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Harsimrat quits over farm Bills

With the resignation, SAD aims at consolidating its stronghold in Punjab's farming community

MONIKA MALIK/PNS
CHANDIGARH/NEW DELHI

Faced with massive unrest among the farmers, the Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) on Thursday distanced itself from its alliance partner BJP on the issue of a set of agriculture Bills by "sacrificing" the Cabinet berth in the NDA-led Central Government.

Strongly opposing the farm Bills, Union Food Processing Minister and SAD's lone representative in the Union Cabinet Harsimrat Kaur Badal resigned from the Ministry "in protest against anti-farmer Ordinances and legislation".

The three Bills — Essential Commodities (Amendment) Bill, 2020, the Farmers Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Bill, 2020, and the Farmers' (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement of Price Assurance and Farm Services Bill, 2020 — were passed by the Lok Sabha on Thursday night. Led by the Congress nearly all the Opposition parties opposed the Bill, calling it "anti-farmer".

"We stand with the farmers and will do anything for them. Next course of action will be taken by our party for which there will be a meeting shortly," said Shiromani Akali Dal



president Sukhbir Singh Badal, leaving open the possibility of walking out of the NDA.

The BJP has a few allies left after Shiv Sena walked out of the NDA.

"I have resigned from the Union Cabinet in protest against anti-farmer Ordinances and legislation. Proud to stand with farmers as their daughter & sister," Harsimrat tweeted ahead of the passage of the Bills in the Lok Sabha.

Farmers form a sizable chunk of the voting population in the agrarian State of Punjab and political parties have all along made attempts to have agriculturalists by their side.

SAD's rivals, including the



Women raise slogan during a protest against three ordinances passed by the Centre at Badal village in Sri Muktsar Sahib on Thursday

Congress and the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), have all along been accusing the Badal family of indulging in "double speak". They have been targeting the SAD for opposing the farm Bills while enjoying the Cabinet berth at the same time.

The SAD has been at loggerheads with its ally BJP over the farm Bills, which has triggered massive protests in Punjab and the neighbouring Haryana by farmer organisations, apprehending that the new laws would bring to an end the assured minimum support price (MSP) regime for agri-

culture produce, and would also benefit the corporates.

The Badal husband-wife couple represents the SAD in the Lok Sabha, while the Upper House has three MPs. On Tuesday, Sukhbir voted against the Essential Commodities (Amendment) Bill in the Lok Sabha, saying that the proposed legislation is against the interests of farmers. Later, it was passed by Parliament by voice vote.

Initially defending the Ordinances, and even persuading the farmers that it would have no bearing on

existing procurement policy and the MSP regime, SAD, in a complete volte-face, claimed that the party was "not consulted" over the controversial farm Ordinances, and it would "destroy the food grain procurement system establishment painstakingly over a period of 50 years".

With Harsimrat's resignation, the SAD would aim at consolidating its stronghold in the State's farming community in an apparent attempt to stage a comeback in the Assembly polls in 2022.

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No power can prevent Army patrols in Ladakh: Rajnath

India will not allow China to unilaterally change status quo on LAC, says Minister

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Thursday said "no power on the earth can prevent" the Indian Army from patrolling its area in Ladakh and India will not allow China to unilaterally change the status quo on the Line of Actual Control (LAC).

The Minister made these observations while briefing the Rajya Sabha about the current situation on the volatile border where stand-offs are on for the past four months. Cutting across party lines, the entire House expressed solidarity with the Government and the armed forces in handling the ongoing tense situation at the border.

Chairman M Venkaiah Naidu said the entire House should send out a message that the country is united in this crisis. It will be an apt rebuff to "propaganda" in a section of the international media that there are differences in India on the LAC issue, he said. Naidu also said India for centuries has followed the path of peace and has never attacked another country.

Updating the House, Rajnath said India has asked China to refrain from making aggressive efforts to unilaterally change the LAC. He also referred to his recent meeting with his Chinese counterpart Wei Fenghe in Moscow where this point was conveyed. China was also asked to honour all the pacts to maintain peace and tranquility at the LAC and told the Indian forces are determined to protect its territory



and sovereignty, the Minister said.

Repeatedly underlining New Delhi's stand that it wanted to solve the complex issue through political and military level dialogue, Rajnath cautioned "war can be started by anyone but no one is sure about the end result."

Replying to questions by the former Defence Minister and senior Congress leader AK Antony and his colleague Anand Sharma about China obstructing Indian patrols, he said "no power on earth can prevent the Indian patrols. The patrolling pattern is traditional and well-defined."

He also said the stand-offs take place as the Chinese try to stop the Indian patrols. The first face-off in May this year also started after the Chinese intruded five km into India in the north bank of the Pangong Tso (lake) and obstructed an Indian patrol near 'Finger 4'. This led to exchange of blows between the two sides leaving scores of soldiers injured.

The Defence Minister said he will not be able to share much more because these were sensitive operational issues. "I hope the House will under-

stand the sensitivity of the matter," he said.

Appreciating the issue, Naidu urged Rajnath to call select leaders for a separate meeting to address deeper issues and answer their questions. The meeting could be attended by senior defence officials, the chairman suggested.

Rajnath did not deviate much from his statement given in the Lok Sabha on Tuesday. In the Rajya Sabha, he said the LAC in the past too had seen face-offs and they were ultimately resolved through dialogue.

However, this time the situation is very different both in terms of the scale of troops involved and the number of friction points, the Minister said adding India remains committed to a peaceful resolution. "Starting war is in our hands but the end is not in our hands. I am astonished at times that peace is compromised. I want to tell our 130 crore countrymen that we will not let the country down. Neither will we bow before anyone, nor is it our intention to make anyone bow before us," he said.

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Covid-19 IN INDIA

TOTAL CASES: 52,12,623
DEATHS: 84,400
RECOVERED: 41,07,515
ACTIVE: 10,19,972

STATES	TOTAL CASES	DEATHS	RECOVERED
Maharashtra	11,45,840	31,351	8,12,354
Andhra Pradesh	6,01,462	5,177	5,08,088
Tamil Nadu	5,25,420	8,618	4,70,192
Karnataka	4,94,356	7,629	3,83,077
Uttar Pradesh	3,36,294	4,771	2,63,288
Delhi	2,34,701	4,877	1,98,103
West Bengal	2,15,580	4,183	1,87,061
Odisha	1,67,161	722	1,33,466
Telangana	1,65,003	1,005	1,33,555
Bihar	1,64,224	855	1,49,722
Assam	1,50,349	528	1,19,364
Kerala	1,22,216	490	87,341
Gujarat	1,19,088	3,271	99,908
Rajasthan	1,09,473	1,293	90,685
Haryana	1,03,773	1,069	81,690
Madhya Pradesh	97,906	1,877	74,398

Rich nations with just 13% global population to secure half of Covid-19 vaccines

APP ■ WASHINGTON

A group of wealthy nations representing 13 per cent of the global population have already bought up more than half of the promised doses of future Covid-19 vaccines, according to a report by Oxfam on Wednesday.

The non-governmental organisation analysed deals struck by pharmaceuticals and vaccine producers for the five leading vaccine candidates currently in late-stage trials, based on data collected by the analytics company Airfinity.

"Access to a life-saving vaccine shouldn't depend on where you live or how much money you have," said Robert Silverman of Oxfam America.

"The development and approval of a safe and effective vaccine is crucial, but equally important is making sure the vaccines are available and affordable to everyone. Covid-19 anywhere is Covid-19 everywhere."

The five vaccines analysed were from AstraZeneca, Gamaleya/Sputnik, Moderna, Pfizer and Sinovac.

Oxfam calculated the combined production capacity of



these five vaccine candidates at 5.9 billion doses, enough for three billion people given that all five future vaccines will or are highly likely to require two doses. Supply deals have so far been agreed for 5.3 billion doses, of which 2.7 billion have been bought by developed countries/union like the US, the UK, EU, Australia, Hong Kong and Macau, Japan, Switzerland and Israel.

The remaining 2.6 billion doses have been bought by or promised to developing countries, including India, Bangladesh, China, Brazil, Indonesia and Mexico.

The non-profit added that one of the leading candidates, developed by Moderna, has received \$2.5 billion in committed taxpayers' money, but has said it intends to make a profit and has sold the options for all its supply to rich nations.

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908 fresh corona cases in Lucknow

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

As many as 908 more people tested positive for coronavirus infection in the state capital, taking the tally of confirmed cases to 42,854 on Thursday evening.

The city also reported 11 COVID-19 deaths, pushing the toll to 560.

With 692 coronavirus infected people recovering in the last 24 hours, 32,519 COVID-19 patients have been cured in the city so far.

At present there are 9,775 active cases, 7,693 of them in home isolation, in the city.

The health workers collected 8,117 samples in the district under contact surveillance.

Meanwhile, 6,318 people tested positive across the state, taking the tally of confirmed cases to 3,36,294.

With 81 more COVID-19 deaths in the state, the death toll stood at 4,771 on Thursday evening.

As many as 4,715 COVID-19 patients recovered during the past 24 hours.



IMMUNE SYSTEM'S T CELLS PLAY BIGGER ROLE IN REDUCING COVID-19 SEVERITY: STUDY

Los Angeles: Vaccine candidates for COVID-19 should elicit a broad immune response that includes antibodies, and the body's helper and killer T cells, according to a study which says weak immunity may lead to a poor disease outcome. The research, published in the journal Cell, confirms that a multi-layered, virus-specific immune response is important for controlling the virus during the acute phase of the infection and reducing its severity.

Amit Shah discharged from AIIMS

New Delhi: Union Home Minister Amit Shah, who recently recovered from Covid-19 and was admitted to AIIMS for a complete medical check-up, was discharged on Thursday evening, officials said.

He was admitted to the premier hospital on September 12. Earlier in the day, the Union Home Minister had addressed an event in his constituency Gandhinagar in through video conference.

CAPSULE

MODI TURNS 70, WISHES IN FROM ACROSS WORLD

New Delhi: Prime Minister Narendra Modi turned 70 on Thursday, a landmark birthday that saw greetings pour in from across the world.

PULWAMA-2 AVERTED; HUGE EXPLOSIVES SEIZED

New Delhi: A Pulwama-style terror attack was averted on Thursday by the Indian Army with the recovery of 52 kg of explosives in Karewa area of Gadikal in Kashmir, Army officials said here.

REGULATE DIGITAL MEDIA FIRST, CENTRE TELLS SC

New Delhi: The Centre has said that if the Supreme Court decides on the issue of media regulation then such an exercise should be undertaken with the digital media first.

US court refuses to stay Trump's move to cut H-1B visas

Washington: A US court has declined to bar the Donald Trump administration's move in US to curtail H-1B visas widely used by foreign technology workers.

The ruling on Wednesday was the second time this month that US District Judge Amit Mehta in Washington has denied a request to suspend the proclamation.

Trump's June 22 proclamation declaring foreign workers a risk to the US labour market amid the coronavirus pandemic triggered pushback from workers and business groups. An array of the nation's biggest tech companies have warned that the policy will do "irreparable harm on businesses and the US' economy."

4 Indian cities slip in Global Smart City rankings

Respondents from Indian cities highlight air pollution, road congestion as main problems

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Four Indian cities — Mumbai, New Delhi, Hyderabad, and Bengaluru — have seen a significant fall in the ranking of Global Smart City Index 2020 released on Thursday. Singapore is the top in the list, followed by Helsinki and Zurich in the second and third places respectively. Beijing is ranked 82 (down from 60 in 2019) while Lagos is at the bottom (109) in the list.

As per the Global Smart City Index 2020, Hyderabad was placed at the 85th position (down from 67 in 2019), New Delhi at 86 (down from 68 in 2019), Mumbai was at 93rd place (in 2019 it was at 78) and Bengaluru at 95th (79 in 2019).



The report said cities in India suffer significant drops this year due to the detrimental effect of the pandemic, where technological advancement was not up to date. Indian cities have suffered more from the pandemic because they were not prepared, the report added.

Others in the top 10 list include Auckland (4th), Oslo (5th), Copenhagen (6th), the Institute for Management Development (IMD), in collaboration with Singapore University for Technology and Design (SUTD). Respondents from Indian cities highlighted air pollution, road congestion as main problems.

Geneva (7th), Taipei City (8th), Amsterdam (9th) and New York at the 10th place. Dubai ranked 43th while Abu Dhabi 42th.

The IMD in collaboration with Singapore University for Technology and Design has released the 2020 Smart City Index, with key findings on how technology is playing a role in the Covid-19 era.

Hundreds of citizens from 109 cities were surveyed in April and May 2020 in the second edition of Global Smart City Index 2020 and asked questions on the technological provisions of their city across five key areas — health and safety, mobility, activities, opportunities, and governance.

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Indict ex-Min Shourie for selling off Palace Hotel for trifle: Court

AGENCIES ■ NEW DELHI

A special CBI court wants a sale case of one of the grandest palace-hotels in Rajasthan, Laxmi Vilas Palace Hotel in Udaipur, to be reopened and former Union Minister Arun Shourie, former bureaucrat Pradeep Bajjal and hotelier Jyotsna Suri to be charged as it claimed that it was grossly sold at a huge loss to the taxpayer in 2002.

The court has asked for criminal cases against the three. "Unknown officers and private persons indulged in this conspiracy from 1999 to

2002 to cause loss of money to the government. The land was valued at ₹45 per square yard. Even a spoon in the hotel would be costlier than that," said a special CBI judge.

Hotel Laxmi Vilas was valued at over ₹252 crore but was sold for ₹7.5 crore to hotelier Lalit Suri, said the special CBI court. Jyotsna Suri took charge of the Lalit group of hotels after her husband Lalit Suri's death.

Shourie, a veteran journalist who was Disinvestment Minister at the time, said he would file a revision petition in the Rajasthan High Court.

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Menstrual hygiene campaign launched on PM's birthday

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

A special cleanliness-cum-menstrual hygiene campaign began on Thursday to mark the 70th birthday of Prime Minister Narendra Modi in various cities of Uttar Pradesh.

The campaign was launched by Sulabh International under 'Seva Saptah' around Sulabh public toilets during which volunteers distributed sanitary napkin packets among adolescents girls and women apart from handing over a number of masks in Kanpur Nagar, Lucknow, Agra, Ayodhya, Varanasi and Vrindavan.

Sulabh International, led by its founder Dr. Bindeshwar Pathak, organises the birthday of the prime minister every year with an aim to create awareness among masses about cleanliness.

Dr Pathak, while wishing Prime Minister Narendra Modi on his 70th birthday, said, "For the last six years, we have been celebrating the prime minister's birthday to give further boost to programmes close to Modi's heart and also very crucial for the nation's health and empowerment."

"As our prime minister is turning 70 today, our volunteers launched a nation-wide campaign to address issues related to public health and distributed masks in about 70

Guv, CM greet PM

Lucknow (PNS): Uttar Pradesh Governor Anandiben Patel and Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath wished Prime Minister Narendra Modi on his 70th birthday on Thursday.

Both the leaders have tweeted for Modi's healthy and long life. Governor Anandiben Patel said, "Best wishes to an honest and hard working PM Narendra Damodardas Modi on his birthday."

Yogi Adityanath in his tweet said fulfilling the dreams of antyodaya to rashtrdaya, happy birthday to PM Narendra Modi.

Sanitation Club actively took part in campaigns in different parts of the country.

Lack of awareness often costs girls their social lives and education, Dr Pathak added. "As an NGO working in areas of sanitation and water, we worked with all partners — in line with the prime minister's vision — to achieve the open defecation-free targets for India. We applaud Narendra Modi for providing leadership in tackling issues crucial for women and girls' health and for achieving SDG targets," he said, and added, "We wish him good health on his birthday."

Special programmes were organised in the villages of Mewat region in Haryana where girls took pledge regarding cleanliness.

Apart from volunteers, students of Sulabh School

"With the grace of Lord Ram, the theme of 'Ek Bharat, Shreshtha Bharat' you march towards to makes the country more stronger," he added while wishing Modi a longer life.

Meanwhile, UP unit of Bharatiya Janata Party is holding a 'Seva Week' to mark the birthday of the prime minister in the state. It commenced on September 14.

During the week-long programme, the BJP leaders and workers would hold blood donation camps and other people-oriented programmes. These programmes would continue till September 20.

Dr Pathak added, "In his Independence Day address, the prime minister had called for raising awareness about stigma around menstruation. So we have focused on the theme of menstrual hygiene and Sulabh volunteers distributed sanitary pads publicly to break the taboo around menstruation."

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Apart from volunteers, students of Sulabh School

Man kills daughter

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

A man killed his daughter in Rampur as he was unhappy with her affair. He later walked down to the police station and confessed to killing his daughter.

Reports said that Noor Mohammed's family was living in Bharatpur area of Shahabad in Rampur for the last several years while he was working as labourer in Chandigarh.

A few months back, his daughter also reached Chandigarh where she fell in love with a boy and eloped.

Noor Mohammed somehow recovered her with the help of police and sent her back to Rampur, asking her to forget the youth.

However, last month she again left home and went to live with the same youth. This time, Noor forcibly brought her back to Rampur and on Wednesday evening, when the girl refused to live without the youth, he strangled her to death and later surrendered before the police.

A case was registered and Noor was sent to jail.

Meanwhile a case of 'love jihad' has come to light following the recovery of a minor girl who was allegedly kidnapped from Meerut on September 3.

The police on Wednesday recovered the girl, who was kidnapped from Kankarkheda area, and also arrested one Abdullah, 42, who was posing as 'Aman' to lure Hindu

girls. Abdullah confessed before the police that he had three wives and four children. He created a Facebook ID as 'Aman' in which he posted his photographs wearing a wig to look younger.

He admitted that he had kidnapped the minor girl and had raped her. He said that he wanted to marry her too.

He was booked under relevant sections of Indian Penal Code and also the POCSO Act and sent to jail.

In another case of love jihad, the Moradabad police on Wednesday recovered a Class 8 student who was kidnapped by one Asif, who posed as Bunty Tyagi and befriended the girl. Asif has been arrested.

Meanwhile in Jaunpur, a 20-year-old woman was allegedly raped by a youth on the pretext of marriage in the Kerakat area, police said on Thursday.

Following his refusal to marry the girl after the alleged rape, the woman went to the Kotwali along with her parents and filed a written complaint regarding the rape.

As per the police, the woman, hailing from a village of the Kerakat police station area, alleged that a youth of the same village allegedly raped her while she was on her way to a farm one week back.

The woman said when she resisted and threatened to tell everyone about the incident, the youth allegedly told her to remain mum as he would marry her.

Big cities have higher number of Covid cases

Lucknow (PNS): The Uttar Pradesh government claimed that the rate of COVID-9 cases in big cities was high compared to smaller cities, posing a big challenge for the administration to control this disease in big districts.

Additional Chief Secretary (Health) Amit Mohan Prasad said that high coronavirus positive rates were witnessed in districts like Lucknow, Kanpur Nagar, Prayagraj, Muzaffarnagar and Meerut while it was low in Hathras, Hamirpur, Baghpat, Shravasti

and Mahoba districts. "The recovery rate of the COVID-19 patients has gone up to 78.29 per cent while the fatality rate is 1.42 per cent, much less than the national average. The positive rate of people going for Covid tests is also 4.15 per cent," Prasad said, and added that the coronavirus positive rate was 4.7 per cent in UP in September after the testing of 23,02,964 samples.

