at the risk of abandonment. The SOS Children's Villages of India have gathered knowledge about the emotional distress and the boredom that children from marginalised communities are going through everyday. After accessing the problems here are some of the ways they shared to address the crisis:

CHILD SAFEGUARDING
We need to focus on providing care, education, health, and psycho-social well-being of children in a structured and professional manner. A comprehensive policy, outlining guidelines that focussed on awareness, prevention, reporting and responding was developed, communicated, and implemented across their organisations. An Epidemic Response Team (ERT) was also constituted for ground level execution and monitoring. To safeguard the safety of the children in the villages, it is important to ensure that essential supplies, hygiene kits (comprising tissue papers, liquid soaps, and hand sanitisers), and medicines are always stocked in the villages. Masks and hand sanitisers should also be distributed.

Take holistic care

We need to focus on providing protection, education, health and psycho-social assistance to children in a structured and professional manner, says SUMANTA KAR



It is also important to comply with all health directives from the government and health organisations. Doctors from government hospitals should periodically conduct COVID-19 awareness classes to mothers in villages, to equip them to meet the physical and emotional needs of the children right from infancy to adulthood. For their community out-

reach programme, they provided materials and services to over 15,000 children during the lockdown with a daily average reach of 30-40 children virtually and wherever possible, through home visits. It helped them to better assess their well-being and identify any child safeguarding issues. Supporting #BreakTheChain campaign, SOS India mentors Self Help Group leaders to help them spread awareness about COVID-19. They also created regional language posters and content to increase awareness about COVID-19 in the communities. and community volunteering. Several SOS Villages have come up with ways of continuing the tradition of evening prayer, while maintaining social distancing. In Puducherry, a couple of children not only lead the morning prayers but also read out the news and engage everyone in a quick round of trivia. A classical dance performed by children of Nagapattinam on COVID-19 preventive measures, was telecast by a TV channel in Tamil Nadu recently. The performance initiated by the children themselves, was hugely appreciated by viewers. COVID has brought forward many painters, singers, actors, orators and writers amongst the children. Under the guidance of animators and co-workers, out-reached children are engaged in several activities to 'Stay safe by staying at home' by pursuing their hobbies along with usual academic routine. Bal Panchayat members have championed promoting preventive messages by developing posters, stickers and pasting these in public spaces, making and sharing videos to demonstrate social distancing as well as handwashing. It is crucial for children and young adults to look forward to a bright future without having any great concerns or anxiety, while being safe and healthy. (The writer is Senior Deputy National Director, SOS Children's Villages India.)

PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING
The biggest challenge has been to keep the children in good mental health amid lockdown and school closures. Some of the ways that have proved effective in relieving their stress include engaging children in activities that tap their creative talents, coupled with fun-filled physical activities. We must encourage children to make posters for promoting the do's and don'ts for creating awareness about COVID-19. Children should involve themselves in yoga and meditation. Some should explore their artistic talents, some indulge in baking and a few can start gardening and vegetable farming as a hobby. There should be activities such as games, drama, reading, cleaning up of physical spaces,

“Mastering others is strength. Mastering yourself is true power.” —Lao Tzu

BP DOSE MAY LOWER DEATH RISK FROM FLU
Researchers have found that drugs to lower the blood pressure of the type 'ACE inhibitors or angiotensin II receptor blockers' reduce the mortality rate of influenza and pneumonia. For the study, published in the Journal of the American Heart Association, the research team compared mortality rates among 5,00,000 Danish patients who were admitted to hospitals in Denmark with influenza and pneumonia during the period 2005 to 2018. "A little over 1,00,000 of the admitted patients took ACE inhibitors or angiotensin II receptor blockers, and the study shows that fewer of them were put on a ventilator and that they had lower mortality rates," said study author Christian Fynbo Christiansen from the Aarhus University Hospital in Denmark. The study arrives mid in a discussion of treatment which peaked while the Corona pandemic was at its height.