He said there were 68,235 active cases in the state while 2,63,288 COVID-19 patients

had recovered, including 4,715 people who were discharged from hospitals in the last 24 hours.

The additional chief secretary said on Wednesday, 1,51,693 sample were tested and with it the total Covid tests in the state had reached 80,79,882.

Prasad said there were 36,522 asymptomatic COVID-19 patients in home isolation, 3,902 in private hospitals and 230 in the semi-paid hotels while the rest were in government-run Covid hospitals.

Ansari for withdrawal of Babri case

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

In a surprise move, the main litigant from the Muslim side in the Ram Janmabhoomi title suit, Iqbal Ansari, has issued an appeal that the Babri mosque demolition case be withdrawn and all the 32 accused be freed.

The appeal came a day after the special CBI court said the judgement on the demolition case would be delivered on September 30.

The 32 accused whom Ansari wants to be freed include former deputy prime minister I.K. Advani, former Union minister Murlu Manohar Joshi, Uma Bharati, and former chief minister of UP, Kalyan Singh.

Ansari told reporters in Ayodhya on Thursday that the Supreme Court had given the entire land for the construction of Ram temple.

He said some of the accused in the demolition case had died while most of the other accused were very old, so it would not be right to punish them at this juncture.

Ansari also demanded that all the cases related to Babri mosque demolition be withdrawn immediately.

"Ayodhya issue had in the past turned into a bone of contention between Muslims and Hindus but after the historic Supreme Court decision, now the issue should be thrown in the back burner and both the communities should end their dispute and join hands for the betterment of the country," he said.

Ansari, who was also invited at the bhoomi puja for the Ram temple in Ayodhya on August 5 when Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited the Ram Janmabhoomi complex and laid the foundation stone, said it was high time that all the issues related to Babri mosque should end and a new chapter should begin so that the country could achieve a new height.

After 27 years, the special CBI court will deliver its judgement on the demolition of the Babri mosque on December 6, 1992.

A total of 49 people were accused for the demolition of the mosque in two FIRs but now only 32 are alive as 17 have died.

CS discusses action plans to improve Purvanchal infra

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

With the aim to improve infrastructure in Purvanchal, Chief Secretary Rajendra Kumar Tiwari assessed action plans prepared by various departments and discussed in detail both the plans and the implementation strategy devised for overall development of the districts of the region.

These plans were shared by various departments including Agriculture, Irrigation, Fisheries, Industry, Tourism, IT, Medical and Health, Vocational Education, Basic, Secondary and Higher Education and Transport.

The state plans to install about 8,000 solar powered bore wells, of which about 2,500, or 35 per cent of the total target, would be installed in Purvanchal districts such as Balrampur, Shravasti, Siddharthnagar, and Kushinagar, where the suitable

location would be identified.

Considering water scarcity in Purvanchal region and the success of drip irrigation, the government plans to install sprinklers under the 'Per Drop More Crop' programme of the Prime Minister Agricultural Irrigation Scheme. It was also discussed to improve research in traditional methods of farming to benefit the Tharu tribe.

The chief secretary stressed on identifying traditional agricultural methods to help improve Tharu tribe's income by improving quality and productivity of agriculture. The tribe should also be encouraged towards crop diversification and assisted in marketing their produce, he said, adding that marketing strategies for traditional farming, goat farming, poultry farming, bee keeping, mushroom production, vegetable production etc. could be designed to help the tribe.

Since the government is actively promoting organic

farming to reduce its fertiliser subsidy budget, a pilot project is envisaged on 100-200 acres in 15 identified districts in the Purvanchal region.

Promotion of contract farming was also discussed to supplement farmers' income. Under contract farming, long-term contracts with multinational companies may be negotiated to encourage cultivation of potato, jack fruit, vine, guava, mango, banana, chilli, spices and other traditional products. Fisheries, poultry, horticulture, cucumber processing, mushroom, etc. too can help farmers generate additional income.

Considering huge possibilities of tourism in Purvanchal region, the 'Buddha app' can also be made available in Mandarin, Korean, Thai and Sinhalese languages, to attract more tourists in the Buddha circuit. This app is currently available in English and Hindi.

The work on startup incubator has already started in

Prayagraj and is currently in progress in Varanasi and Gorakhpur. Construction work of Gorakhpur startups incubator will be completed by the month of December 2020.

A BPO unit has been set up for IT logistics under digital programme in Prayagraj and Deoria. A total of nine units have been set up under the BPO Promotion Schemes in Deoria, Varanasi, Prayagraj, Lakhimpur Kheri, Ayodhya, Kanpur, Bareilly, Unnao etc.

Work is on to integrate e-commerce companies with startups. An MoU is signed with Flipkart under ODOP so that the units of MSME sector can deliver their products both within and outside India using the e-commerce platform.

Under the Medical Education department, facilities of tele-counselling, setting up of BSL-2 Lab etc. are under progress in four medical colleges in the Purvanchal region. The chief secretary stressed

on strengthening the infrastructure by taking help of the private sector and using technology.

He asked officials to ensure all necessary measures for quality education in schools. He said that the syllabus for vocational education should be such that it should attract industries in Purvanchal. Three months' training is being imparted under the Skill Development Mission and at present a total of 800 courses are being conducted in 33 sectors.

It was also discussed to make computer literacy compulsory for students enrolled in government colleges. The chief secretary instructed officials to conduct short-term courses in computer programming, data management, web designing etc.

The proposal to operate 25 electric buses in Gorakhpur will see the day of light soon and the buses will start running by the month of June, 2021.

Maya against making Ambedkar hostel a detention centre

Lucknow (PNS): The Uttar Pradesh government should roll back its decision to convert the Ambedkar hostel in Ghaziabad into a detention centre for illegal foreigners, said Bahujan Samaj Party supremo Mayawati on Thursday.

The BSP chief said that her party's government had built the hostel for the benefit of Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe students of the state and its conversion into a detention centre by the Yogi Adityanath government was proof of its "anti-Dalit work style".

The hostel was constructed in Ghaziabad between 2010 and 2011 during her regime.

"The conversion of multi-storey Dr

Ambedkar SC/ST student hostel, Ghaziabad, built by BSP government into detention centres for illegal foreigners is saddening and highly condemnable. This is another proof of the government's anti-Dalit work style. BSP demands that the government take this (order) back," Mayawati tweeted on Thursday.

Meanwhile, reports confirmed that there were two separate hostels for Dalit students at Nandagram in Ghaziabad. One of these hostels has been converted into a detention centre.

According to Additional Chief Secretary (Home) Awanish Awasthi, the detention centre has been cleared following the Centre's order. He said those who were

foreigners and had been languishing in jails and those who had time to return to their countries would stay in the detention camps.

"Until the foreign people are sent to their country, they will be kept in the camp under the Social Welfare department," he added.

According to reports, the first detention centre for illegal foreigners in UP's Ghaziabad is likely to be operational by October. Officials had said that the necessary changes in the hostel premises had been carried out to ensure it could serve as a detention centre for those foreign nationals who were to be deported back to their native countries.

The detention centre will house all such detainees, who are foreigners and booked for violating the Passport (Entry into India) Act, 1987, and Foreigners Act, 1946.

The Ghaziabad detention centre will be the 12th such centre in India. Notably, foreigners who have completed their sentence for violation are kept in detention centres till the time they are deported to their respective countries. Currently, there are 11 detention centres across India. In Assam, there are six such facilities. Delhi, Goa's Mapusa, Rajasthan's Alwar, Punjab's Amritsar, and Karnataka's Sondekoppa have such detention centres.

Man kills wife, ends life in Meerut

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The bodies of a man and his wife were recovered from a hotel room and a child was found in an unconscious state there, in Meerut. Police said that it seems to be a case of suicide. It is believed that the man first killed his wife and then hanged himself.

After getting the information, the police reached the spot and found a 5-year-old girl in the room unconscious but she survived. The police have investigation after sending both the bodies for post-mortem.

Meerut police said Arvind, the deceased, was previously the manager of the hotel where his body was found. A year ago, he had quit the job and had returned to work in the hotel again with his family ten days earlier. Arvind first stabbed his wife to death and then tried to kill the daughter by giving her poison. Later he hanged himself

and gave up his life. The motive behind the extreme step is yet to be ascertained.

The girl was admitted to hospital in a serious condition.

The Meerut police are investigating this case and trying to find out why Arvind killed his wife first and tried to kill her own daughter and then committed suicide.

According to police officials, Arvind was originally a resident of Ahmedabad in Gujarat.

In another incident, a 28-year-old woman committed suicide after killing her two-year-old daughter in Banda. Rajni first killed her daughter, Shalini, and then committed suicide by hanging herself from the ceiling fan. The incident took place on Wednesday.

The villagers told the police that the woman's husband, Shivdas, had married another woman, which often led to a dispute between the couple. The

police said that Rajni killed her daughter and then ended her life when her husband had gone out to work. Kotwali police station in-charge, Ramasre Singh, said investigations were underway into the incident.

"We have taken the woman's husband into custody and are questioning him to ascertain the exact reason that prompted his wife to resort to the extreme step," he added.

In Barabanki, Tez Narain Shukla, son of former Congress MLA Sheesh Narain Shukla, a native of Munshiganj under the Kotwali police station in Barabanki, committed suicide by shooting himself inside his room on Thursday noon. Tez's wife Suman and adopted son Anmol Shukla (18) were present at the time of the incident. Family members claimed that Tez was in acute depression for last few months and had claimed that he would commit suicide. A case was registered

and the body was sent for post-mortem.

Meanwhile, one person was killed and several injured as the bus overturned on Agra-Lucknow Expressway. A 40-year-old man died and at least 50 people were injured when the bus overturned after hitting a culvert on the Agra-Lucknow Expressway in Unnao district on Thursday, police said.

There were around 80 passengers in the double-decker bus that was on its way to Gorakhpur from Anand Vihar in Delhi. The mishap occurred when the driver tried to overtake a truck and hit a culvert near Jogi Cote village in Behatmaujawar police station area early in the morning, a police officer said.

The deceased was identified as Jogi, a resident of Gorakhpur. The injured were rushed to a community health centre, Bangarua Circle Officer Gaurav Tripathi said.

CLASSIFIEDS

NOTICE

Certified that the correct name of wife is Smt. Urmila and not Nirmala. As such in future, she will be known & identified as Smt. Urmila W/o Mahesh. H.No. 460 Village & Post-Chandwara, Dist. Banda U.P.

NOTICE

I declare with Affidavit that my name is Sana D/O Naseem Ahmad R/O Vill. Semra Post-Maghar, Distt. Sant Kabir Nagar. My Father's true and real name is Naseem Ahmad according to my old record of High School mark sheet 2018 but some mistakes my Father's name become Md. Naseem which is wrong and it should be corrected by real name Naseem Ahmad.

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Health dept testing 10 contacts for each patient

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Ten contacts for each Covid-19 patient are being tested in Lucknow in order to strengthen contact tracing, CMO Dr Rajendra Prasad Singh said it was for this purpose that over 220 rapid response teams were moving in the field.

"We are testing ten persons for every Covid-19 patient, including primary contacts, to ensure contact tracing in a better manner. We are following it up with routine activities of identification, treatment and home isolation by rapid response teams," the CMO said. He added that there was a slight dip in new cases in the district and they were expecting the situation to improve in coming days.

He said though there were more than 800 persons testing positive for coronavirus daily,

they had been able to manage the patients with 56 ambulances at their disposal, because majority of patients were opting for home isolation. About reduction of mortality rate in the district, he said most of the deceased were from other districts.

On Thursday, a meeting was held by Additional Chief Secretary (Rural Development) Manoj Singh with the divisional commissioner and district magistrate at the Smart City office. The additional chief secretary reviewed contact tracing in the district with all nodal officers of CHCs.

Singh said that contact tracing should be increased and people from outside of families also be tested. He directed all the nodal officers to reach CHCs by 8:30 am and ensure all the teams leave the CHCs after a briefing.

Directions were also issued for increase in the number of rapid response teams that should be trained and then sent in the field.

Divisional Commissioner Ranjan Kumar also held a separate meeting with all the officers of the division regarding containment of coronavirus. Also Present also in the meeting was District Magistrate Abhishek Prakash and Chief Development Officer Manish Bansal

Ranjan said they had issued directions for distribution of pamphlets with details of how the disease impacts the body in terms which the general public can understand.

"The teams going from door to door will distribute these pamphlets and also make people aware about the disease apart from testing and carrying out routine activities. Contact tracing will also be

strengthened because it was witnessing gaps," he said.

Many contacts of Covid-19 patients said they did not want to get tested but leave for another place. We will put the phone numbers of these people in the system and call them thrice everyday to know about their well-being. In this way, we are trying to fill the gap," he said.

Meanwhile, director of Lok Bandhu Hospital Dr Madhu Saxena inspected the Covid ward wearing personal protection equipment. She has written to the state government, asking for the latest version of TruNat machine at Civil Hospital since they have an older version.

"With the machine that we currently have, we get the result of a sample in one hour while the newer version of the machine will test four samples at a time," she said.

She added that with the increasing number of cases in the city, they were trying to contain the spread of infection in the hospital through various methods. "We have introduced a night shift for the TruNat machine operation so that more samples can be tested. We have increased the beds in the holding area and asked the staff to wear personal protection equipment if there is any patient suspected to be suffering from Covid-19," she said.

She pointed out that earlier the patients were being admitted to Civil hospital after antigen testing but some of them were diagnosed with Covid-19 through RTPCR method, and hence they opted for TruNat testing.

The department of Respiratory Medicine (KGMU) having eight faculty members, two senior resi-

dents and 21 junior residents, nursing staff and other employees were providing healthcare services to Covid-19 patients in triage & holding areas, isolation ward, and ICU. Till now, it has attended to a total of 1,400 patients in emergency.

"A total of 368 out of 1,400 patients were admitted to the department and managed efficiently. As many as 335 patients have been cured and discharged till date. Of the 335 patients admitted, 135 were referred from the holding area, 60 from triage area and the rest were admitted to the emergency. Besides, 143 out of 368 patients were of lung cancer, 17 of interstitial lung disease, 102 of TB, six of asthma and 25 of chronic obstructive pulmonary disease while 42 had miscellaneous complaints," a senior faculty member said.

Man duped by son-in-law over ₹1 cr on promise of attractive profit

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

A man accused his son-in-law of duping him of Rs one crore on the pretext of attractive profit against investment. As per reports, Sudhanshu Bhardwaj of Keshav Nagar said he gave the money to his son-in-law Vipul Sharma of Saharanpur. "A few days after the marriage, Vipul told me that he had suffered loss in business. He asked to bail him out with monetary help. He and his brother Vipin Sharma promised that they would give me 20 per cent profit against investment. I signed a deed on May 27 last year and transferred the money. On July 17, I got a cheque of Rs 5 lakh as profit but they stopped giving me money thereafter. When I insisted for payment, they threatened me with dire consequences," Bhardwaj said.

In another case, a broker duped his acquaintance of Rs 2.84 crore on the pretext of purchasing a land in Gomti Nagar. Reports said that Ashish Patel of Vipul Khand met Dharmendra Kumar Verma of Sultanpur, who introduced himself as the director of a company facilitating plots to buyers. Patel said he gave Rs 4.12 crore in advance for purchase of the land in March-April last year. "In due course of time, Dharmendra helped me purchase land worth only Rs 1.20 crore. He still owes me Rs 2.84 crore," Patel alleged.

In Gudamba, a sum of Rs 17,000 was allegedly withdrawn from the bank account of a man, identified as Mahatma Chandra of Gudamba. Reports said Matama Chandra has a saving account in Vikas Nagar. He said the money was withdrawn between June 22 and August 17.

In another case, unidentified miscreants withdrew over Rs 4,000 from the bank account of Jaya Karki of Kumramachal Nagar. In her complaint, she stated that she got a call from a person who introduced himself as manager of the bank in which she has a saving account. She said the caller sought all the details and later she got a cash withdrawal message.

died on the way. In another case, the Gosainganj police arrested two persons on the charges of looting mobile phones from different people on Thursday. Those arrested were identified as Afzal and Adil, both of Gosainganj.

The police said the accused had looted the mobile phone from a boy, identified as Anshu of the area, two days back. The police said the accused were planning to sell the mobile and the police were tipped off about it.

As per reports, Sunil was a labourer and was returning home by a mini-loader. On the way home, Sunil fell down because of a sudden jerk due to reckless driving. Sunil sustained grievous injuries and was admitted to a private hospital. As his condition deteriorated, he was referred to KGMU Trauma Centre but he

Youth falls off loader, succumbs to injuries

Youth falls off loader, succumbs to injuries

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

A youth was killed in a road mishap in Kakori on Thursday. He is identified as Sunil (25) of Asiwan in Unnao.

As per reports, Sunil was a labourer and was returning home by a mini-loader. On the way home, Sunil fell down because of a sudden jerk due to reckless driving. Sunil sustained grievous injuries and was admitted to a private hospital. As his condition deteriorated, he was referred to KGMU Trauma Centre but he

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Vishwakarma Puja celebrated with Covid precautions



Vishwakarma Puja being performed at Vishwakarma temple (top) on Basmandi road and at Mankameswar temple (above)

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Vishwakarma Puja was celebrated with Covid precautions in private as well as government workshops, homes, schools and religious places. According to UPSRTC officials, the puja was performed at the Gomtinagar depot with all precautions. There were very few people present on the occasion," a senior official said.

NHAI officials said the puja was performed at various sites. Sudeep Gupta, an official of Bridge Corporation, said the puja was performed at the workshop in Aishbagh and at the office of managing director.

"Very few people were present and the puja was performed with all precautions, he said. UPMRC also celebrated Vishwakarma Puja. Director (Operations) Sushil Kumar, general manager Swadesh

Kumar Singh, deputy general manager (Rolling Stock and Systems) Avnish Goyal, along with other senior officials and employees, were present on the occasion.

Vishwakarma Puja was performed for timely completion of various metro projects in the state. UPMRC managing director Kumar Keshav said: "We have completed Lucknow Metro project in a record time and we will also develop world class infrastructure in Kanpur and Agra. UPMRC team is committed to providing the best mass rapid transit system to the public with all modern amenities and state-of-the-art technology. We are steadfastly transforming the contemporary way of mass commutation for urban population."

Vishwakarma Puja was also celebrated at St Joseph Inter College in Thakurganj and at SKD Akademy.

Celebrations, protest mark PM's b'day

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Celebrations and protests marked the birthday of Prime Minister Narendra Modi in the state capital on Thursday. Lucknow University had a plantation drive to celebrate the occasion. Vice-Chancellor AK Rai, along with registrar Vinod Singh, DFO Ravi Singh and other officials, planted 51 peepal saplings on the old and new campuses.

Rai said that as a person who inspires wisdom, encourages enlightenment through education and protects everyone around him, Modi represents grandeur, gravity and grace and therefore, the plantation drive was an apt way to celebrate his birthday.

Rai said he has been acutely conscious about the role of LU in improving city's green quotient from the day he took charge. He said he hopes these trees grow and become active contributors towards university's as well as city's green assets.

Meanwhile, members of National Student Union of India observed 'National Unemployment Day' in front of Lucknow University on Thursday.

Some organisations had given a call for celebration of the PM's birthday as National Unemployment Day. Gaurav Tripathi from NSUI said they observed September 17 as National Unemployment Day because the PM had promised jobs to two crore youths but the same number of youths lost their jobs.

Samajwadi Chhatra Sabha also observed National Unemployment Day at the LU



(Top) Members of Samajwadi Chhatra Sabha who protested over unemployment being arrested by police. (Above) A sapling planted at LU

gate. Trishul Dhari Singh said the members were arrested by police even as they briefly protested against the fact that their degrees had not served the purpose in getting them employment.

Meanwhile, workers and leaders of Chhatra Yuva Sangharsh Samiti (CYSS) staged a demonstration at Parivartan Chowk, accusing the state government of not providing

employment to youths and hiding the "Covid scam". Police resorted to cane-charge and later arrested the protesters who were taken to Eco Garden Park by buses. AAP state president Sabhajeet Singh flayed the government for cane-charging the protesters and said the government wants to suppress the voice of dissent by using force instead of providing jobs.

CSYY president Vanshraj Dubey said BJP promised two crore jobs to youths but forgot its promise after coming to power. He said the police thrashed the protesters instead of resolving their problems. "The BJP now is bringing the black law of offering government jobs on contract basis for a period of five years," he said. Earlier, a huge number of workers assembled at the scene, catching the police unawares. The police tried to disperse the crowd and later cane-charged them.

Woman's naked body found on highway

Lucknow (PNS): Naked body of an unidentified woman, aged around 21 years, was recovered near a road divider on Lucknow-Rae Bareilly highway in Nigoha on Thursday. Villagers suspected that the body was dumped was sumped there by miscreants. Police claimed that the woman was mentally unstable and she died after being hit by some speeding vehicle.

Around 6 am on Thursday, some villagers spotted the body lying on the highway opposite Shivram dhaba and alerted the police. The body was naked

with the face smashed.

The news spread like wildfire and a huge number of villagers started flocking to the scene. On being informed, a police team reached the scene. As the identity of the woman could not be ascertained, the police sent the body to morgue.

Malihabad CO Naemul Hasan told reporters that the woman appeared to be mentally unstable and she might have been mowed down by some speeding vehicle. "The inspector gave me these details and the body has been sent for autopsy," he said.

Contrary to police claim, villagers suspected foul play. They said the police conducted preliminary probe in haste and did not get the inquest done by women cops. They said that they never saw the woman loitering in the area earlier. "The woman may have subjected to sexual assault and torture before the body was dumped on the highway," they suspected. They said they did not see blood stains at the crime scene, nor there were any signs of a road accident. They also exclaimed why the body was without clothes if it was a road mishap.

DRM takes stock of ongoing work at Gomtinagar station

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Divisional railway manager (DRM), Lucknow division of North Eastern Railway, Monica Agnihotri took stock of the ongoing redevelopment work being carried out at Gomtinagar station on Thursday. She was accompanied by ADRM (Operations) Shishir Somvanshi, officials of Railway Land Development Authority (RLDA) and other senior officials. She later held a meeting with RLDA officials to discuss the status of work. The DRM later inspected the under-construction railway platform at the second entry gate of Gomtinagar station, laying a new railway line, foot overbridge and approach road. She also asked questions of railway officials about the facilities to be provided to passengers in the time to come, progress of ongoing



work and scope of parcel handling at the station. She directed the officials to expedite the ongoing work while maintaining quality.

The DRM later visited the coaching complex where she inspected the administrative block, yard, pitline, sinkline and electrification work. She and the officials wished them prosperity and happiness on the occasion of Vishwakarma Puja.

INDIAN OVERSEAS BANK

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E-AUCTION NOTICE

Sale of immovable property/ies mortgaged to Bank under Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 (No.54 of 2002)

Whereas, the Authorized Officer of Indian Overseas Bank has taken possession of the following property/ies pursuant to the notice issued under Section 13(2) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002 in the following loan account with right to sell the same on "AS IS WHERE IS BASIS" and "AS IS WHAT IS BASIS" and "WHAT EVER THERE IS BASIS" for realization of Bank's dues plus interest & costs as detailed hereunder and whereas consequent upon failure to repay the dues, the undersigned in exercise of power conferred under Section 13(4) of the said Act proposes to realize the Bank's dues by sale of the said property/ies. The sale will be done by the undersigned through e-auction platform on 22.10.2020 between 11.00 am to 2.00 pm provided at the Web Portal "https://auctions.mstcecommerce.com/auctionhome/ibapi".

Sl No	Name of the Branch and Borrower Name	Brief Description of mortgaged Property/ies	Outstanding Dues (Rs. in Lakhs)	Reserve Price (Rs. in Lakhs)	EMD (Rs. in Lakhs) (A/c No. where the EMD to be deposited/ IFSC code)	Name of contact Person & Mob. No.
1	PROPERTY AT GORAKHPUR Branch: Vijay Chowk Borrowers : M/s. Malik Chappal House Prop. Abdul Malik & Guarantor Mr. Malikul Aziz	A Double Storied Residential Building Measuring 1392 Sq. ft., of Land & building Situated at House No. 72-A, Moh- Bakhtiyar (Bharpurwa), Near Neem Tree Ground, Gorakhpur, U.P. in the Name of Sri Abdul Malik S/o Late Nasser Ahmad Bounded : North : Kaccha Rasta thereafter malani library, South : House of Mr. Abdul Haq, East : Passage thereafter plot of owner(93.50 sq.ft.) and common open space West: House of Mr. Abdul Haq.	25.34 as on 31.08.2020 with further intt + other cost	64.51	6.50 04520113301010 IOBA0000452	Ravindra Jha Mob : 8004985161

Inspection of properties : Till 20.10.2020 from 10.00 a.m. to 4.00 p.m. Submission of online application for bid with EMD : 18.09.2020 onwards
Last date for submission of online application for bid with EMD : 21.10.2020 by 5.00 p.m. E-Auction Date & Time : 22.10.2020, 11.00 am to 2.00 pm

TERMS AND CONDITION OF E-AUCTION SALE: The sale shall be subject to the Terms & Conditions prescribed in the Security Interest (Enforcement) rules 2002 and to the following further conditions: (i) The properties are being sold on 'AS IS WHERE IS BASIS'. (ii) The particulars of secured Assets Specified in the schedule-here in above have been stated to the best of the information of the Authorised Officer, but the Authorised Officer shall not be answerable, for any error, misstatement, or omission in this proclamation. (iii) The secured assets will be not sold below the reserve price. (iv) The auction sale will be "online through e-auction" portal "https://auctions.mstcecommerce.com/auctionhome/ibapi". (v) The bidders are also advised go through the portal http://www.ibapi.in for detailed terms and conditions for e-auctions sale before submitting their bids and taking part in the e-auction sale proceedings. (vi) The interested bidders shall deposit the EMD through NEFT/RTGS before last date of depositing of EMD i.e. 21.10.2020 before 5.00 pm. For other terms and conditions of e-auctions please visit website http://www.ibapi.in **Helpline No.:** 033-22901004, **E-mail :** varanasilaw@ioibnet.co.in

Date : 17.09.2020 Place : Gorakhpur

Authorised Officer- Indian Overseas Bank

3 TERRORISTS KILLED IN J&K

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

Three terrorists belonging to a pro Pakistan terror outfit Hizbul Mujahideen were neutralised by the joint teams of security forces in the congested area of Batmaloo in Srinagar early Thursday morning.

Two CRPF personnel, including a Deputy commandant identified as Rahul Mathur leading one of the search parties, received bullet injuries during initial exchange of fire while one civilian woman was also killed in the crossfire. So far 16 terrorists have been neutralised in seven different operations in Srinagar this year.

Director General of Police (DGP) Dilbagh Singh said that

all the three terrorists were locals from South Kashmir and were heavily armed.

Since January 1, a total number of 177 terrorists have been neutralised in 72 operations across J&K. Out of these 22 were foreign terrorists from Pakistan.

DGP termed the killing of a 45-year-old kousar Jan in "cross firing" as unfortunate and expressed sympathy with the bereaved family.

Addressing a Press conference at Police Control Room (PCR) Srinagar, DGP Singh said, "the operations were launched during few hours in the Batmaloo area after receiving a tip off about the presence of heavily armed terrorists in the area."

In a separate statement a police spokesman said, "The killed terrorists have been identified as Zakir Ahmad Paul son of Nisar Ahmad resident of Aloora Imam Sahib Shopian, Ubair Mushtaq Bhat son of Mushtaq Ahmad Bhat resident of Badragund Kulgam and Adil Hussain Bhat son of Abdul Rashid Bhat resident of Batapora Chersoo Awantipora, all affiliated with proscribed terror outfit HM. They were involved in several attacks in Srinagar City and South Kashmir.

Responding to a question related to frequent encounters taking place in and around Srinagar DGP said, "terrorists from other districts of South and north Kashmir keep on

visiting Srinagar to carry out attacks on security forces." "On August 14, they targeted our party and killed two policemen at Nowgam. Before that, they had killed two BSF men at Pandach on city outskirts. And then they made another attempt at Pantha Chowk where we lost a brave SoG man," the DGP Singh said.

He said police and CRPF teams are alert and whenever they get a lead about presence of terrorists in Srinagar, efforts are always put in to ensure zero collateral damage. "Today's operation was seventh one in Srinagar in the recent past, but biggest success was the killing of Hizbul Mujahideen commander Junaid Sehrai," the J&K Police chief said.

No power ...

From Page 1

He also commented that what China said and did were very different. The Chinese engaged in provocative military maneuvers on the night of August 29 and 30 while the two sides were engaged in diplomatic and military dialogue. "Unki kathani aur karni alag hai (their words and actions are different)," Rajnath said.

Leader of Opposition Ghulam Nabi Azad said his party stood with the Government in this hour of a challenge to the nation. Similar views were expressed by almost all parties including AAP, BSP and Left parties. TMC leader Derek O'Brien just said "Jai Hind" Pransha Acharya, a member of Odisha's ruling BJD, warned the Government to be guarded with China. "You cannot trust China. They have gone back on every agreement and the Government must be careful while negotiating with the country," he said. A similar sentiment was aired by the JD(U).

CITYBRIEFS



MoU signed between LU and CIMAP

LU, CIMAP SIGN MoU

An MoU was signed between Central Institute of Medicinal and Aromatic Plants (CIMAP) and Lucknow University. The pact was signed by LU Vice-Chancellor AK Rai and CIMAP director Dr. PK Trivedi. The prime objective is to strengthen the functional relationship between the two institutes in order to share the facilities and expertise for mutual benefits. "The prime beneficiaries of this MoU will be MSc students, research scholars, faculty members of various Life Science-related departments of LU and research scholars & scientists of CIMAP.

Fatehpur, Gonda, Hamirpur, Kannauj, Kanpur Nagar, Kanpur Dehat, Lucknow, Mahoba and Unnao. Medical of 488 candidates, which was pending at the Base Hospital and Central Command Hospital due to coronavirus pandemic, has commenced. The candidates are required to report to the Base Hospital from September 21 and Central Command Hospital from September 25. Guidelines and instructions issued with regards to Covid-19 should be adhered to by candidates while undergoing medical examination.

APPOINTED

Dean, Academic Affairs of Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar University, Rana Pratap Singh has been appointed as the chairman of Advisory Committee for Environmental Sciences of the Council of

Science and Technology, UP. He will now undertake the responsibility of examining, reviewing and evaluating all environmental-related projects of the Council.

CMS STUDENT SELECTED BY JUNIOR ACADEMY

Arav Pratap Singh, a class XII student of City Montessori School, RDSO Campus, has been selected by Junior Academy of 'The New York Academy of Sciences'. The New York Academy of Sciences shortlists students from all over the world and pairs them with NASA scientists for research programmes. Hailing Arav for his achievement, CMS founder Jagdish Gandhi said the school is continuously preparing students to take up decision-making global careers and they are making a mark in every field all over the world. Junior Academy is a passionate community of problem solvers made up of talented students, STEM experts, and industry leaders from around the world. Junior Academy members are elite students and mentors who are dedicated to designing innovative solutions to society's greatest challenges.



Another Pulwama-type terror strike averted

PNS ■ JAMMU

Another Pulwama type terror strike was averted by the joint teams of security forces after they stumbled upon 52 kgs of explosive material which included over 400 packets of explosives weighing 125 gm and 50 detonators during search operations near Karewa forest area of Gadikhal in Awantipora on Thursday.

According to official sources, during a joint search operation in the Karewa forest area security forces spotted a syntax tank. "On detailed search, a total of 52 Kgs of explosives were recovered. There were 416 pkts of explosives with each pkt of 125gm. In another



such syntax tank 50 detonators were also recovered."

The Karewa is located very close to the National Highway, 9 km South east of Lethpora and in general area where Pulwama attack happened.

According to a police

spokesman, "acting on tip off about the presence of JeM terrorists, police along with 42 RR and 130 BN CRPF conducted a joint search of the nursery area near forests of village Gadikhal Awantipora. During search of the said forest area, 02

explosive dumps were found which were concealed underground in 02 different 250 litres plastic tanks".

In one plastic tank, 416 high explosive gelatine sticks have been recovered while in another plastic tank, 50 detonators were recovered, a police spokesman said.

"The detonators were destroyed by the Bomb Disposal Squad on the spot, due to their risk of carrying/transporting," the spokesman added.

Meanwhile, a case FIR number 126/2020 under relevant sections of law has been registered in Police Station Awantipora and investigation has been taken up.

Rich nations...

From Page 1

Oxfam and other organizations are therefore calling for a "people's vaccine" free of charge, distributed fairly based on need. "This will only be possible if pharmaceutical corporations allow vaccines to be produced as widely as possible by freely sharing their knowledge free of patents, instead of protecting their monopolies and selling to the highest bidder," Oxfam said. It added that the estimated cost of providing a vaccine for everyone on Earth was less than one percent of the projected cost of Covid-19 to the global economy.

4 Indian...

From Page 1

The report also considered how technology played a role in the coronavirus era.

Meanwhile, from 15 indicators that the respondents perceive as the priority areas, all four Indian cities highlighted air pollution as one of the key areas that they felt should be looked after as a priority. Road congestion was another disgrace for cities like Bangalore and Mumbai.

This year's Smart City Index suggested that cities that have been able to combine technologies, leadership, and a strong culture of "living and acting together" should be able to better withstand the most damaging effects of such crises, the report said.

Chief of Army Staff takes stock of LoC situation

PNS ■ JAMMU

The Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General MM Naravane Thursday conducted first hand assessment of the prevailing security situation along the Line of Control (LoC) in north Kashmir.

Immediately after landing in Srinagar General Naravane proceeded to the forward areas along with top brass of the Northern Command.

Later in the day, the COAS reviewed the overall security situation along with the Northern Army Commander and Chinara

Corps Commander. He was also briefed by the commanders in the hinterland.

Defence Spokesman in Srinagar Col Rajesh Kalia said, "During his interaction with the soldiers deployed in high altitude areas, General MM Naravane appreciated their high morale and complimented them on their response to Pakistan ceasefire violations."

He also commended use of technology to ensure effective day and night surveillance across the LoC which has resulted in many successful operations to foil infil-

tration bids from POK in the recent past.

The COAS reinforced the need to extend all possible support to civilians residing in the border areas who are victims of targeted ceasefire violations by Pakistan Army and are facing hardships due to the pandemic.

The COAS also appreciated the high level of coordination amongst all government agencies towards maintaining peace in the valley and efforts to reach out to the "Awam" to overcome the challenges due to Covid-19 pandemic.

Harsimrat...

From Page 1

After ruling the State for a decade, the SAD was routed in 2017 polls and finished on the third spot with just 15 seats in the 117-member House. Farmers have always been SAD's strong vote bank, and by "sacrificing" the Cabinet berth in protest against the farmer's welfare, the party has virtually laid down the foundation stone of its campaign with their help.

Hailing the passage of the Bills, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said it was an important moment for the farmers and agricultural sector of the country. The Bills will liberate the farmers from middlemen and other obstacles said the PM.

"I assure the farmers that the system of MSP (Minimum Support Price) and Government procurement will remain. The Bills will provide opportunities to the farmers and empower them in the true sense, the PM said in his first reaction to the passage of the Bills in the Lok Sabha.

Defending the Bills, Agriculture Minister Narendra

Tomar said it was wrong to think that contract farming would help the corporate at the cost of farmers.

"Contract will not lead to taking over of land. If the corporates build some infrastructure, it will only benefit the farmer in the end," Tomar said.

Tomar also added that the contracts signed under this law will also have a provision that if prices at the time of sale are more than what agreed to at the time of contract then the farmer will get a certain percentage of the additional profit. He said that the trade outside APMCs will also give the farmers an option to avoid paying the mandi tax imposed by various State Governments.

Tomar said that the new Bills will lead to more traders competing for farmers' produce, which in turn will get them better prices. "License, Inspector Raj will end, corruption will end and farmers, traders will be free to buy and sell anywhere in the country," the Minister said.

Congress MP from Ludhiana Ravneet Singh Bittu slammed the Bills and termed

these as 'black laws'. Bittu asked the Government to not implement this in Punjab and Haryana, and try it out in other States.

"Punjab is a border State, don't needle it. Sometime you raise SYL and then you come up with such Bills," he said.

Punjab Congress MPs Gurpratap Singh Aujla and Jasbir Singh Dimpal also opposed the Bills so did AAP MP Bhagwant Mann.

The TMC, the AAP and the BSP also opposed the Bills. The Shiv Sena supported the Government, the BJD wanted it to be sent to the standing committee.

Opposing the Bill, the TRS said it could not support contract farming at the cost of poor local farm tenants.

TRS MP Bheemrao Baswanthrao Patil said that by bringing in corporate players through contract farming, the Government is putting at risk the hundreds of poor farmers who rent farmlands from owners on feeble verbal contracts with little bargaining power. The MP said that landowners will clearly prefer corporates over poor farmers who are ploughing fields on

batai (tenants farm the land and split the produce with absentee landlords under this system).

The MP also said that the Bill mentions some grievance redressal mechanism for any disputes but what chance will farmers stand in the face of large corporations with infinite legal resources at their disposal.

TMC MP Mahua Moitra said that the Government was trying to crush the spirit of federalism by its brute parliamentary majority. "By legislating on the farm sector, the Government has once again done what it does best, that is aggrandising itself the authority that is simply not vested in it by the Constitution," she said.

The TMC MP said the proposed legislations would also lead to black marketing and hoarding and push the entire sector towards privatisation.

Saying that farm markets and agricultural pricing are State subjects, TDP lawmaker K Ram Mohan Naidu urged the Centre not to presume that all Opposition parties have a political agenda.

Indict ex-Min Shourie for selling off Palace...

From Page 1

"When you dispose of a property the evaluation is based on various factors - the land rate, possibility of growth, business potential, assets and liabilities. All these are studied and were studied by not one man but by a firm appointed by the government. The entire committee looked at it. Due process was followed and then the property was sold," Shourie told NDTV.

The Laxmi Vilas Palace, a spectacular five-star hotel on the banks of the lake Fateh Sagar, is a massive draw for tourists and one of the most popular destinations in India.

"Advocates will examine the order and then we will decide what to do next,"

Shourie said

The CBI had filed a closure report in late 2019 saying there was "no evidence" in the 2002 case. "It is concluded that evidence worth launching prosecution was not found in the entire process of disinvestment of M/s Laxmi Vilas Palace Hotel, Udaipur," the agency said.

But the special court in Jodhpur rejected the report and ordered further investigation.