US-BASED SENSOR RAPIDLY DETECTS COVID
In ray of hope to identify asymptomatic people, researchers in the US have developed a new test with a low-cost sensor that may enable the at-home diagnosis of a COVID infection through rapid analysis of small volumes of saliva or blood, without the involvement of a medical professional, in less than 10 minutes. When attached to supporting electronics, the sensor can wirelessly transmit data to the user's cell phone through Bluetooth technology. A crucial part of the global effort to stem the spread of the pandemic is the development of tests that can rapidly identify infections in people who are not yet symptomatic. The team at California Institute of technology developed this multiplexed test (a test that combines multiple kinds of data) with a low-cost sensor developed in the lab of Wei Gao, assistant professor in the Andrew and Peggy Cherng department of medical engineering.

COFFEE BEFORE BREAKFAST MAY UP DIABETES
If you're taking coffee before breakfast, read this carefully. Researchers have found that drinking coffee first thing can have a negative effect on blood sugar control — a risk factor for diabetes and heart disease. For the study, published in the journal British Journal of Nutrition, the research team looked at the effect of broken sleep and morning coffee across a range of different metabolic markers. "The results show that whilst one night of poor sleep has limited impact on our metabolism, drinking coffee as a way to perk you up from a slumber can have a negative effect on blood glucose (sugar) control," said study authors from the University of Bath in the UK. During the study, the research team asked 29 healthy men and women to undergo three different overnight experiments in random order. In one, condition participants had a normal night's sleep and were asked to consume a sugary drink on waking in the morning.

NITRIC OXIDE CAN TREAT CORONAVIRUS
In a major finding, researchers have discovered that an effective way of treating the Coronavirus behind the 2003 SARS epidemic also works on the SARS-CoV-2 virus behind the COVID-19 pandemic. According to the study, published in the journal Redox Biology, the substance concerned is nitric oxide (NO), a compound with antiviral properties that is produced by the body itself. "To our knowledge, nitric oxide is the only substance shown so far to have a direct effect on the SARS-CoV-2," said study author Ake Lundkvist from the Uppsala University in Sweden. Since there is still no effective cure for COVID, the main emphasis in the treatments tested has been on relieving symptoms. This can shorten hospital stays and reduce mortality. To date, however, it has not been possible to prove that any of these treatments have affected the actual virus behind the infection.

YOGA AND MEDITATION REDUCE CHRONIC PAIN
Mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) course — yoga and meditation — was found to benefit patients with chronic pain and depression, leading to significant improvement in participant perceptions of pain, mood and functional capacity. According to the study, published in the Journal of the American Osteopathic Association, most of the participants (89 per cent) reported the programme helped them find ways to better cope with their pain while 11 per cent remained neutral. Chronic pain is a common and serious medical condition affecting an estimated 100 million people in the US, which correlates with annual costs of approximately \$635 billion. The small-scale study was conducted in a semi-rural population in Oregon, US, where issues of affordability, addiction and access to care are common.

IPL 2020

KL Rahul | 302 runs

Yuzvendra Chahal | 8 wickets

TODAY

DELHI CAPITALS VS ROYAL CHALLENGERS BANGALORE

Live from 7:30pm
STAR SPORTS 1 & 3

Luckily it worked out for me. We keep talking about close victories and this was one of them. Really satisfied with the way everyone stepped up.

It was a bit difficult, proud that the guys pulled it through. We had different plans - try and change it up, not go with the same thing over and over again.

Particularly when you have a world-class all-rounder in Andre Russell. He is an incredible striker, and when he comes up the order, obviously everybody else has to shift down a little bit.

It wasn't easy to start off (while batting), lack of partnerships as I said, losing wickets back-to-back isn't ideal, but there were a few positives coming out of this match.



Mumbai High

Bowlers lead charge after explosive batting to take defending champs on pole position

PTI ■ SHARJAH

Quinton de Kock was back amongst the runs with a sizzling 39-ball 67 before the bowlers did a commendable job in batsmen-friendly Sharjah to power Mumbai Indians to a clinical 34-run win over Sunrisers Hyderabad in the Indian Premier League here on Sunday.