"The judge gave no ground for not accepting the CBI closure report. Non-bailable warrants have been issued like we are terrorists, murderers and rapists," Shourie said.

According to the CBI's closure report, accessed by

NDTV, the disinvestment of the government-run luxury hotel "resulted in wrongful loss of about ₹ 143.48 crore to the government and corresponding wrongful gain to the accused persons individually/jointly."

But the agency pinned the blame on the valuation by a private firm, Kanti Karamsey. The CBI said the property was undervalued at ₹ 7.85 crore and based on this valuation, the reserve price was fixed at ₹ 6.12 crore.

"During the course of the investigation, we had reevaluated the property through the Income Tax Department and it was valued at ₹ 193.28 crore. Undervaluation of the property by Kanti Karamsey and

company led to the loss to the exchequer," sources in the agency told NDTV.

The CBI registered a case on August 13, 2014 on the basis of a preliminary inquiry that alleged that Pradeep Bajjal had abused his position as Secretary, Disinvestment, in the hotel sale. But last year, it filed a closure report.

Laxmi Vilas palace belonged to the former kings of Udaipur. During the accession of princely states, the massive property was handed over to the government.

After independence, the government ran it as a hotel. In 2002 it was disinvested and bought by the Lalit Suri group of hotels.

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 dtd.14.09.2020
 Name of the work: "Allotment of 10 (Ten) nos. of Manual Iron Ore/Iron Ore Pellet plots."
 License Fees: Rs. 2,32,93,908/-
 Wharfage Fees: Rs. 6,13,707/-
 Last date & time of submission of bid: 05.10.20 up to 17:00 hrs
 Date and time of opening (technical bid): 06.10.2020 up to 16:00 hrs
 Refer our website for details https://eprocure.gov.in/eprocure/app
 PPT/PR/216/20-21 Date 14.09.2020 Traffic Manager

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Tender Notice No. 9 of Year 2020-21
 Sealed open tenders are invited by Divisional Railway Manager (S&T) N.E. Railway, Itanagar for and on behalf of the President of India for the following works: - (1) Supply, installation, testing & commissioning of MSDAC in poor drainage stations and flood prone area of RPO, KAP, BC, HTC and RAYA stations of Itanagar Division, Approx. Value :- ₹ 6,29,07,371.29, EMD Money:- ₹ 4,64,500.00, Cost of Tender Form :- ₹ 10,000, Completion Period :- 180 days. Date & time of closing of e-tender: 20.10.2020 at 11:00 Hrs.
 * Manual offers are not allowed against this tender and any such manual offer received shall be ignored. * The tender can be viewed at website http://www.ireps.gov.in.
 * The tender/bidders must have Class-III Digital Signature Certificate & must have register on IREPS portal.
 * All relevant papers must be uploaded at the time of participating in e-tendering.
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उत्तर प्रदेश पावर ट्रांसमिशन कारपोरेशन लिमिटेड, ई-निविदा सूचना निम्नलिखित ई-निविदा जिनका संक्षिप्त विवरण नीचे दिया गया है ई-निविदा की वेबसाइट www.etender.up.nic.in पर अपलोड कर दी गई है: अति अल्पकालीन ई-निविदा संख्या - T-71/ETC-II/2020-21, 220 के0वी0 उपकेन्द्र नौबकरोरी पर 132 के0वी0 बे का इन्वोल्वमेंट व सम्बन्धित कार्य। अति अल्पकालीन ई-निविदा संख्या - T-72/ETC-II/2020-21, 220 के0वी0 उपकेन्द्र नौबकरोरी पर 132 के0वी0 मेन बस एक्सटेंशन का कार्य। अति अल्पकालीन ई-निविदा संख्या - T-73/ETC-II/2020-21, 132के0वी0 उपकेन्द्र कायमगंज पर 33के0वी0 बे का निर्माण कार्य। अल्पकालीन ई-निविदा संख्या - T-74/ETC-II/2020-21, 220 के0वी0 उपकेन्द्र नौबकरोरी पर एस0एफ0-6 गैस आपूर्ति का कार्य। अति अल्पकालीन ई-निविदा संख्या - T-75/ETC-II/2020-21, 132 के0वी0 उपकेन्द्र कृष्णानगर पर 40 MVA (ALSTOM) मेक ट्रांसफार्मर पर नाइट्रोजन/ड्राई एयर प्रसिंज व सम्बन्धित कार्य। उपरोक्त विषय में विस्तृत विवरण साईट पर उपलब्ध है सभी सक्षम आपूर्ति/कार्यदायी संस्थाएं तदनुसार निविदा में भाग ले सकती हैं। अधीक्षण अभियन्ता, विद्युत पारेषण मण्डल द्वितीय पनकी कानपुर पत्रांक 3117, दिनांक 17.09.2020, "राष्ट्र हित में विजली बचायें"

LU announces recruitment of teachers on 180 posts

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Lucknow University on Thursday announced recruitment of teachers on 180 posts. LU spokesperson said applications have been invited through the online recruitment portal and the complete list of posts is available on the website.

"Applications received as per the University Grants Commission's prescribed

qualifications will be verified and the information will be sent to the applicants shortlisted for the interview rounds. Thereafter, the list of candidates selected will also be displayed through the appointment panel itself," he said.

He added that step-by-step information throughout the entire process of filling the application form till the release of the final list would

be received by the applicants through this portal.

Vice-Chancellor AK Rai examined the portal, submitted a mock application form and expressed confidence that this portal would not only save time and resources but also ensure continuity, speed and transparency in the process. The VC had earlier said that the announcement would be made on the birthday of PM Narendra Modi.

CLONE SPECIALS FOR HIGH OCCUPANCY TRAINS/ROUTES (Commencing services from 21.09.2020)

It is notified for the information of passengers that Railways have decided to run twenty (20) pairs of Clone Special Trains starting from 21.09.2020 on some of the high occupancy trains/routes. Out of the total announced 20 Pairs Clone Specials, following special trains will originate/terminate/pass over on Northern Railway's network. The Dates/Timings of commencement of these services are shown against each:-

Train No./ Train Name	Station From	Dep. Time	Station to	Arr. Time	Frequency	Dates from Originating stations.
02563 Humsafar Clone Special	Saharsa	05:00	New Delhi	05:10	Daily	21.09.2020
02564 Humsafar Clone Special	New Delhi	13:30	Saharsa	18:15	Daily	22.09.2020
03391 Humsafar Clone Special	Rajgir	07:00	New Delhi	02:30	Daily	21.09.2020
03392 Humsafar Clone Special	New Delhi	11:00	Rajgir	09:00	Daily	22.09.2020
02569 Humsafar Clone Special	Darbhanga	06:30	New Delhi	04:00	Daily	21.09.2020
02570 Humsafar Clone Special	New Delhi	12:15	Darbhanga	09:30	Daily	22.09.2020
02573 Humsafar Clone Special	Muzaffarpur	09:40	Anand Vihar (T)	05:45	Sunday	27.09.2020
02574 Humsafar Clone Special	Anand Vihar (T)	12:00	Muzaffarpur	10:30	Monday	28.09.2020
03293 Humsafar Clone Special	Rajendra Nagar	15:00	New Delhi	06:15	Sunday	27.09.2020
03294 Humsafar Clone Special	New Delhi	13:40	Rajendra Nagar	07:00	Monday	28.09.2020
05485 Humsafar Clone Special	Katihar	16:55	Delhi Jn.	15:45	Friday	25.09.2020
05486 Humsafar Clone Special	Delhi Jn.	05:30	Katihar	04:55	Sunday	27.09.2020
04653 Humsafar Clone Special	New Jalpaiguri	07:00	Amritsar	16:20	Friday	25.09.2020
04654 Humsafar Clone Special	Amritsar	08:40	New Jalpaiguri	17:45	Wednesday	23.09.2020
04651 Humsafar Clone Special	Jaynagar	06:15	Amritsar	14:45	Tue,Fri,Sun	25.09.2020
04652 Humsafar Clone Special	Amritsar	10:55	Jaynagar	20:00	Sun,Wed,Fri	23.09.2020
04059 Humsafar Clone Special	Varanasi	17:55	New Delhi	07:20	Tue,Thu,Sat	22.09.2020
04060 Humsafar Clone Special	New Delhi	17:45	Varanasi	07:35	Mon,Wed,Fri	21.09.2020
04055 Humsafar Clone Special	Ballia	14:10	Delhi Jn.	06:35	Tue,Thu,Sat	22.09.2020
04056 Humsafar Clone Special	Delhi Jn.	18:00	Ballia	10:00	Mon,Wed,Fri	21.09.2020
04251 Jan Shatabdi Exp. Spl.	Lucknow	05:30	New Delhi	13:35	Saturday	26.09.2020
04252 Jan Shatabdi Exp. Spl.	New Delhi	11:25	Lucknow	20:00	Sunday	27.09.2020
07379 Humsafar Clone Special	Vasco-Da-Gama	12:30	H. Nizamuddin	04:20	Friday	25.09.2020
07380 Humsafar Clone Special	H. Nizamuddin	13:00	Vasco-Da-Gama	04:45	Sunday	27.09.2020
06523 Humsafar Clone Special	Yesvantpur	13:55	H. Nizamuddin	13:35	Wed, Sat	23.09.2020
06524 Humsafar Clone Special	H. Nizamuddin	08:45	Yesvantpur	06:20	Sat, Tue	26.09.2020
09415 Humsafar Clone Special	Ahmedabad	17:40	Delhi Jn.	07:55	Sun, Wed	23.09.2020
09416 Humsafar Clone Special	Delhi Jn.	14:20	Ahmedabad	04:35	Mon, Thu	24.09.2020
09025 Humsafar Clone Special	Bandra (T)	11:15	Amritsar	16:00	Monday	21.09.2020
09026 Humsafar Clone Special	Amritsar	06:20	Bandra (T)	11:05	Wednesday	23.09.2020

• The Advance Reservation Period (ARP) of above Clone Special trains will be 10 days. • Stoppages shall be restricted in view of the suggestions of State Govt. • These trains will be fully reserved. • The passengers shall adhere to the COVID-19 related safety norms & guidelines issued by govt. from time to time.

Beware of Touts Always buy train tickets from Railway Counters/Authorized Railway Travel Agents only.

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

Security Helpline No. 182 **Integrated Helpline No. 139**

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Varanasi crosses 11K-mark as 208 more test positive

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

The district has crossed 11K-mark here on Thursday when 208 new Covid-19 cases have been detected here on Thursday, increasing the total number of cases to 11,089. Besides, the district also saw one more death, increasing the toll to 182. During the day, the follow-up negative reports included 181 patients. Out of them, 168 patients recovered from home isolation and the total number of patients cured at home has increased to 6,654. Besides, 13 recovered from the hospital and the number of patients who have been discharged from the hospitals has

reached 2,585. The total number of cured patients is now 9,239, leaving 1,668 active patients. The recovery rate has improved slightly to 83.31 per cent and mortality rate to 1.64 per cent.

Meanwhile, on the instructions of District Magistrate (DM) Kaushal Raj Sharma, mass/ group antigen testing continued and a day ago 37 persons were tested at the Police Lines and all of them were found negative. Similarly, 54 were tested at Tulsī, Harishchandra and Nishad ghats also all of them were negative. However, two were detected positive out of 148 employees tested at LBS

Hospital, Ramnagar while one was found positive out of 30 employees of National Highway Authority of India (NHAI). Besides, Chief Medical Officer (CMO) Dr VB Singh has informed that the Health department has distributed 12,976 ivermectin tablets to 1,622 persons. So far, he added that 8.59 lakh tablets were distributed to 1.07 lakh persons and out of them, 6.69 lakh tablets to 83,685 persons were distributed by the Health department while rest of tablets by other departments so far.

CMO has also informed that by the first of the day at 11 am, 141 positive patients were detected out of 1,891 reports

received. Till then, the total test reports received were 1,57,661 and the results of 3,154 were awaited. Out of them, 1,46,639 were negative, while 11,022 positive. The total number of samples collected was 1,70,770. Earlier, a male aged 70 and female 13 from Pandey Haveli and Badagaon respectively succumbed to COVID-19 at DDU Hospital while one male aged 66 died at HIMS. Besides, with the addition of 14 new red zones, the total number of hotspots has increased to 1,852 including 380 red zones. Two green zones have been converted into red zones again. There are 1,472 green zones including 23 new ones.

328 new COVID-19 patients found

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ ALLAHABAD

The number of people recovering from corona on Tuesday was again higher than those infected within 24 hours. On one side where 404 people became infection-free, at the same time 328 new cases of COVID-19 detected in Prayagraj late on Tuesday night. Apart from this, four people have died. The number of active cases stands at 3698. This has been confirmed by Dr Rishi Sahai, the Nodal Officer for Coronavirus.

He said that the total number of infected people in the district has increased to 15,084 with 328 new infections being received on Monday, while 11,171 people have been cured. Because of this, the recovery rate remains around 73 per cent. The number of active cases has dropped to 3,698 with decreasing by 20 from Monday. There are 373 patients admitted in different hospitals.

Most patients are admitted to Swaroop Rani Nehru Hospital. According to the report, 140 infected persons of Prayagraj admitted here in hospitals. Apart from this, 53 infected were admitted to railways, 56 in Covid Care Centre Kalindipuram, seven in Unani Medical College, 74 in two private hospitals, 43 in Beli Hospital. The remaining 3,325 people are in home isolation.



District Magistrate BC Goswami holding a meeting with COVID-19 doctors at Beli Hospital in Prayagraj

Apart from this, 47 people have been discharged from hospitals. Of them 10 people from Covid Care Centre Kalindipuram, three from Railway Hospital, one from Unani Medical College, seven from Beli, seven from two private hospitals and 19 from SRN Hospital. Apart from this, samples have been taken for testing of 2,875 suspects and reports of 3,151 people have come negative.

Nodal Officer for COVID-19, Dr Rishi Sahai said that 231 people have been found infected by antigen test, 136 from RTPCR and 21 in Trunot among those who came positive on Tuesday. In RTPCR, 41

people were examined in a private lab. He said that more than 55 people were tested positive in private hospitals.

However, Wednesday's day in Prayagraj was quite a relief. The number of those who got infection free for the second consecutive day was higher than 328 patients who got infected. On Wednesday, a total of 406 infected people got free from corona infection, which is a record so far. On Tuesday, 404 patients were infection free. This was confirmed by Dr Rishi Sahai. He said that the total number of infection-free people has gone up to 11,577.

CMO Dr GS Bajpai said

that 328 new infections have been detected on Wednesday. With this, the number of infected in the district has reached 15,412. Home isolation of 344 people has been completed. With this, the recovery rate has risen by two per cent to 75 per cent.

The number of active cases has increased to 3,616. There are 363 patients admitted in different hospitals. Most patients are admitted to Swaroop Rani Nehru Hospital. According to the report, 53 infected admitted to railways, 36 in Covid Care Centre Kalindipuram, six in Unani Medical College, 73 in two private hospitals, 42 in Beli.

The remaining 3,253 people are in home isolation. Apart from this, 62 people have been discharged from hospitals. 24 people were discharged from Covid Care Centre Kalindipuram, seven from Railway Hospital, eight from Beli, five from two private hospitals and 18 from SRN Hospital.

Apart from this, samples have been taken for testing of 3,086 suspects and 2,229 reports have been negative. Nodal Officer of COVID-19, Dr Rishi Sahai said that 214 people have been found infected with antigen test, 91 from RTPCR and 23 in Trunot among those coming positive on Wednesday.

Kashi celebrates birthday of Modi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

The parliamentary constituency of Prime Minister Narendra Modi celebrated his 70th birth-day here on Thursday. A great enthusiasm was seen among the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) workers and some supporting organisations. However, Congress, Samajwadi Party (SP) and some other organisations also organised programmes to express their protests in style. UP Minister Dr Neelkanth Tiwari reached Dasheswamedh ghat and along with a group of priests, he offered milk in the holy river, seeking the blessing of Maa Ganga for the long life of the PM.



UP minister Dr Neelkanth Tiwari offering milk on birthday of PM in Varanasi on Thursday

State Dr Neelkanth Tiwari reached Shri Shiv Prasad Gupta (SSPG) Hospital to distribute fruits to the patients admitted there. Another Minister of State Ravindra Jaiswal, along with party workers, reached Homi Bhabha Cancer Hospital, Lahartara and distributed fruits to the patients admitted there. A team of BJP workers led by MLA Saurabh Srivastava reached Trauma Centre of Banaras Hindu University (BHU) to distribute fruits among the patients.

Under the auspices of Muslim Mahila Foundation (MMF), a programme was organised at Lamahi to celebrate the birthday of Modi. Speaking on the occasion, chairman of Anaj Bank Dr Rajeev Srivastava highlighted

the work of the organisation during the lockdown period when they served food and ration kits to thousands continuously. Besides, in view to make the women self-reliant, training in tailoring was given to many, he informed. MMF chief Nazneen Ansari praised Modi for his bold steps to abolish Article 370 and Triple talak. She said that today our MP is not only the Prime Minister of India but also a great statesman of the world.

Purvanchal unit chief of Muslim Rashtriya Manch Mohd. Azaruddin and many others also expressed their views. The function was also attended by Archana Bharatvanshi, Dr Mridula Jaissal, Nagina, Soni, Sehna, Farjana and Nazia.

At Santusthi Hospital, Nevada (Sunderpur), a blood donation camp was organised to celebrate the birthday of Modi and Vishwakarma Puja. Corporator Vineet Singh, chairman of the hospital Dr Sanjay Garg, director Dr Ritu Garg and many others were present. They said that it is an ironical that the birthday of Modi falls on the occasion of Lord Vishwakarma, architect of the world.

Apart from this, some opposition parties also organised programmes on the occasion. Youth Congress workers led by its state chief organised Unemployment Day at Bharat Mata Mandir. As the gate remained closed, they raised slogans against PM and CM. Heavy police force was deployed there as the YC workers tried to enter the premises. They also criticised CM for increasing unemployment in the state. Similarly, a group of SP workers assembled at Maidagin and expressed their protest in style, cooking Pakaudas.

They were led by state secretary Manish Yadav. They also observed the day as 'Berogari Diwas', wearing black badges on their hands. A group of youths also expressed their protest in style, blackening their faces and beating thalis. They flayed the PM for privatisation, appointment on contracts, deteriorating economy and police lathicharge on farmers and others.

Cold storage of Atique demolished

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ ALLAHABAD

Action against the declared and undeclared properties of Atique Ahmed and his near and dear ones continues on a regular basis in Prayagraj on the instructions of the Chief Minister who has gathered courage to teach a lesson to top mafia dons of the state including Mokhtar Ansari and Atique Ahmed.

On Thursday a cold storage of Atique Ahmed in the trans-Ganga area of Andawa, was demolished with the help of JCB machines. This cold storage was an unauthorised construction, and was a source of income for the mafia-turned-politician Atique who represented Allahabad West in the Uttar Pradesh Legislative Assembly several times and later became Samajwadi Party MP from the trans-Ganga constituency of Phulpur.

On Thursday itself a commercial complex Mak Tower in Civil Lines was also sealed. It was owned by Mohammad Abbas, a close associate of Atique Ahmed and a history-sheer.

Situated on a prime location of Sardar Patel Marg in

Civil Lines, came under scanner for unauthorised constructions. The top floor of this commercial building was totally unauthorised.

The police had recently raided the residence of Mohammad Abbas in Attersuiya and had seized some vehicles. The police had also picked up Abbas' son who had later been released from the police station.

It may be mentioned here that within a couple of weeks dozens of valuable properties of Atique Ahmed and his close associates have either been razed to ground or a seal has been put on them by the officials of the district administration or the Prayagraj Development Authority in different parts of the city.

DOCTOR HELD IN RAPE CASE: The police arrested the accused Dr Anil Dwivedi posted at Beli Hospital for outraging the modesty of a teenage girl a BA final year student living in Colonelganj. The doctor was sent to jail. In the same case, the police raided several places in search of accused BJP leader Shyam Prakash Dwivedi. However, police failed to trace the whereabouts of the BJP leader. On the

other hand, the student underwent a medical examination. A statement under section 164 will be recorded soon, added SHO, Colonelganj.

A 22-year-old girl, student of BA final year in Colonelganj, was allegedly gang-raped after the former was offered a cold drink mixed with sedatives. It is alleged that in the name of first aid, the doctor posted at Beli Hospital raped her and later pressured her to go to the BJP leader. Police said that an investigation is underway after registering a report on the basis of a written complaint given by the victim.

The student had given a complaint to the police, alleging that her father was badly injured in a road accident in 2011. The treatment cost a huge amount of money, with the family destroyed in debt. An acquaintance introduced her to Anil Dwivedi, a doctor in the TB section of Beli Hospital, who developed his proximity to the family by pretending to sell the land.

Then one day, he fraudulently called her to Jaya Hospital in Alopibagh and gave her a cold drink with intoxicants and forced her for physical relations. At the same

time, he also threatened her and her family for dire consequence if she dared open her mouth in this connection. A few days later, the doctor again pressured her on the phone and then raped her at his residence near the Myorabad intersection. After about a week, the doctor put her under pressure and took her to the Hotel Star Regency at Civil Lines where his familiar BJP leader Shyam Prakash Dwivedi. Shyam Prakash Dwivedi who was allegedly armed with a pistol, and the doctor gang raped her there. Also, they threatened to kill her if she tried to leak the issue to anyone.

SHO, Colonelganj, Avan Kumar Dixit said that after preliminary investigation, on Wednesday, Dr. Anil Dwivedi was arrested near the Laxmi Talkies intersection. And raids were being conducted in search of BJP leader Shyam Prakash.

The SHO said that today the student had undergone a medical examination. An application has been submitted to the court for a statement under section 164 through the investigating officer. As soon as permission is received, a statement will be recorded before the court soon.

Thousands offer pind daans to forefathers

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Despite detection of a high number of corona cases in the city, thousands of people gathered at Dasheswamedh and other ghats apart from mythological Pichasmochan Talab (pond) here on the last day of Pitrapaksh here on Thursday to offer pind daan to their forefathers. During the event, neither social distancing was maintained nor were many seen wearing the masks. On the occasion, despite all restrictions, hundreds of people also bathed in the holy river Ganga at Dasheswamedh and adjoining ghats. During the day, rush was also seen at dozens of places, when many with tonsured heads were seen sitting near the Pandas offering pind daan and performing the rituals for the rest in peace for the souls of their ancestors.



People taking holy bath in river Ganga on the occasion of Pitrapaksh in Varanasi on Thursday

Though during Pitrapaksh, the rush of people was seen at these places, it was maximum on the last day as many who could not offer the rituals earlier reached there to perform the same as per the Sanathan

traditions. It was hectic day for the Brahmins as well as at the shops selling various puja items, sweets, puris, clothes and many other articles. It was also a field day for the barbans and the beggars. At dozens of places

between Dasheswamedh and Godowlia, barbans were seen tonsuring the hairs of the people. The people also offered eatable items to animals and birds after completion of rituals.

Normally, Shardiya Navratra begins a day after the end of Pitrapaksh falling on Amavasya but this year, as there is a month-long Malmas, the same will be started from October 17. According to information, such changes are being seen after 165 years when there would be two Ashmin months as during the month, the festivals like Patrapaksh, Navratra and Dusshetra fall. Due to this extra month, this time Dusshetra will fall on October 26 and Deepawali on November 14. Besides, the ongoing Chaturmass (four months of rainy season when the saints take shelters at a place) is also of five months.

Free tele-medical service started

VARANASI (PNS): Aarogya Bharti has started a free online medical consultation service under which specialist doctors of Ayurveda, Homeopath and Allopath will be available to give medical advice to the patients daily from 9 am to 5 pm. Representative of the organisation Dr. Manish Tripathi said that as per the condition of the patients, medical facility will be provided and if there would be need, the doctors would visit the homes of the patients and they would be provided ambulances for shifting them to the hospitals. He appealed to the people to get consultation through this tele-medicine facility to solve their health problems during this period of coronavirus pandemic. During this tele-medicine consultation, Ayurvedic experts including Dr Dhruv Agarhari (mobile No. 9415294325), Dr. Ruchi Tiwari

(9453642440), Dr. Priyadarshini (8090029260), Dr. Subhash Srivastava 9235759110), Dr GS Dubey (9415451372) and Dr KP Prakash (9721304060) will be available apart from Allopathic experts Dr. Indranil Basu (9889193210), Dr Anita Chaudhary (9415202105), Dr Atul Ratna (9005753660), Dr Preeti Wadhwa Agrawal (9455313377), Dr. Preeti Gupta (9453040620), Dr. Anurag Dixit (9839911027) and the Homoeopathic experts Dr. Manish Tripathi (7007831706), Dr Vipul Narayan Singh (9026288538), Dr Rudreshwar Tripathi (7390002662), Dr Arun Kumar Srivastava (9335411157), Dr Sunita Sharma (9215256011) and Dr Arpita Chatterjee (9919427071).

LOW MORTALITY RATE IN SOUTH ASIA: BHU PROF: The novel coro-

navirus SARS-CoV-2, causative agent of the ongoing pandemic of COVID-19, presents an ongoing major threat to humanity. Recent studies have effectively demonstrated that the Angiotensin Converting Enzyme 2 (ACE2) encoded by a gene located on the X-chromosome is the host receptor for the virus. Although data have been accumulating, the expression of ACE2 gene variation affecting host susceptibility among the various world populations is not yet known.

Therefore, an international team from six institutions, led by BHU Professor Gyaneshwer Chaubey has analysed whole genome data of the ACE2 gene from various world populations, focussing on South Asia. This work is published in the internationally reputed journal PLOS ONE. 'Genetically, most South Asians are more related with West

Eurasian populations rather than with East Eurasians, whereas for this gene the result is contradictory,' said Prof George van Driem of University of Bern in Switzerland. There are a few studies on the ACE2 gene by other research groups, but all of them have looked at the frequency differences of various mutations, whereas this team has used more powerful haplotype based analysis. 'The main novelty of the paper is the unexpected connection of South Asians with East Eurasians for the ACE2 gene. Hence, it is highly likely that South Asian host susceptibility to the novel coronavirus SARS-CoV-2 will be more similar to that of East/Southeast Asians rather than that of Europeans or Americans. This also explains the low mortality rate in South Asia,' explained Prof Gyaneshwer Chaubey.

Kothari takes over as chief electrical engineer

ALLAHABAD (PNS): Satish Kothari took over as chief electrical engineer, North Central Railway and Dr. Sumant Bahl took over as chief medical superintendent. Satish Kothari assumed charge as chief electrical engineer, North Central Railway. The post became vacant due to Anupam Singhal's transfer to the RITES.

Kothari is a 1986 batch officer of the Indian Railway Electrical Engineering Service. He studied BE (Hons) in Electric Engineering in the year 1986, Malviya Regional Engineering College, Jaipur (presently MMIT), one year Orientation of Nuclear Engineering and Sciences at

Bhabha Atomic Research Centre in the year 1987 and has a Master's degree in Public Administration in the year 2011 from IIPA, New Delhi.

Satish Kothari has established several records while working as the post of Group General Manager / Administration in DFCL before taking over as principal chief electrical engineer, North Central Railway. During his 20 years of service, he served as JGM / AGM Maintenance and Chief Electrical Engineer, ITRPD in DMRC, chief electrical and distribution engineer in Northern Railway, upper divisional rail manager in Lumding Division of Northeast Frontier

Railway besides chief electrical service engineer / CEGE in North Western Railway and served on important posts like Officer on Special Duty from Railways in NTPC.

Dr. Sumant Bahl took over as chief medical superintendent in Prayagraj. He holds a master's degree in surgery. Bahl started his service in 1988 and has served in various important posts in Moradabad, Bareilly, Prayagraj and Jhansi during his 20 years of service.

NSS STUDENT BAGS AWARD: Sam Higginbottom University of Agriculture, Technology and Sciences (SHUATS), an institute dedicated to agriculture education, research and extension for the

last 110 years. The National Service Scheme (NSS) of the university has set another achievement as one of the NSS student has been selected for NSS award 2018-19. The student will be awarded by President of India Ramnath Kovind.

In a letter issued to the SHUATS Registrar, the Regional Director Dr Ashok Kumar Shrotri informed that the NSS student Chris John has been selected for the National Service Scheme Award. Programme Officer Satyam Kumar Kesari said that on September 24, 2020 President Ramnath Kovind will award the student Chris John.



The District Magistrate, City, Alok Tiwari, along with other officials carried out a surprise raid on Divine Hospital on Thursday.

Pioneer

Admn's goal to bring down COVID-19 death rate: DM

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

District Magistrate Alok Tiwari, on Thursday, said that the administration's goal was to bring down the COVID-19 death rate sharply in Kanpur Nagar.

Admitting that the COVID-19 death rate in Kanpur Nagar fell slightly on days but returned to the same level soon, he said the administration was taking all possible measures.

Tiwari said to check the death rate by rising further, the administration was making surprise visits to Covid hospitals and initiating action against those not following the protocols and guidelines.

The district magistrate also expressed concern over the failure of private hospitals to deploy anaesthetists round the clock in their Covid care facilities.

He said for the past over one week, constant surprise inspections were being made at private hospitals and it was found that they were engaging part-time anaesthetists who were working in two to three hospitals in a day. He said this was a grave violation of the Covid protocol.

Tiwari said the district

395 more test positive

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Kanpur Nagar reported 395 fresh cases of coronavirus infection till Thursday evening. Chief Medical Officer Dr AK Mishra said 395 more people had tested positive for coronavirus infection between Wednesday evening and Thursday evening, taking the count of confirmed cases to 21769. He said a total of 64 cases were discharged and 5801 COVID-19 patients had been cured in the city so far, and at present 4838 active coronavirus cases were undergoing treatment.

The CMO said 14 COVID-19 deaths were reported in the city till Thursday evening taking the toll to 568. He said a total of 66153 samples were sent for testing in the district.

administration was mulling harsh measures against the private hospitals which do not engage full time anaesthetists to man the Covid facilities round the clock.

The district magistrate said the static magistrates were also unable to provide detailed report on violations of Covid guidelines, if any, in the private hospitals and cross-checking would be done to ensure that proper feedback of the hospitals was loaded on the portal.

He asked the static magistrates to keep a strict vigil on the functioning of the hospitals, equipment, doctors, anaesthetists and ensure that the information in this regard was forwarded to the CMO Kanpur portal.

Tiwari said the chief medical officer had been given a free hand to take action against the private hospitals which do not adhere to the guidelines issued by the district administration.

He said with increased testing, the positive cases were bound to increase but the medical fraternity and the district administration were jointly working to contain the spread of the coronavirus. He urged the people to cooperate with

the administration by strictly following social distancing. The district magistrate made a surprise inspection of Divine Hospital in Swarup Nagar and found the anaesthetist absent. The static magistrate informed the district magistrate that anaesthetists were never present for 24 hours a day in the hospital. Tiwari directed the officials concerned to take strict action against the anaesthetists.

He directed the ACM (VI) to prepare an updated record on the COVID-19 deaths that took place in the hospital. He also directed them to record the version of the family members of the patients.

He said the relatives would have to give the date and time of admission and date-wise information provided to them by the hospital administration regarding the condition of the patients.

He said it should also be mentioned at what time the patients death was informed to the relatives.

Tiwari also sought all details of hospital bills. On finding the hospital guilty of irregularities, the district magistrate cancelled the Level-2 Covid care hospital status given to it.

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Girl hangs self

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Unhappy at her marriage being fixed by her parents, a girl committed suicide by hanging herself in Majhawan village under Vidhnu police station late Wednesday night. Rajendra Dwivedsi is employed as security guard in a private company. He had fixed the marriage of his daughter, Ankita (24). But she was not happy with her parents' decision but could not muster courage to oppose them.

On Wednesday evening, when her father left for duty and her mother went to visit a relative in Ishwariganj, Bithoor, Ankita hanged herself from the iron grill in the courtyard late in the night. On Thursday morning, when her brother, Ankur, woke up, he found Ankita hanging and raised an alarm. He also informed his grandfather Kali Prasad and grandmother Urmila who were sleeping outside, about the body. Police recovered a suicide note in which it was written "I am not wrong and committing suicide willingly. Nobody is responsible for it. God, I should again be given birth in this house."

Station Officer Pushpraj Singh said as the girl was not happy with her marriage being fixed by her parents, she committed suicide.

Meanwhile, a building material trader was killed under mysterious circumstances in Vidhnu police station area. He was identified as Manoj Kumar (50) of Satbari, New Azad Nagar, Vidhnu. After receiving a call on his mobile phone, Manoj had gone out of the house on Wednesday night and was found hanging from a tree near Parsauli village on Thursday morning. The trader's wife and son alleged that he was the murdered. The police recovered one filled and one empty liquor bottle, two glasses, potato chips, two samosas and a bicycle from the spot.

Two held for making spurious liquor

KANPUR (PNS): On a tip-off, a joint team of Excise department and Sath police raided an authorised country-made foreign liquor shop and unearthed manufacture of spurious liquor. The police caught two salesmen red-handed busy preparing spurious liquor and recovered huge quantity of empty bottles, labels and processed liquor from the spot.

It is surprising that spurious liquor is still being made in Ghatampur police area (now Sath police area), the consumption of which had led to the death of eight people last year. Excise Inspector Amitraj had been receiving information about the manufacture and sale of adulterated liquor from a country-made foreign liquor shop in Kudhni village for the past several days. On Thursday morning, he along with Sath police raided the shop and caught salesmen Amit Kumar of Parvatkheda (Sadh) and Santosh Kumar of Anikheda, Rasoolabad (Unnao) red-handed preparing spurious liquor. The team recovered around 100 bottles of processed liquor, eight thick needles used in extracting the liquor, 20 empty quarters and around 150 bottle covers from there.

Timetable for clone spls announced

CORRESPONDENT ■ GORAKHPUR

As per the decision taken by the Railway Board the movement of clone special trains will be done from/via NER from September 21. Clone special trains will be fully reserved and their fare will be like Humsafar Express, said CPRO PK Singh. The movement of clone special train from NER:- The 04055 Ballia-Delhi tri-weekly clone special will depart on every Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday from September 22 from Ballia at 14.10 hours, from Ghazipur City at 15.15 hours, from Jaunpur at 17.00 hrs, from Prayagraj Jn at 20:40 hrs, from Kanpur Central at 23:55 hrs and reach Delhi at 06:25 hrs the next day. While 04056 Delhi-Ballia tri-weekly clone special will depart on every Monday, Wednesday and Friday from September 21 from Delhi at 18.00 hrs, the next day from Kanpur Central at 00:20 hrs, from Prayagraj Jn at 03:25 hrs, from Jaunpur at 06:45 hrs and from Ghazipur City at 08:40 hrs reach Ballia at 10.00 hrs. The movement of clone special trains through NER: The 04651 Jaynagar-Amritsar tri-weekly clone special will on every Tuesday, Friday and Sunday from September 25 depart from Jaynagar at 06:15 hrs, from Samastipur at 09:45 hrs, from Chhapra 13.15 hrs, from Shahganj at 18.25 hrs, the second day from

Lucknow at 00:10 hrs, from Moradabad at 01:55 hrs, from Delhi at 05:25 hrs, from Ambala at 08.40 hrs and reach Amritsar at 13.00 hrs. The 04652 Amritsar-Jaynagar tri-weekly clone special will on every Sunday, Wednesday and Friday from September 23 depart from Amritsar at 10:55 hrs, from Ambala at 14:50 hrs, from Delhi at 18:10 hrs, from Moradabad 21.20 hrs, from Lucknow on the second day at 02.45 hrs, from Shahganj at 07.40 hrs, from Chhapra at 12.40 hrs, from Samastipur at 16.55 hrs and reach Jaynagar at 20.00 hrs. The 02563 Saharsa-New Delhi clone special daily from September 21 will depart from Saharsa at 05.00 hrs, from Barauni at 07:40 hrs, from Chhapra at 12:17 hrs, from Gorakhpur at 15.15 hrs, from Aishbagh at 20:30 hrs, from Kanpur at 22.10 hrs and will arrive in New Delhi the second day at 05:10 hrs. The 02564 New Delhi-Saharsa clone special daily from September 22 depart from New Delhi at 13:30 hrs, from Kanpur at 19:45 hrs, from Aishbagh on second day at 01.55 hrs, from Gorakhpur at 07.10 hrs, from Chhapra at 10.27 hrs and from Barauni at 15.20 hrs reach Saharsa at 18:15 hours. The 02569 Darbhanga-New Delhi clone special daily from September 21 will depart from Darbhanga at 06:30 hrs, from Samastipur at 08:15 hrs, from Muzaffarpur at 09.10 hrs,

from Chhapra at 11:32 hrs, from Gorakhpur at 14:30 hrs, from Aishbagh 19:40 hrs and from Kanpur Central at 21:25 hrs and reach New Delhi at 04.00 hours. The 02570 New Delhi-Darbhanga clone special daily from September 22 will depart from New Delhi at 12.15 hours, from Kanpur Central at 18.35 hours, from Aishbagh at 19.55 hours, the second day from Gorakhpur at 00.55 hours, from Chhapra at 04:35 hours, from Muzaffarpur at 06.55 hours, from Samastipur at 08.10 hours and reach Darbhanga at 09.30 hours. The 04653 New Jalpaiguri-Amritsar weekly clone special will every Friday from September 25 leaving New Jalpaiguri at 07.00 hrs, from Katihar at 10.40 hrs, from Samastipur at 14:10 hrs, from Chhapra at 17:35 hrs, from Gorakhpur 20:55 hrs, from Sitapur at 02:50 hrs, from Moradabad at 07:43 hrs and Saharanpur at 10:2 hrs and reach Amritsar at 16.20 hrs. The 04654 Amritsar-New Jalpaiguri weekly clone special will depart from Amritsar from September 25 every Wednesday depart from Amritsar at 08.40 hrs, from Saharanpur at 14:10 hrs, from Moradabad at 17.40 hrs, from Sitapur at 22:20 hrs, from Gorakhpur at 04:05 hrs, from Chhapra at 07:10 hrs, from Samastipur at 10.35 hours, from Katihar at 14.35 hrs and arrive at New Jalpaiguri at 17:45 hours.