The swash-buckling duo of Hardika Pandya (28) and Kieron Pollard (25 not out) scored at their usual brisk pace but it was Krunal who propelled MI to 208 for five with 20 runs off a mere four deliveries in the last over.

Then, the MI bowlers did just enough to restrict SRH to 174 for seven.

Chasing 209, a formidable target even on the small Sharjah ground, SRH began with Jonny Bairstow sending Trent Boult's third delivery into the stands. Two fours and a six followed before Boult had the Englishman for a 15-ball 25.

David Warner (60 off 44 balls) got into the act with a couple of boundaries off Jasprit Bumrah. Manish Pandey had raced to 16 when Hardik Pandya dropped a sitter, his view blocked by the evening sun.

Pandey lofted Rahul Chahar over long-on for a massive six and Warner followed suit, hitting the leg-spinner for another maximum in the same over as SRH kept pace with the required run-rate.

The prolific Australian then cut his compatriot James Pattinson through the point region before smashing Krunal for a six and four to help SRH past the 100-run mark in the 11th over.

Attempting an upper cut against Boult, Kane Williamson was out caught by Quinton de Kock, after Bumrah bowled an excellent six-run over.

Last match hero Priyam Garg failed to replicate his performance but it was the big wicket of Warner, in the 16th over bowled by Pattinson, that almost sealed the game in MI's favour even as the required rate soared past 14 runs an over.

For MI, there were two wickets apiece for Boult (2/28), Pattinson (2/29) and Bumrah (2/41).

Earlier, Rohit Sharma plonked Sandeep Sharma over mid-wicket for a six to start the proceedings but the MI skipper was out caught behind the very next ball as he chased a wide delivery, only to nick it to Jonny Bairstow.

The on-field umpire Richard Illingworth was not convinced by Sandeep's loud appeal but the review went in

favour of his team.

Suryakumar struck six boundaries, including a couple of pleasing drives, in his 18-ball 27 before being dismissed by Siddarth Kaul, who played his first game of the season. Kaul leaked as many as 64 runs in his four overs.

At the other end, de Kock worked the ball around nicely in between playing the big shots, as Mumbai Indians maintained a healthy run rate.

After 10 overs, MI were 91 for two with de Kock looking in fine touch.

Playing in place of the injured Bhuvneshwar Kumar, Sandeep had done more than what was expected of him in his first two overs, sending back the in-from Rohit early.

But MI have enough firepower in their batting lineup and recovered from the early blow with de Kock leading the charge.

However, the seasoned South African, who reached his half century with a six straight over the bowler's head, got out after Rashid Khan took a fine running catch off his own bowling to signal the arrival of Hardik.

Pandya would have been dismissed cheaply but David Warner could not hold on to a difficult chance at the boundary.

Manish Pandey, who had spilled one earlier in the day, made up for that with a sensational catch to send back Ishan Kishan for a 23-ball 31.

What a Faf win

Watson, Du Plessis record opening stand secure perfect 10 wicket victory

IAN S ■ DUBAI

Shane Watson (83 not out) and Faf du Plessis (87 not out) brought Chennai Super Kings (CSK) back to winning ways in emphatic fashion on Sunday at the Dubai International Cricket Stadium.

The pair put an unbeaten 181-run opening partnership to take their team to a 10-wicket victory over Kings XI Punjab (KXIP).

The pair chased down the target of 179 with more than two overs to spare. This is the second highest target a team has managed to chased down without losing a wicket.

It is also only the second time that CSK have managed to win a match by 10 wickets and they are also the first team to successfully chase down a target in Dubai this season.

Watson and du Plessis hardly gave any threats for the bowling side and got off to a swift start. du Plessis smashed 19 runs off the sixth over to take CSK to 60 within the powerplay and they crossed 100 in the 10th over.

There were some murmurs between Watson and the umpire and later with KL Rahul over what seemed to Ravi Bishnoi's run-up during the 16th over. du Plessis finished off the chase with a six and a four off the third and fourth balls of the 18th over bowled by Shami.

Earlier, highly effective death over bowling from Shardul Thakur and Dwayne Bravo CSK restrict KXIP to 178/4 after the latter looked set for a total close to or beyond the 200-run mark.

Delhi Capitals wishes Indian wicketkeeper batsman Rishabh Pant on his birthday 4 October

DK SHOULD BAT AFTER MORGAN, RUSS
Two-time IPL winning Kolkata Knight Riders captain Gautam Gambhir believes current skipper Dinesh Karthik should bat after Eoin Morgan and Andre Russell and also wants Sunil Narine to be dropped from the top of the order. Apart from a 23-ball 30 coming at no 3 against Mumbai Indians, Karthik has failed to produce any significant score despite batting ahead of Morgan so far in the tournament. "Rahul Tripathi goes up the order, Dinesh Karthik plays at no 6, not before Morgan and not before Russell as well. Probably Sunil Narine goes to bat at 8 or 9. If Morgan bats no 4 and Russell at 5 and Dinesh Karthik to follow," Gambhir told ESPNcricinfo.

WE CAN OUTSKILL RCB
Unfazed by the threat posed by the big guns of Royal Challengers Bangalore, Delhi Capitals' pacer Anrich Nortje said his team is capable of outperforming their opponents on Monday. Nortje said it is all about sticking to basics and executing their plans as the Capitals, who defeated Kolkata Knight Riders by 18 runs on Saturday night, will face RCB in an IPL game here. "It's going to be a good challenge. They have got a pretty good line-up, and have some big names. But, I think we have got a good team as well and the guys have been training really well," Nortje said in a release issued by DC on Sunday. "If we just execute our skills, perform the way we have been, I think it's going to be a very good game, and I'm sure we can outskill them."

TOP 3 SHOULD DO MORE
Steve Smith on Saturday said that the top three batsmen have to perform better after their eight-wicket defeat to Royal Challengers Bangalore (RCB). "Our top three should be doing the job a lot more. In the last two games we haven't got going and that has cost us. We have to take it a little bit deeper us three and then we have enough power, we have seen what Tewatia can do, Jofra and Tom Curran as well," said Smith after the match. "He [Lorror] played nice, under pressure having lost quite a few wickets and he was able to build throughout the middle, I thought he played a really mature innings. There are few areas we have to work on, we will go back and have a look at it."

MORGAN SHOULD LEAD KKR: SREESANTH
Eoin Morgan should lead Kolkata Knight Riders instead of Dinesh Karthik in the remaining matches of the Indian Premier League (IPL) 2020, believes out-of-favour fast bowler Sreesanth. "Genuinely feel Eoin Morgan should lead the side, surely not DK. World Cup-winning captain should surely lead IPL side," Sreesanth tweeted after KKR suffered an 18-run defeat against Delhi Capitals at the Sharjah Cricket Stadium in their latest IPL encounter. "I hope KKR looks at this issue and they need a leader who will lead from front like Rohit, Dhoni or Virat, what a player," he added.



Faf Du Plessis and Shane Watson celebrate their team victory BCCI

Boult, Bumrah made difference in end

IAN S ■ SHARJAH

Sunrisers Hyderabad (SRH) captain David Warner's 60 was not enough as his side fell to a 34-run defeat to Mumbai Indians (MI) on Sunday at the Sharjah Cricket Stadium. Warner said that the combined efforts of MI's Jasprit Bumrah and Trent Boult in the death overs made it difficult for SRH to keep up with the required run rate.

"The stats do tell the tale, their two most experienced bowlers, they bowled well towards the end and we couldn't target the fence," said Warner after the match. Chasing MI's score of 208/5, SRH could only reach 174/7. It is the first time this season that a team has not been able to cross 200 in Sharjah.

"Look, I think we didn't



gauge the wicket properly, during the day time it's perhaps a bit slower and when the ball gets soft - it's difficult to hit the wicket harder. They had runs on the board and we were left chasing at 10 RPO - we didn't string partnerships together to take the chase deeper," he said.