Virtual Hindi technical seminar held

CORRESPONDENT ■ GORAKHPUR

Under the aegis of the NER Rajbhasha department during the Rajbhasha Week celebration-2020 being held at the headquarters, Gorakhpur, from September 14 to 18, a Hindi technical seminar on the topic, 'Features and uses of Windows 10' was organised in a virtual form under the presidency of Deputy Chief Rajbhasha Officer and Deputy General Manager/General ON Singh on Wednesday, CPRO PK Singh said. In his presidential address Deputy Chief Rajbhasha Officer Singh said

that the new computers were coming with Windows 10 which was completely noted-based operating system. In the Rajbhasha department during the Hindi keying training it was found that many computer users while working on e-Office or on Windows 10 computers of new version were facing a lot of difficulty. Keeping this in mind, this programme had been organised on Wednesday, he added. Senior translator/Rajbhasha, headquarters, Gorakhpur, Shyam Babu Sharma, who was the keynote speaker, while elaborating on 'Features and Uses of Windows 10' said that Hindi lan-

guage and typing tool, creating a new windows on the device itself, locking the device, activating magnifier and text reader, use of snipping tool, cloud drive and emoji facilities had been provided. Earlier, in his welcome address Rajbhasha Officer DK Srivastava gave information about various programmes under the Rajbhasha Week celebration being held at the headquarters, NER, since September 14 and requested everyone to join them. The technical seminar was conducted by Rajbhasha Officer Mohammad Arshad Mirza while the vote of thanks was proposed by senior translator, headquarters, Sapna Khare.

Pledge administered

CORRESPONDENT ■ GORAKHPUR

On the first day of 'Swachhhta Pakhwada' on Wednesday being organised under Swachh Bharat Mission till September 30, NER GM Lalit Chandra Trivedi administered the cleanliness pledge to all officers and employees through video conferencing. On the occasion AGM Amit Kumar Agarwal, DRM, principal heads of department and senior railway officers besides a large number of employees, took the cleanliness pledge.

85 bicycles distributed

CORRESPONDENT ■ MIRZAPUR

Under Sant Ravidas Shiksha Sahayata Yojna Labour department distributed 85 bicycles among the daughters of labourers on Wednesday. Assistant Labour Commissioner (ALC) RK Pathak said that the department had sought applications from labourers who were registered in the department and whose daughters had passed High School and Intermediate examinations and had got admission in the next class. Under the scheme against the sanctioned 184 bicycles 85 were distributed on Wednesday, he said. ALC told The Pioneer that the cost of each bicycle was ₹3,500 and it was purchased fulfilling the norms. He said that during the brief function held at the sprawling ground of labour office located on Jangi Road norms of social distancing were followed. He praised the departmental team comprising labour enforcement officer, NK Pandey besides Anupam Tripathi and others for the successful conduct of the programme.

organisations. The campaign will continue till September 30. Besides, Varanasi Division of NER under 'Swachh Rail-Swachh Bharat Abhiyan' observed the first day as 'Cleanliness Awareness Day'. During the day the cleanliness pledge was administered at various stations and offices on the instructions of DRM Vijay Kumar Panjari. Apart from DRM and divisional security commissioner office, the employees at various other places including divisional hospital, health centers, coaching depots, crew lobbies, all A and A1 stations also took such oaths. They also offered 'shramdaan' to keep the premises clean and remove the wastes from waiting rooms and railway tracks. Tree plantation programmes were also organised at Yatri Niwas, offices, health units, stations, RPF barracks, rest houses and railway colonies. In this order, neem, aonla and lemon saplings were planted at unused and vacant land near second entry of Manduakhin station, nearby RDI and coaching depot units apart from Prayagraj Rambagh, Chhapra, Azamgarh, Ballia, Siwan and Ghazipur City stations. The fortnight drive will continue till October 1.

Cleanliness fortnight begins at DLW, NER

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

As per the directions of the Ministry of Railways, 'Swachhata Hi Seva Pakhwada' (cleanliness fortnight) began at DLW and various stations of Varanasi Division of NER on Wednesday. During the day apart from taking pledge various programmes regarding cleanliness awareness and plantation were organised. In DLW premises the employees not only pledged to keep their work places clean but also participated in plantation apart from doing wide-spread awareness and publicity through banners, posters, pamphlets, SMS, WhatsApp etc. Voluntary organisations like the Civil Defence, St John's Ambulance Brigade, Bharat Scouts and Guides made their valuable contribution during the day. A public awareness rally was also organised to mobilise the people towards the importance of cleanliness to prevent the spread of Covid-19 pandemic, appealing to all to put garbage at proper dustbins, use masks and sanitizers and maintain social distancing. Masks and sanitizers were also distributed by voluntary



organisations. The campaign will continue till September 30. Besides, Varanasi Division of NER under 'Swachh Rail-Swachh Bharat Abhiyan' observed the first day as 'Cleanliness Awareness Day'. During the day the cleanliness pledge was administered at various stations and offices on the instructions of DRM Vijay Kumar Panjari. Apart from DRM and divisional security commissioner office, the employees at various other places including divisional hospital, health centers, coaching depots, crew lobbies, all A and A1 stations also took such oaths. They also offered 'shramdaan' to keep the premises clean and remove the wastes from waiting rooms and railway tracks. Tree plantation programmes were also organised at Yatri Niwas, offices, health units, stations, RPF barracks, rest houses and railway colonies. In this order, neem, aonla and lemon saplings were planted at unused and vacant land near second entry of Manduakhin station, nearby RDI and coaching depot units apart from Prayagraj Rambagh, Chhapra, Azamgarh, Ballia, Siwan and Ghazipur City stations. The fortnight drive will continue till October 1.

Concern over spurt in dengue cases

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

The sudden spurt in dengue cases has set the alarm bells ringing. Till now, there were sporadic cases but with the spread of dengue in Naubasta Galla Mandi, more than six cases of dengue have been reported from there in the past 15 days. Apart from this, several dengue cases were reported from various part of the city.

Amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, the surfacing of several dengue clusters in he city is causing concern to the district officials and the people.

Ironically, people are unaware that dengue mosqui-

toes breed in fresh water and not in drains and stagnant waters and thus there is also need to spread awareness about it.

Additional Chief Medical Officer Dr DK Singh said dengue fever was caused by the dengue virus and it was transmitted through the bite of an infected Aedes mosquito. He said dengue symptoms included fever, intense headache, body ache, joint pain, loss of appetite, nausea, vomiting, skin rashes and mucosal bleeding.

The ACMO said there was no specific treatment for dengue fever, but adequate fluid intake and bed rest was important. He said most

patients recovered within two weeks but often dengue fever could turn severe, leading to dengue haemorrhagic syndrome and dengue shock syndrome.

Dr Singh said as per the directives of the World Health Organisation, dengue could be classified into three forms — dengue without warning signs, dengue with warning signs and severe dengue. He said it was important to recognise the warning signs such as abdominal pain, persistent vomiting, mucosal bleeding, lethargy and fluid accumulation as it could progress to severe dengue.

The ACMO said even

dengue patients without warning signs could develop severe dengue and also require aggressive emergency treatment and hospitalisation.

Dr Singh said one had to protect oneself against mosquito bites and prevent mosquito breeding inside and outside homes. He said one should refrain from visiting areas prone to mosquitoes. He advised people to wear full sleeves shirts and trousers and ensure that majority of the body parts were covered. He said one could also use mosquito repellent, ideally one containing DEET. He said one potent method was to use mosquito nets while sleeping.

'Nation has made rapid advances under Modi'

KANPUR (PNS): Mahila Mahavidyalaya Principal Dr BR Agarwal while addressing a tree plantation drive carried out by the college on the birthday of the Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday said today under the leadership of Modi the nation had made rapid advances and carved an image for itself among the developing countries in the world.

The principal said the PM had always focused on clean city, air and water and thus it was the duty of every individual to ensure they contributed in tree plantation drive.

She said that India was trying to be a financial and industrial power but that was not what alone make citizens happy and healthy as there was need for healthy air, soil and water which to keep everyone healthy and for this there was need for massive tree



Principal of Mahila Mahavidyalaya, Dr BR Agarwal paying tributes to Lord Vishwakarma and inaugurated tree plantation drive on Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Birthday on Thursday.

plantation drives. She said Peepal was one of the main trees which helped in maintaining a balance in ecosystem as it had both spiritual and material powers. She added that planting saplings on birthdays and other important dates was a way to teach others to gather strength from our deepest roots and align oneself with the cosmic

rhythm. She also paid tributes to Lord Vishwakarma on his jayanti and said he was the first engineer of the world. Dr Meera Tripathi, Dr Anamika Verma, Dr Nishat Fatima, Dr Pooj Srivastava, Dr Mamta Mishra, Sunita Madan, Poonam Shukla along with the entire staff of the college were present on the occasion to make the event a big success.

Others present included Dr Rashmi Chaturvedi, Arvind Verma, Dheeraj Yadav, Vijay Singh and Kirti Dixit. Several peepal saplings were planted on the campus.

WEBINAR ON NEP

A webinar on 'New Education Policy 2020 : Opportunities and Challenges' was also held in which the principal said the NEP 2020 had introduced structural changes in the education system which aimed at making India the global knowledge superpower, ensuring equity and inclusion. The principal said the NEP aimed at sensitising students towards human values, empathy, tolerance, human rights, gender equality, inclusion and equity in order to develop respect for diversity of India culture. Delivering the key note address, ex-professor

and head of education department and ex-Dean of Lucknow University, Prof M Varma, said the NEP attempted to develop a conscious awareness of roles and duties and inclusion of community participation to minimise the exclusion of the students on the basis of the language and disability and to increase the gross enrolment ratio of 50 per cent by 2035.

Dr Senthil Kumar said the strategic plans incorporated in the NEP for the upgradation schemes for the deemed universities and self-financed colleges and would also focus to show equal respect for all religions with the idea to develop or bring back creative human endeavour required for the 21st Century education system. Among those present included Dr Rashmi Chaturvedi, Dr Pratibha, Dr Sangeeta Sitani and Dr Neeta Mishra.

World Ozone Day observed at NTPC Unchahar

CORRESPONDENT ■ RAE BARELI

World Ozone Day was observed at NTPC Unchahar on Wednesday with a pledge and a signature campaign for the protection of ozone layer. On the occasion CGM, Unchahar, Bhola Nath, administered the pledge to all employees of the plant in the morning through video conferencing. The programme was organised following the Covid-19 protocol. CGM said that United Nations had proclaimed September 16 as the



International Day for the Preservation of the Ozone Layer. NTPC officials also displayed banners and distributed pamphlets to create awareness among employees and public while maintaining social distancing. The project schools organised various online activities like painting, slogan writing, etc for students to create awareness about the day on theme, 'Ozone for life: 35 years of ozone layer protection.' GM (O&M) Asit Datta, GM (Operation) Arindam Banerjee, GM (Maintenance) SK Jha along with senior officials were present on the occasion.

SDM inspects village

CORRESPONDENT ■ JALAIUN

SDM Kalpi Jayendra Kumar inspected Akbarpur Guru village in Kalpi tehsil on Wednesday. He said that for the past few days they were getting complaints from villagers on different issues of Itaura Guru village. He said that 60 villagers had complained that they had not received payment for MNREGA work. He asked subordinate officials to investigate the entire matter and submit a report in this regard. He also inspected drinking water facilities at public places besides sanitation and cleanliness in the village. The villagers told him about their problems regarding toilets and accommodation.

Two arrested

CORRESPONDENT ■ MIRZAPUR

Ahaura police arrested two criminals, Ishiyak Ansari and Abdul Quadir, residents of Patitha village, along with a stolen motorcycle on Wednesday. Ahaura police during patrolling saw two suspects near a graveyard and caught them. They confessed that the motorcycle was a stolen one. After frisking them police recovered a country-made gun and two cartridges from them.

India can get Covid vaccine by early '21, Parliament told



PNS ■ NEW DELHI



Harshvardhan said the PM has handled Covid-19 "meticulously." "History will remember Prime Minister Narendra Modi for meticulously monitoring the entire situation himself," he said.

Responding to Congress MP Anand Sharma's query on how large number of people was prevented from being infected, Harshvardhan said that six scientific agencies gave scientific data on the basis of which it was stated the 14-29 lakh cases were prevented by the coronavirus lockdown.

While the vaccine candidates undertaken by Zydus Cadila and Bharat Biotech have completed phase 1 of human tests, SII has resumed its trials after getting clearance from the Drug Controller General of India (DGCI).

SII is the manufacturing partner of the vaccine candidate being developed jointly by UK-based pharma giant AstraZeneca and University of Oxford's Jenner Institute.

The Pune-based company is looking after the human tests being conducted at 17 trial sites across the country.

house after a total of four hours of debate during the last three days in the Rajya Sabha.

Harshvardhan's remarks come at a time when India has reported over 50 lakh cases and people are expecting a vaccine at the earliest.

On the criticism that Government made no effort to tackle the pandemic menace at early signals, Harshvardhan stated that the PM, the ministers, and state health ministers have been addressing the situation since January 8 fighting this battle together.

He said that detailed advisories had been circulated even before the first COVID-19 case was detected in India on January 30.

The Union Minister further noted that "extensive contact-tracing was undertaken" with 162 contacts being traced to the first case.

The Centre on Thursday informed the Parliament that the COVID-19 vaccine will be made available in India by the beginning of 2021.

Addressing the Rajya Sabha over the coronavirus situation in the country, Health Minister Dr. Harshvardhan said that India is also making efforts like other nations and three vaccine candidates are in different phases of clinical trials.

"Three vaccine candidates (Zydus Cadila, Bharat Biotech, and the Serum Institute of India) are in different phases. Under Prime Minister's guidance, an expert group is looking at it and there is advanced planning in place. We are hopeful that by the start of next year a vaccine will be available in India," the Health Minister informed the upper

IMA flays Govt over hiding data on Covid fatalities among healthcare staff

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Indian Medical Association (IMA) has slammed the Government for failing to reveal the data on the number of healthcare staff who have been affected and who died from Covid-19, when the Parliament debated the issue.

It said that at least 382 doctors across the country have lost their lives in the line of duty so far, but Union Health Minister Harshvardhan could not come up with the number of fatalities occurred in the medical fraternity when asked by MP Binoy Viswam in Parliament recently.

Besides, the IMA, which represents a battery of private doctors from across the country, also released the data of the doctors who died due to

Covid-19. "Health is a state subject. Such data is not maintained at Central level," Vardhan had told Viswam in a written reply.

In a reaction to Vardhan's statement, the IMA said, "If a government does not maintain the statistics of total number of doctors and health care workers infected by Covid-19 and the statistics of how many of them sacrificed their life due to the pandemic, it loses the moral authority to administer the Epidemic Act 1897 and the Disaster Management Act."

The IMA also stated that the reply by the Union Minister also exposes the hypocrisy of calling the healthcare workers 'corona warriors' while denying them and their families the status and benefits of martyrdom.

The IMA also expressed concerns at the huge number

of deaths of doctors and health care workers.

"Doctors suffered four times mortality of ordinary citizens, and private practitioners suffered eight times mortality on the same scale. To feign that this information does not merit the attention of the nation is abominable," said the IMA.

The doctors' body also objected to the statement made by Ashwini Kumar Chauhan, Minister of State (MoS) for Health, that insurance compensation data is not available with the Union Government in Parliament.

"IMA finds it strange that after having formulated an unfriendly partial insurance scheme for the bereaved families to struggle with the ignominy of the Government disowning them altogether stares at them," it added.

Amit Shah recuperates, discharged from AIIMS



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Union Home Minister Amit Shah was on Thursday discharged from the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS). Earlier in the day, Shah attended the inauguration of a water work scheme under smart city programme for his Gandhinagar constituency through video conferencing from the Hospital. He also spoke for more than 10 minutes.

Shah was admitted in the hospital on Saturday night fol-

lowing breathing trouble. The AIIMS bulletin said that Shah was admitted for a "complete medical checkup before the Parliament Session for 1-2 days." On August 2, he was admitted to Medanta Hospital for Covid-19 treatment and discharged on August 13. But on August 17, he was admitted to AIIMS following post Covid-19 ailments and discharged on August 30.

The Home Minister is expected to attend the Parliament Session in the coming days.

CBI files case against software cos for sending pop-up malwares on PCs

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The CBI has registered a case against six private companies based at New Delhi, Jaipur (Rajasthan), Noida (UP) and Gurugram (Haryana) and other unknown persons on a complaint alleging that these companies have transmitted pop-ups to the victims' personal computers with warnings/bogus messages about serious technical problems including malware infection in their Microsoft Windows Systems.

The agency on Thursday conducted searches at 10 locations including Jaipur, Delhi, Noida, Gurugram, Faridabad and Mainpuri (Uttar Pradesh)

at the premises of the accused companies and the residential premises of other related persons.

"The employees of these companies allegedly advised the victims to install certain anti-malwares or anti-virus, which are essentially PUPs (Potentially Unwanted Programs). The victims were allegedly given the option to activate PUPs by paying the fee online or by calling a support number advertised in the interface of the program. The victims are fraudulently influenced in this manner and allegedly fall in their trap to maintain their systems properly," the CBI said in a statement.

It was also alleged that the victims were made to pay online by clicking the link on the interface for resolving the non-existent problem or when they ask the call centres to seek resolution of the fake problems, it further said.

The accused firms are Softwill Infotech Private Limited, New Delhi, Innovana Thinklabs Limited, Jaipur, Benovellunt Technologies Private Limited, Noida, Systweak Software Private Limited, Jaipur, Saburi TLC Worldwide Services Pvt. Ltd, New Delhi and Saburi Global Services Pvt Ltd, Gurugram. Some other unknown persons have also been mentioned as accused in the FIR.

India rejects Pak's 'Absurd Assertions' In orchestrated map

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Two days after National Security Advisor(NSA) Ajit Doval walked out of a virtual meeting when his Pakistani counterpart showed a wrong political map of India, the Government on Thursday told the Parliament that these maps have no legal and international validity.

Making this observation in a written reply in the Rajya Sabha, minister of state for external affairs V Muraleedharan said, a so-called 'political map' of Pakistan was unveiled by its Prime Minister on August 4. It made absurd assertions and laid untenable claims to territories in Gujarat and the Union Territories of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh, the minister said.

The Government has rejected Pakistan's obsession with territorial aggrandisement supported by cross border terrorism.

It has also been emphasized that Pakistan should desist from laying untenable claims to Indian territories, which have neither legal validity nor international credibility.

The Minister also said the government continues to respond appropriately to Pakistan's malicious actions and propaganda, including on the issue of Jammu and Kashmir, at various international fora. The question was asked by BJP MP Jyotiraditya Scindia.

Taking strong exception to the provocative act by Pakistan, India had on Tuesday walked out of a meeting of the National Security Advisors(NSA) of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation(SCO).

The Ministry of External Affairs said what Pakistan did was in "blatant disregard to host Russia's advisory".

Delhi Metro incurs ₹1,609 revenue loss during lockdown

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Metro incurred a loss of ₹1,609 crore due to the lockdown followed by Bangalore metro with ₹170 crore. Lucknow, Chennai and Kochi metros have incurred losses of ₹ 90 crore, ₹80 crore and ₹34 crore respectively.

As per the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs' data tabled in the Upper House on Thursday, a total loss of ₹1,983 crore was incurred in five cities due to closure of metro rail services amid the coronavirus pandemic. Metro services, which were shut on March 22 to contain the spread of novel coronavirus, resumed on September 7 in a phased manner. Full-fledged normal operations resumed on September 12.

Replying to impact on loan repayment by various metro



rail networks due to the lockdown, Union Housing and Urban Affairs Hardeep Singh Puri said that loan was paid as per their schedule. During the lockdown period, he said, preparatory work like detailed designing, preparation of tender schedule and finalisation of tenders, among other things, had been carried out by the Delhi metro.