Warner kept SRH in the chase while batting with the top order consisting of his opening partner Jonny Bairstow, Manish Pandey and Kane Williamson but SRH fell off the pace after they lost their third wicket.

Delhi, RCB fight for top

PTI ■ DUBAI

A back-in-form Virat Kohli's tactical acumen will be put to test against Shreyas Iyer's unassuming but dynamic brand of captaincy when the two most impressive teams of the ongoing IPL - Royal Challengers Bangalore and Delhi Capitals - face each other here on Monday.

Both DC and RCB have looked solid so far and are placed atop the standings with three wins out of four games each.

While Iyer has shown great form in his team's four matches, Kohli finally got his act together in RCB's last game against Rajasthan Royals, striking a fluent half-century.

On Saturday, Iyer (88 not out off 38 balls) again showed his class after Prithvi Shaw's (66) opening act as Delhi beat Kolkata Knight Riders by 18 runs.

Kohli too finally got his touch back after three ordinary outings

with an unbeaten 72 off 53 balls to guide RCB to a comfortable eight-wicket win over Rajasthan Royals.

And come Monday, the two skippers would look to lead from the front and outwit each other in what promises to be a thrilling contest.

While Shaw has so far looked quite in control at the top of the order for DC, Shikhar Dhawan's form would be a cause of concern for Iyer.

But on the brighter side, Delhi seem to have finally got Rishabh Pant back in form as he dusted off his rustiness with a quick-fire 17-ball 38 against KKR.

To add to it, there is Marcus Stonis and Shimron Hetmyer waiting in the wings.

On the bowling front, Kagiso Rabada is the go-to man for DC even though he leaked runs against KKR the other day.

South African pacer Anrich Nortje has been brilliant for DC in the opening and slog overs and bowled a brilliant penultimate over against KKR on Saturday.

Harshal Patel, as Ishant Sharma's replacement, did well enough to finish with 2 for 34 in 4 overs but the fit-again Ravichandran Ashwin and Stonis went for runs.

RCB, on the other hand, have been served well by the young Devdutt Padikkal at the top. The left-

hander, considered the next big thing in Indian cricket, is fourth in the run-scorers' tally with 174 from four games, including three fifties.

And if Aaron Finch too gets going, it would be difficult for any side to stop the marauding Bangalore openers.

Kohli's return to form is a relief for RCB's batting unit, which also has the likes of the in-form AB de Villiers, Shivam Dube and Gurkeerat Singh among others.

Isuru Udana has been a welcome addition in RCB's bowling line-up along side Navdeep Saini and the spin duo of Washington Sundar and Yuzvendra Chahal.

But Australian leg-spinner Adam Zampa is yet to adjust to the conditions.

RCB would also be hoping for Chris Morris to recover quickly after the South African all-rounder picked up a side strain before the start of the tournament.



Inter drop points

AP ■ MILAN

Inter Milan dropped its first points of the season as it drew 1-1 at Lazio in Serie A on Sunday, in a match that saw both teams reduced to 10 men late on.

Earlier, Atalanta made it three wins out of three with a 5-2 victory over Cagliari.

Juventus was supposed to be playing Napoli later but Gennaro Gattuso's team has not left Naples after two of its players tested positive for the coronavirus.

League authorities and Juventus have indicated the game should go ahead, raising the prospect of Napoli being handed a 3-0 loss by the league judge for failing to show. In Rome, Lazio was still smarting from a 4-1 defeat at home to Atalanta and was beset by injury problems.

It lost two more players to injury during the first half and also conceded the opener in the 30th minute when Ivan Perisic cut in from the left and managed to get the ball to Lautaro Martinez who turned and fired into bottom left corner.

Purr-fect Nadal

AP ■ PARIS

On a Sunday of upsets among the women at the French Open, revenge was a dish served up in an autumnal chill by a Polish teenager.