According to metro rail officials, metro projects have two sources of steady revenue - farebox, which accounts for almost 80 to 90 per cent of the revenue- ticketing, passes, sales,

35 judges in SC, 557 new judges & 483 addl judges made permanent in 2014 to 2020, Govt informs RS

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

As many as 35 judges were appointed to the Supreme Court while 557 new judges were appointed and 483 additional judges made permanent in various High Courts in the country between 2014 to 2020, the government informed the Rajya Sabha.

In a written reply to a question, Minister for Law and Justice Ravi Shankar Prasad said the number of computerized District and Subordinate courts has increased from 13,672 in 2014 to 16,845 as on September 14, 2020, registering an increase of 3,173.

He said a new and user-friendly version of Case Information Software has been developed and deployed at all the computerized District and Subordinate Courts.

All stakeholders including Judicial Officers can access information relating to judicial proceedings/decisions of computerized District & Subordinate Courts and High Courts on the National Judicial Data Grid (NJDG) as on September 14, 2020.

The minister informed

that eCourt services such as details of case registration, cause lists, case status, daily orders and final judgments are available to litigants and advocates through the eCourts web portal, Judicial Service Centres (JSC) in all computerized courts, eCourts Mobile App, email service, SMS push and pull services.

"Video conferencing facility has been enabled between 3,240 court complexes and 1,272 corresponding jails," he said.

"From May 1, 2014 to September 14, 2020, 35 Judges were appointed in Supreme Court. 557 new Judges were appointed and 483 Additional Judges were made permanent in the High Courts. Sanctioned strength of Judges of High Courts has been increased from 906 in May, 2014 to 1079 currently," he said.

The sanctioned and working strength of Judicial Officers in District and Subordinate Courts has increased from 19,518 and 15,115 respectively as on December 31, 2013, while the sanctioned strength of judges on September 15, 2020 is 24,203 and the working strength is 19,171.

Bangladesh seeks lifting of ban on onion export by Modi Govt

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Worried over skyrocketing onion prices in the retail market, Bangladesh has requested the Modi Government to withdraw the ban imposed on its export as soon as possible.

The Government had on Monday banned the export of all varieties of onions with immediate effect to increase availability and curb prices of the commodity in the domestic market. Onion prices in Bangladesh have touched 200 taka per kg while it is being sold at ₹40-45 per kg across India. Onion traders and political parties including Congress and NCP are demanding reversal of the ban order while retailers expect a ₹2-5 per kg drop in the rate due to the export ban.

Expressing deep concern over the sudden ban on the

export of onions as it directly affects the supply of essential food items in market, the Bangladesh government in a letter dated September 15, requested the Indian High Commission to convey the message to authorities in New Delhi and take necessary measures to resume onion exports taking into consideration the excellent ties between the neighbours.

It pointed out that a secretary-level meeting between the commerce ministries of the two countries held on January 15-16, 2020 in Dhaka requested India not to impose export restriction on essential food items required by Bangladesh. The letter said the Bangladesh side also requested India to inform Dhaka ahead of time in case of any event necessitating such a restriction.

During April-June period,

onion exports to Bangladesh, India's largest overseas market for the key kitchen ingredient, shot up 147.5% to 1.9 lakh metric tonne. Overall, onion exports grew 23% during the same period to 6.8 lakh metric tonne.

During her visit to India in October last year after the onion export ban, Bangladesh PM Sheikh Hasina had said, "We are facing some issues because of the ban on onion exports from India. I don't know why you banned export of onions. It would have been better if you had alerted us in advance so that we could have sourced onions from other countries. You banned it suddenly and it became a problem for us."

Hasina had then said in jest that she had asked her cook not to use onions in the kitchen.

Regulate digital media first, Centre tells SC

NEW DELHI: The Centre has said that if the Supreme Court decides on the issue of media regulation then such an exercise should be undertaken with the digital media first as it has faster reach and information has the potential to go viral due to applications like WhatsApp, Twitter and Facebook.

The Government told the apex court that sufficient framework and judicial pronouncements exist for the electronic and the print media.

"Considering the serious impact and the potential, it is desirable that if this court decides to undertake the exercise, it should first be undertaken with regard to digital media as there already exists sufficient framework and judicial pronouncements with regard to electronic media and print media," said the counter affidavit, filed by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting.

PTI

Uddhav to lay foundation of Babasaheb memorial today

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray will lay the foundation stone for the 350 ft statue of late Babasaheb Ambedkar raised as part of the grand memorial for the late architect of Indian Constitution being developed at the Indu Mills compound at Dadar in north-central Mumbai, on Friday.

Five years after Prime Minister Narendra Modi laid foundation stone of late Ambedkar's grand memorial, Uddhav will kick-start the work on building of a statue of the iconic Dalit leader.

Friday's will be the biggest state government programme to be held during the lockdown period. Apart from Uddhav and deputy chief minister Ajit Pawar, many of the ministers in his Cabinet will attend the programme which will be as per various social dis-

tancing norms. The work on the construction of the Ambedkar had been hanging fire for the first four years. To be developed by the state-run Mumbai Metropolitan Region Development Authority (MMRDA), the memorial will cost Rs 1,089 crore as per the revised estimates. On its part, the MMRDA has already started the construction.

Excavation and piling work has been completed, while the work on the auditorium basement comprising two-floors below its framework has been completed.

The height of Dr Ambedkar's statue, which was earlier proposed to be of the height of 250 feet, will now be 350 feet. The statue will be erected on a pedestal of the height of 100 feet. In essence, the collective height of the bronze statue will be 450 feet. There will be elements of

the Buddhist architecture in the Ambedkar memorial, which is coming up on a 12 acre plot of land.

While 68 per cent of the land will be open lawn, there will be a training centre that can accommodate 400 people, a state-art auditorium and a museum-cum-exhibition hall at the memorial.

Trees will be planted on 'parikrama' as a median to segregate the inward and outward visitor movement. It will also provide shade to the visitors. In addition, the viewing gallery width will have a dedicated upward and downward movement by providing railing in between. Also, customised LED lights will be installed.

It may be recalled that October 11, 2015, Prime Minister Narendra Modi laid the foundation stone for the grand memorial of Babasaheb Ambedkar at the Indu Mills compound.

Cong holds protest on Modi's 70th b'day

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Congress leaders Rahul Gandhi, Priyanka Gandhi and Shashi Tharoor wished Prime Minister Narendra Modi on his birthday on Thursday but at the same time their party also launched a scathing attack on the PM over the growing unemployment in India and held protests over the issue at several places across the country.

The Congress celebrated the day as 'National Unemployment Day' to highlight the jobs lost since the COVID-19 struck the country earlier this year.

image and mentioning 'Berojgar Divas'.

"Massive unemployment has forced the youth to call t o d a y #NationalUnemploymentDay . Employment is dignity. For how long will the Govt deny it?", Rahul, who is currently out of the country for treatment of his mother and Congress chief Sonia Gandhi, tweeted.

Priyanka said the youth of the country wants that the Government must hold exams for Government jobs on time and the results should be declared in a fix time frame.

She added that the Government must create more job opportunities and if the Centre will fail to address the concerns of the youth then they will change the Government.



Women make rangoli from flower petals on the occasion of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's 70th birthday at a school in Ahmedabad on Thursday

But Congress chief spokesperson Randeep Surjewala made certain derogatory remarks against the PM likening him to monkeys. Surjewala tweeted from his official Twitter handle, "Aab Ki Baar Bandar Ke Hath Me Ustra Sarkar." This is not the first time that the Congress has made derogatory statements against PM Modi. Congress leader Arjun Modwadia had also once compared Modi to a monkey.

Who will regulate TV?

If the SC has to intervene every time on mala fide content on channels, it will be flooded with petitions. We need a neutral code



It is sad that the fourth estate, which ought to be a thriving institution in its own right — showing a mirror to society and advocating rights and issues that politics ignores — now needs regulation or correction by other institutions. Weaponised as a tool of governance and propaganda for long, it took the Supreme Court to stop it from destroying the social fabric instead of mending it. The top court restrained a channel from telecasting a controversial programme that sought to “expose” a “conspiracy and jihad to infiltrate Muslims” into the Indian civil services. The court was right to see through the agenda to vilify a certain community on the pretext

of an investigation and perpetuate a narrative suited to the political climate of the day. It had to halt broadcast that would have aggravated an already prejudiced sentiment in the country and, as it said, challenged the constitutionally mandated plurality of India. But then how many broadcasts will it stop given the partisan nature of the hundreds of news channels in India today, some of them owned and funded by political parties themselves? How will it manage the whataboutery and a slew of counter-petitions of why a certain programme doesn't deserve to be aired while others do? What is divisive and what is not? The court also deliberated on national debates on television channels, which the bench felt required regulation. To bolster its argument, it cited parallel investigations being carried out in criminal investigations, quite clearly implying how motivated interests were manufacturing a national mindset that would go by a heave of emotion rather than facts. Given these observations, the court would then have to become a media watchdog, too, stretching its resources no end. As it is, the Government, a day after the verdict on the channel perceived as friendly to it, filed an affidavit in the Supreme Court, arguing that if the latter desired to undertake the exercise to regulate the media, then it should first do so for digital media, and not electronic media, because social platforms have a faster and wider reach. That is indeed another problem, as given their dependence on open traffic, digital platforms have often been the purveyor of hate speeches and campaigns that have fuelled unrest on the ground. There are more than 50 documented cases of mob violence triggered by misinformation spread over social media in India over the last two years. Many platforms, including Facebook and YouTube, have only to upload an uncensored clip that swiftly becomes credible headlines when picked up by TV media. Facebook and Twitter are too big and have become influencers in their own right, embedding themselves in policies of the regime that is crucial to their business plans in respective countries. Facebook, with over 2.3 billion monthly users across its family of networks, has become too much of a behemoth to be democratic. But its subsidiary messaging board, WhatsApp, is by far the most popular of the platforms. With India accounting for 400 million of its global base of 1.5 billion users, it ends up being the focus of discussions on the spread of misinformation. It has become as much an information propagator as it has a disseminator.

The court mentioned setting up a committee of five citizens who can come up with standards for electronic media but what about existing frameworks, which are toothless at the moment? There is no statutory regulatory mechanism but self-regulatory bodies like the News Broadcasters' Association (NBA), Broadcast Editors' Association and News Broadcasters' Federation have failed to rise to the occasion and ensure a modicum of professionalism. Besides, this multiplicity of authorities generates its own politics and lobbies. The NBA does take up broadcast complaints seriously and has a code of ethics but because it is in the nature of just guidelines and not mandatory, there is no bold, punitive action. Usually, errands are let off with an apology or a minor rap on the knuckles. Besides, members of the NBA are from channels themselves and their hands are somewhat tied up by the prevalent business model of journalism, the kind that links coverage and pitches to revenue and funding. Till we have a singular code that's trustworthy, neutral or effective or till we have a legally empowered regulatory body, there will always be conflict of interest. Of course, the best regulation would be if broadcast media stuck to sensible rather than sensational journalism. Our Constitution has guaranteed the right to freedom but it implies we follow our duties, too. In a democracy, the media is as much accountable to citizens as are other institutions. It cannot be a self-serving clique but has to call out its own and self-cleanse in the interest of holding up its institutional integrity. Or it could content itself with scripting doggerel.

No country for children

The World Bank's human capital index shows the potential development of kids slid to 50 per cent in pandemic times



As expected, the impact of the Coronavirus pandemic has not just been on health and global economies; its multi-pronged effect is now threatening to erase the gains made in improving child education and health in the years before the outbreak. This fallout of the contagion is the most evident in the poor and Third World nations, the World Bank said while commenting on the Human Capital Index for 2020, which ranks countries on how well children are prepared for the future, with an emphasis on factors like schooling and healthcare. Despite the fact that most countries made steady gains in improving health and education prior to

the pandemic, the virus has dealt a body blow to all these efforts. Children in a low-income country will likely achieve only 56 per cent of their human capital compared to ones with access to a complete education and full healthcare. This is alarming as human capital is absolutely vital to the financial and economic future of any country as well as its social well-being. And as World Bank President David Malpass has warned, “inequalities among children are set to increase” and as “more than one billion children have been out of school due to COVID, they could lose as much as \$10 trillion in lifetime earnings.” In our case, the girl child would be the first victim as her education is the first casualty in poor households forced to choose between feeding the family and reserving knowledge pursuit as a rare privilege. Besides, while the education of children from well-heeled families will not face so much disruption, students from marginalised families and in rural areas will suffer, both due to lack of smartphones, computers, laptops and the lack of infrastructure and knowhow on how to use these enablers. Though both teachers and students have adapted to online classes to a large extent in urban areas, teachers themselves are not satisfied because they feel that the learning experience can never compete with brick and mortar classrooms. In an online setting, students may have more distractions and less supervision, which can reduce their motivation to do well academically. First there is the issue of keeping students engaged. Then how do you teach subjects which require live experiments and demonstrations? What of personal attention to struggling students? Research shows that students who struggle in physical classes are likely to struggle even more online. Also, being in school/college in person with teachers and other students creates social pressures and benefits that can help motivate the young to engage.

On the health front, too, there is cause for concern as the lockdown impacted programmes tackling malnutrition. With schools closed, children from impoverished families have been deprived of their one, daily nutritious food in the form of free mid-day meals. Immunisation programmes have been hit by the lockdown as has the community vigilance by the ASHAs and ANMs, who were the first point of contact for parents with sick children. If the world had to work hard to provide an equitable world for children, it will have to work doubly hard to mend the damage caused by the contagion in the years to come.

The tale of two IPLs

IPL is one of the rarest sports spectacles which completely subverts otherwise ubiquitous nationalist and parochial discourses



SUMANYU SATPATHY

After months of uncertainty and speculation, the Indian Premier League (IPL) is all set to start; outside the country of its origin and minus the shrieking fans. Everyone, even its critics and detractors, admits to its stupendous popularity. For most of its supporters and fans, it is an event almost of national importance, no less than the General Elections. In fact, a year ago, a large majority of Indians were simultaneously subjected to two kinds of spectacles: one in the sports arena and the other in the political playing field. The dates for both overlapped for a period of one month as the grand spectacle of the IPL (March 23-May 12, 2019) coincided with the heat and dust generated by the General Elections. The Code of Conduct was immediately effective after the dates for the elections were announced on March 10, 2019. In between the elections, the din over the IPL rose to a crescendo and climaxed with the final in which the Mumbai Indians defeated Chennai Super Kings at a “neutral” venue in Hyderabad. As the great excitement over IPL subsided, all hell broke loose over the no-holds-barred election campaigns. There is no doubt about the ephemerality and inconsequentiality of the first, nor about the epochal nature of the second. And yet, many cricket fans think otherwise.

With the pandemic and economy playing havoc, and none of the venues in India playing host, the event may have already lost its usual sheen. Also, the forthcoming elections in Bihar are no match for the national polls last year. Yet, now that both the events are round the corner, it is a good time to reflect on how both affect the public psyche. For cricket has always been seen, at least in the former colonies, as a weapon for political dominance or even as an instrument to fight back dominance; any reader of CLR James' *Beyond the Boundary* would know that. Until the advent of IPL, cricket was about national teams and races. As James says, “Cricket...had plunged” him “into politics long before [he] was aware of it. When [he] did turn to politics, [he] did not have too much to learn.” What lessons in politics does the IPL proffer?

The Election Commission lays down the rules of the game in the Model Code of Conduct. The IPL



follows most of the rules laid down by the International Cricket Council (ICC). During the IPL and also the General Elections, many of these rules were flouted, decidedly or allegedly. The IPL cricketers, drawn from across cricket-playing nations, were bought and sold much before the event. Apparently, inconsequent to the followers of the game, the prices, sometimes incommensurate with the reputation of many players, were headlined. Many high profile players and erstwhile heroes were left unsold or sold late. Political parties also tried to highlight names of politicians who crossed over from their rivals' party. There seemed to be a competition of sorts to rope in glamorous cricketers or film stars from Chennai and Mumbai, from Bhojpuri to Tamil stars. Many of them even floated new parties for the cause of democracy, freedom of expression and so on.

In a certain sense, they were engaged in completely different practices; in another sense, they shared certain commonalities, especially in the visual space of the electronic media. The high octane media coverage, with experts in both “fields” crying themselves hoarse regarding the current performances, strategies and forecasts, was common to both the arenas. A few IPL specialists like Gautam Gambhir, who until last year were commenting both on cricket and political matters, jumped into the fray, hoping to prove their political prowess.

But, of course, the man in the street took a keen interest in both, while the satellite channels

“
THE ONE PUZZLE THAT SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGISTS NEED TO SORT OUT AND EXPLAIN IS HOW THE SAME PEOPLE CAN BE SO DEEPLY INVOLVED IN TWO KINDS OF SPECTACLES, ONE ENTRENCHED IN RABID NATIONALIST DISCOURSE AND ANOTHER WHICH IS AGGRESSIVELY INTERNATIONALIST. SOME OF THESE QUESTIONS WILL BE TESTED AGAINST THE BACKDROP OF BIHAR POLLS
”

made merry with increased TRPs and phenomenal commercial gains. In the background of both, the Balakot airstrikes fed the emotions directly and indirectly: directly in the political arena of elections, and indirectly by the absence of cricketers from Pakistan.

For one thing, the IPL is not about national teams. No one cares which country the players come from. The jerseys are of individual franchises and one looks in vain for the nationality behind the jersey in case the player happens to be one of the lesser-known. No, IPL is not about nations and nationalism. Nor is it about parochialism. The teams are named after cities but even the Indian players are not from these cities. They could well be from the city of the rival team. Sourav Ganguly can be the coach of Delhi Daredevils playing against the Kolkata Knight Riders for whom he had earlier played and whose coach he had eventually become. Shah Rukh Khan (a Delhiite) living in Mumbai is the owner of Kolkata Knight Riders. The same kind of fuzzing of identities is seen even among spectators.

Talking of Shah Rukh Khan brings to mind the two sets of affiliation leading to a triangular bonding. Politics and Bollywood, politics and cricket, and cricket and Bollywood. For decades, Prime Ministers have made it a point to pose with winning cricket teams and cricketing heroes. But these are about winning international tournaments like the World Cup. Seldom does one see politicians in IPL events. Last year, around the time of the General

Elections, many actors posed with major politicians. One of the X-factors in popularising IPL was that popular film stars like Shah Rukh Khan and Preity Zinta owned franchises.

Whereas communal-based politics is the order of the day, cricket and Bollywood, at least superficially seen, symbolise communal amity. Last year, exactly at a time when communal identities were dominating electoral arithmetic, and politicians were busy dividing and stereotyping people with a certain kind of facial hair, Indian cricketers had broken down this identity divide by almost all of them flaunting facial hair.

Such is the privileging of cricket over other sports. The one cricketing spectacle that the spectators in the subcontinent look forward to is the Indo-Pak encounter during which rabid nationalism rises to the fore. IPL, in contrast, is one of the rarest sports spectacles which completely subverts otherwise ubiquitous nationalist and parochial discourses. The one puzzle that social psychologists need to sort out and explain is how the same people can be so deeply involved in two kinds of spectacles, one entrenched in rabid nationalist discourse and another which is aggressively internationalist. This year, some of these questions will be tested against the backdrop of the Assembly elections in Bihar.