And it was only partially business as usual for the men, too. Rafael Nadal advanced, but his opponent in his 14th quarterfinal at Roland Garros will be dangerous debutant Jannik Sinner. By making the men's last eight as a newcomer, the 19-year-old Italian matched a feat last achieved by Nadal himself, in 2005, on his march to the first of his 12 titles in Paris.

So impressive has Sinner been on the clay that his 6-3, 6-3, 4-6, 6-3 win against U.S. Open finalist Alexander Zverev hardly seemed like an upset, despite the 68-spot gulf separating them in their rankings. Sinner pulled the sixth-seeded German this way and that with precision groundstrokes and unfurled his wingspan to make 21 winners at the net.

Sinner said that from his side of the net, his opponent seemed "quite okay, you know, because in the third and fourth set he was running quite a lot."

Against fourth-round foe Sebastian Korda, a 20-year-old qualifier who idol-



izes him so much that he named his cat "Rafa," Nadal was - excuse the pun - practically purr-fect, winning 6-1, 6-1, 6-2.

Korda lapped it up. His long-term sights are set on winning at least two Grand Slam titles, one more than his dad, 1998 Australian Open champion Petr Korda.

Nadal has yet to drop a crown in his pursuit of a 13th French Open title that would be his 20th major title overall, tying Roger Federer's record.

Although Nadal and Sinner have practiced together, their match will be the first between the 34-year-old and the youngest man in a Grand Slam quarterfinal since Novak Djokovic in 2006.

AFP ■ ENGLAND

Tottenham tore apart Manchester United for a 6-1 victory on Sunday, exposing the defensive weaknesses in Ole Gunnar Solskjaer's side by inflicting the team's joint-heaviest Premier League defeat at home.

Only once since 1930 has United conceded six at home - to Manchester City nine years ago. Not since 1986 has United opened the league season with back-to-back home losses.

This was a crushing defeat to a Tottenham side managed by Jose Mourinho, who was fired in 2018 to make way for Solskjaer. And against a team that has played eight games in 22 days across three competitions and was trailing after two minutes at Old Trafford.

But after Bruno Fernandes' penalty, United's wretched defense allowed Tanguy Ndombele to level in the fourth minute and Son Heung-Min to net again inside three minutes.

United can be aggrieved that Erik Lamela's apparent playacting led to Anthony Martial being sent off in the 28th minute. But the team was already being run ragged by Tottenham.

Harry Kane scored his first on the half-hour, Son netted again in the 37th, Serge Aurier

Spurs hit Man Utd for 6



Manchester United's Paul Pogba, right, fights for the ball with Tottenham's Harry Kane during the English Premier League

was on target in the 51st and Kane wrapped up the rout from the penalty spot in the 79th.

Arsenal moved into the Premier League top four as two goals in three minutes saw off Sheffield United 2-1, while Leicester's perfect start came to a shuddering halt with a 3-0 defeat at home to West Ham.

Liverpool can now leapfrog Leicester to move joint top of the table alongside Merseyside rivals Everton if they win at Aston Villa later on Sunday, while Jose Mourinho takes his Tottenham team to Old Trafford

team move opened the scoring on the hour mark when Bukayo Saka headed home Hector Bellerin's cross at the far post.

Bellerin was the provider again moments later as Nicolas Pepe drove forward to curl the ball in off the far post.

David McGoldrick halved the deficit seven minutes from time with the Blades first league goal of the season, but they remain without a point.

Arsenal are now level on points with Leicester as the Foxes suffered a huge fall from grace just a week on from thrashing Manchester City 5-2.

West Ham manager David Moyes was again taking charge from home after testing positive for coronavirus.

But just as in a 4-0 win over Wolves last weekend, the Hammers did not miss his presence as goals from Michail Antonio, Pablo Fornals and Jarrod Bowen gave the visitors a full deserved three points.

Antonio's presence was too much for Leicester to handle and he opened the scoring with a header at the far post from Aaron Cresswell's pin-point cross.

DUGOUT

MOTION PICTURE



Delhi Capitals wishes Indian wicketkeeper batsman Rishabh Pant on his birthday 4 October