(The writer is a well-known scholar; he is the former head of Dept. Of English, Delhi University and author of books such as Tenth Rasa and The Will to Argue)

SOUNDBITE

We must show unity like never before to overcome today's emergency, get the world moving and working and prospering again, and uphold the vision of the Charter.



UN Secretary-General —Antonio Guterres

Three vaccine candidates are in different phases. We are hopeful that by the start of next year, a vaccine will be available in India.



Union Health Minister —Harsh Vardhan

It's an absolute delight to welcome back Indian cricket with the Dream11 IPL and I hope this tournament can infuse positive energy into the lives of millions.



Former cricketer —Sunil Gavaskar

Our biggest threat to this election is Governors from opposing parties controlling ballots, millions of ballots. To me, that's a much bigger threat than foreign countries.



US President —Donald Trump

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Export agro-produce

Sir — India must prepare to export agricultural products to accomplish the two aspirational goals set by Prime Minister Narendra Modi: double the income of farmers and achieve the aim of a \$5 trillion economy, which seem rather far-fetched now. Indian traders encounter several hurdles in exporting agricultural products and we need the Government's diligent intervention and support. India needs to chalk out a strategic plan and ensure increased percentage from 2.2 per cent to 5 per cent in global trade before 2025.

Rahul Chouhan
Ujjain

The five million mark

Sir — The rapid progression of COVID-19 has sent India's confirmed cases beyond the sombre five million mark. It now accounts for about one-sixth of the total global cases. This also means that one in every 260 people in India is infected with the virus. The exponential growth is borne out by the fact that it has taken just 11 days for the cases to rise from four to five million.

These are official figures; the true figures could be far higher.

India is among the few countries where there has been no flattening of the curve. It is projected that India will emerge as the country with the most number of infections in a matter of weeks. So far, more than 82,000 people have died from the virus.

Yet the Government's reply to “unstarred” questions in the

Parliament has been lacklustre. It further claims it has no data on the number of deaths of migrant labourers. It has not cleared GST dues to cash-strapped states and is being secretive about PM CARES Fund. Derek O'Brien of Trinamool Congress rightly described it as the “PM CARE LESS Fund”.

G David Milton
Maruthanode

Pakistan violates norms of NSAs' meeting

After Nepal's Cabinet endorsed a new political map showing Lipulekh, Kalapani and Limpiyadhura under its territory, amidst a border dispute with India, Pakistan has come out with a new map of its own. The new political map includes territories of Jammu and Kashmir and a part of Ladakh, claiming these territories as belonging to Pakistan. The map also claims Junagadh, Manavadar and Sir Creek in Gujarat as part of Pakistan.

At the online meeting of the National Security Advisors (NSA) of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), Pakistan used the map as a backdrop for its representative. Indian NSA Ajit Doval raised strong objection to Pakistan using the illegal map and walked out of the meeting, saying such an act was a blatant violation of the SCO Charter.

Despite the fact that for a like SCO do not allow bilateral issues to be brought to the table, Pakistan tried to use the platform to internationalise the Kashmir issue. The provocative action of Pakistan is in violation of the



norms of the NSAs meeting. Pakistan seems to be emboldened by China's attempt to alter the Line of Actual Control (LAC). Instead of showing the territories of other countries as its own, Pakistan needs to save Balochistan and stop violating human rights in these areas.

KV Seetharamiah
Hassan, Karnataka

ty. Bachchan disagreed with these claims. She said that the film industry had been ridiculed by social media and the Central Government must protect and support it. While many within the industry praised the actor for speaking up against the negativity surrounding the industry since Sushant Singh Rajput's death, fact is they didn't collectively campaign against mindless vilification or try to restore their credibility. Had not Bachchan raised her voice, the industry would have kept silent.

Bhagwan Thadani
Mumbai

Irresponsible media

Sir — The Supreme Court has strictly prohibited showing the remaining episodes of *Sudarshan TV's Bindas Bol* programme as its objective was to “vilify Muslims.” The claims made by the channel also question the credibility of UPSC examinations. The media must be responsible and take appropriate measures to not promote oligarchy.

M N Alam
Saharanpur

Send your feedback to:
letterstopioneer@gmail.com

FIRST COLUMN

The intelligent future is here

Events of 2020 have hugely accelerated the human civilisation's race towards finding an alternative to its own organic intelligent brain



KUMARDEEP BANERJEE

Now that most of us are becoming video-conferencing experts, innovating on every call with a new virtual background, while also ordering groceries online and keeping an eye on the latest news updates popping up on our phone and computer screen, will it be too early to crystal gaze into a not-so-distant future, say 2021? Yes, it may be too early to call 2020 a "gap year", specially when each new day has its own set of surprises. But there is no harm in peeping a little into next year's trends. First, there is no escaping the fact that technology will tremendously impact the way we live, work, exercise, eat or buy next year, too. If the pandemic has thrown us into an ocean of uncertainties, if we look around carefully, it is an ocean of data. Those that learn to swim through pretty quickly and get a raft or something to latch on to will soon realise the potential of this ocean of opportunities. It has already started happening but a new technology called Artificial Intelligence (AI) will take over most of what is today relegated to a digital world.

To start with, algorithms would be put to use for early detection or even prediction of pandemics, assessment and even solutions for traffic patterns in a city, incremental/severe weather forecasts, health-care, care for the most vulnerable and so on. But soon, like everything else, it will be all-pervasive in every little life decision. I am not sticking my neck out to say it will happen by next year but events of 2020 have hugely accelerated the human civilisation's race towards finding an alternative to its own organic intelligent brains. The world is already flush with examples on how AI will have multiples of applications from that which is already available across the web. In short, we are on the verge of entering a new technological era which is predictive, sophisticated and has an eerie inorganic intelligence almost running into infinity (it is not enough to cut the cord and think that an AI system has switched off; remember there are thousands of machines crunching data points from multiple sources to predict simple buying behaviour). This will definitely have a deep impact on the human race.

Next will come an age of extreme speeds of data access over the air or 5G. The world would have already been piloting cutting-edge 5G or fifth-generation mobile technology across large geographies and would have been near phase-wise national rollouts, had the pandemic not hit. India definitely has lost a year in the 5G race. However, the protocols and network vendor partner solutions may have been made more secure as a result of the delay.

In fact, 5G is likely to see the first level of deployment in urban areas (where the revenues are) and besides helping you download (at say five times the speeds of your current streaming action) social media videos/your favourite films and cricket matches, will also prove to be a great tool for remote and risky jobs. If some of the arterial sewer lines in a city are fitted with 5G chips, there could be a possibility of completely eradicating the need for human intervention in maintenance of a city's drainage system. If the data coming in and also fed into the chips are analysed at the back-end by smart machines (think AI), who, then takes decisions to deploy little machine worms into the sludge to clean a choke or fix a leakage or even defuse a toxic gas emission, it would mean saving a few thousand precious lives each year. Together with this will come the ultra-smart homes (the protocols for which are already in advanced stages of negotiation by big tech companies) where perhaps your cooking burner will decide the menu and your bar may order itself a few of your favourite wines in case you aren't stocked for the weekend. While robotic surgeries performed over the network specially for remote terrains (read rural) are already happening outside India, a self-driving car in Chandni Chowk may be further away.

Now that the all-pervasive technology has started to co-exist with us in our altered carbon realities, the threats to humanity will also increase. These threats would be increasingly cyber and 2021 will likely see more cyber security attacks (small, big, macro) than all of these years of digital revolution put together. The tell-tale volumes of these cyber security attacks (think SIM cloning, phishing attacks, stealing of bank passwords and OTPs) are already giving consumers and lawmakers a nightmare with increased adoption of the digital world during these work from home times. Think of the manifold increase of these forces as the technology world starts getting more complex with evolving protocols and appendages. You are more likely to hear the word cyber security in almost every important public forum and ministerial dialogues than you have ever heard in your life. Along with these, and one can only wish, multilateral solutions to tackling emerging threats will also emerge, which prevent anti-State forces from manipulating users of emerging technology. There will be new policy regimes, language and grammar for embracing these brave new islands we are heading towards, but let's keep those for a later piece.

(The writer is a policy analyst)

POINTCOUNTERPOINT

SHE (URMILA) WAS MAKING A MOCKERY OUT OF MY STRUGGLES. SHE IS JUST A SOFT PORN STAR NOT KNOWN FOR HER ACTING SKILLS FOR SURE

—ACTOR

KANGANA RANAUT



IT'S DISHEARTENING TO SEE SOMEONE TALKING ILL NOT ONLY ABOUT ME, BUT ALSO JAYA JI, WHO IS AN MP AND HAS RAISED HER VOICE ON SO MANY ISSUES.

—ACTOR

URMILA MATONDKAR

Spare a thought for our kids

Let our children, including those at the margins of territory, identity, services, social and economic interventions, find themselves future-ready



SUMITRA MISHRA

Infants and children — naked, hungry, crying, sleeping in overcrowded trucks, on the shoulders of their tired parents and caretakers. These were some of the heart-breaking pictures that emerged as everyday lives were disrupted following the COVID lockdown put in place in March across India. The multiple fault lines of our societal order were more visible than ever as migrant workers and their families were seen out on the roads across major cities, while the rest of us took to working from home. This was not "a long walk to freedom". It was a walk back home through a terrain that was as indifferent as it was strange. It was reverse migration, a story of lost livelihoods and ever-increasing struggles. For some, it was a walk to their deaths.

As we battle the Coronavirus and its varied impacts on our lives, it is important that we do not lose sight of these fault lines. It has especially hit the families of workers in the unorganised sector, who do not have adequate social protection, support and additionally find it hard to provide adequate care to their children.

One of the casualties of the lockdown was the slew of programmes tackling malnutrition. As per the National Family Health Survey-4 (2015-16), 21 per cent children below the age of five in India were undernourished, 91.4 per cent of the children aged six to 23 months did not receive an adequate diet, one in three (38 per cent) of children under five years of age was stunted, one in five (21 per cent) of the children was wasted, 36 per cent were underweight. The lockdown resulted in a more dire situation where the resulting socio-economic impacts, the closing down of anganwadi centres and the resource crunch minimised the likelihood of availability of food to counter malnutrition.

These intersecting impacts of poverty, gender discrimination, caste and class differences, violence, issues of availability and accessibility of services to the young child and lack of professionalisation of childcare workers are brought to the fore in the *State of the Young Child in India* (SOYC) report, that Mobile Creches, an organisation working for early childhood development (ECD), released recently. While the report was finalised before the pandemic hit the world, it nevertheless offers important insights into the status of India's children under six years of age — who form over 13 per cent of the country's population — in addition to a critical examination of legislative frameworks designed to address their needs. The report also goes beyond a homogenising understanding of the child, as it emphasises various disadvantaged categories within this age group and the dire situation they are in. It calls for specific interventions for each vulnerable category, otherwise it results in a risk of lifelong consequences of deprivation.

The results emerging from the indexing can be used to draw out good practices from top performers like Kerala and Goa and turning more attention towards the poor-performing regions and States like Jharkhand, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Madhya Pradesh. With recommendations stemming from exhaustive analysis, it can also enable in envisioning a post-pandemic world where the issues of marginalisation and neglect receive due attention and policy intervention.

The Integrated Child Development Services

“
 THE PER CHILD EXPENDITURE IN THE COUNTRY FOR 2018-19 WAS AN ABYSMALLY LOW FIGURE OF ₹1,723. THIS MUST BE ENHANCED TO ₹1.25 TRILLION ANNUALLY TO COVER FUNDING GAPS AND ENSURE HOLISTIC INTERVENTIONS. THIS APPROACH HAS THE POTENTIAL TO BRING IN RETURNS THAT WOULD EXCEED BUDGETARY SPENDS ON ANY ALTERNATIVE WELFARE PROGRAMME
 ”



scheme (ICDS), the world's largest programme catering to children, requires recalibration for it suffers from design and capacity deficits, does not adequately address the components of care and early education and is still a long way from reaching the most marginalised in an effective and equitable manner.

The youngest child is often the most invisible and exceptionally vulnerable. This calls for tapping development opportunities in this young age that can set a healthy foundation for life. Investment in ECD not only has the potential to enhance individual capacity and economic growth, it also provides an opening for women empowerment by recognising the overlapping rights of women and children and bringing in State interventions and increased budgetary allocations.

The SOYC report recognises the biological role in care-giving yet questions the gendered stereotypes that result in an undue burden on the mother. In the unorganised sector especially, women are bogged down by a triple burden — the responsibility of childcare, work outside the home that mostly entails unequal access to the market, longer working hours, unhealthy working environment and lesser wages, and the household work as well. Often, young children are seen lying or roaming around these unsafe work sites since these women are deprived of maternity or childcare benefits. This weak support system compromises their ability to provide quality care to the infant/child. Therefore, it is important that where families are unable to pro-

vide due childcare, compounded by their multiple issues, the State steps in as an enabler. As the sole scheme to cater to the needs of children of women engaged in the informal sector, the Government-sponsored National Crèche Scheme has actually seen a reduction in the number of creches, with only 7,930 of them functional across the country in 2019, which translates into one creche per 21,000 children. The scheme needs to be re-imaged and strengthened with serious revision of the budget, and this can also be supplemented by a phased conversion of anganwadis into anganwadicum-creches.

The pandemic-induced lockdown witnessed a rare visibility of anganwadi and ASHA (Accredited Social Health Activist) workers as they emerged to be the first line of defence in dealing with the contagion. However, as the SOYC report notes, they are otherwise marginalised — not seen as a professional cadre, treated as part-time workers, paid well below the minimum wages in most States. There is a pressing need for their critical role in the childcare ecosystem to be recognised, acknowledged, professionalised and for their remuneration to be in line with their responsibilities. The professionalisation of this service will also mean adequate training of these workers and can strengthen the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) component, which remains a weak focus of the ICDS.

All children in the ages of three to six should have a right to quality ECCE, irrespective of whether they are located at anganwadi centres, pre-pri-

mary sections of Government, private schools or any other pre-school centres.

For the country, prioritising ECD can translate into fulfilment of Sustainable Development Goals and its international commitment towards child rights. While data paucity on multiple dimensions of child well-being hampered the indexing process and a more accurate insight in certain areas, the budgetary analysis through national-level data and allocations to States brings forth issues of inadequate allocation, under-utilisation, lack of management capacity to cater to the needs of children.

The per child expenditure in the country for 2018-19 was an abysmally low figure of ₹1,723. This must be enhanced to ₹1.25 trillion annually to cover funding gaps and ensure holistic interventions. This approach has the potential to bring in returns that would exceed budgetary spends on any alternative welfare programme.

Coronavirus has significantly altered the way we thought of our lives, our work and our very support systems. It has taught us lessons, tragic ones at that.

Yet, it is in this moment that we must recognise the deprivations, neglect and exclusion that mar equitable access of various vulnerable groups, including children, to essential services. Let our children, including those at the margins of territory, identity, services, social and economic interventions, find themselves capable for the future.

(The writer is Executive Director at Mobile Creches and an early childhood development activist)

We are being sucked into an ash pond

Fly ash is inevitable while producing thermal power. However, leaving it to pollute the environment is not desirable



KOTA SRIRAJ

Fly ash, a by-product of coal-fired electricity-generating power plants, has always been a predominant challenge for the environment, as its unsafe disposal or ineffective recycling can pose a direct threat to the quality of the air we breathe. Such is our dependence on thermal power plants for energy that apart from the air pollution caused by these behemoths, the fly ash is also compromising other aspects of our environment.

For instance, the breach of the fly ash dyke at the Vindhyaal NTPC Super Thermal Power Station in Singrauli district of Madhya Pradesh in October 2019 led to the seeping of nearly 35 lakh metric tonnes of fly ash into the Govind Vallabh Pant Sagar, popularly known as the Rihand water reservoir. The Essar power plant at Mahan

in the same district, too, saw breaches in its fly ash dykes leading to its seepage into the environment.

The huge level of water pollution triggered by the seepage of fly ash into the Rihand reservoir raised a red flag and the National Green Tribunal (NGT) imposed an interim penalty of ₹10 crore on the NTPC and Essar after reviewing the ground report filed by its committee. Additionally, the NGT also rapped the Lanco-Anpara power plant to stem the excess ash pond flow into the reservoir. The fly ash caused soil pollution, too, due to which agricultural land became infertile and standing crops suffered.

Thanks to the fly ash pollution, the levels of mercury in the soil, air and water spiked besides causing health complications for local communities as the Rihand reservoir is a source of drinking water for many. All these adverse developments took place despite the existence of statutory notifications from the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change (MoEFCC) under the Environment Protection Act (EPA) that mandates a 100 per cent utilisation of fly ash.



However, the full extent of the damage caused by the fly ash pond breach has come to light now thanks to a new report submitted recently by the joint committee comprising the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) and the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Roorkee. The report estimated that the fly ash breach by Essar Power Limited caused damages worth ₹7.35 crore while the damage inflicted by the fly ash dyke breach at the NTPC plant was pegged at a whopping ₹104 crore. The committee based its damage estimations on two parameters: One was the Green House

Gas (GHG) emissions caused by the clean-up operations and two the extent of water pollution due to ash overflow.

The use of diesel during the clean-up operations caused the carbon footprint to spike, leading to the damage estimation to go up. Similarly, the fly ash infusion into the water bodies led to heavy metals and suspended solids leaching into the water. This, too, was translated into cost and added to the damages.

Thermal power stations are still the mainstay of our power sector with renewable sources of energy being nowhere near the required potential to take over as primary sources of our needs. Moreover, the opening up of the coal sector for mining to private players, besides nixing of the mandatory coal-washing requirements, is set to increase the production of fly ash in the future.

Already the ash ponds are overflowing across the nation due to increasing output and decreasing utilisation. As a result, the dykes are frequently breaking, leading to the ash polluting the nearby fields and water bodies.

The last 10 years saw the ash ponds

contain a humongous 627 million tonnes of unused material. This is three times the fly ash being generated per year today, which is 200 million tonnes per annum. The close of 2019 saw an unused fly ash stock quantity of 1,647 million tonnes in India, which is eight times the annual generation quantity.

This is despite the fact that India has the regulations in place that mandate 100 per cent usage of fly ash and there is technology available to put this into action. Yet we are still far from a "full utilisation status."

The Government-driven initiative to promote the use of fly ash in the construction material industry has not been a spectacular success as red bricks continue to be sold and used in open violation of the Government's rules that ban them. Bricks are made out of top soil which is a precious part of our environment. An inch of top soil takes 500,000 years to form as it essentially involves the breaking down and erosion of rock.

If the Government cannot shut the countless red brick kilns that can be seen dotting the countryside, it cannot promote the use of fly ash in the building material industry. The buyer will

have no option but to continue with the traditional red brick, which is easily available. Once the red brick production and supply chain is broken, it will not only save the top soil but also stem the pollution caused by these kilns as they use diesel and sugarcane waste as fuel.

Fly ash can be successfully used to produce bricks in combination with gypsum or lime. The resultant brick is not only eco-friendly but lighter and stronger. Technologies are available today that use compressed natural gas (CNG), an eco-friendly fuel, to fire autoclaves or huge ovens to manufacture fly ash bricks. Each autoclave can manufacture 22,000 fly ash-lime bricks in an eight-hour span.

So, if the thermal power plants in the country were mandated with a target to produce a certain quantity of bricks using the autoclave technology, then the problem of excess fly ash would disappear. There are ways to ensure full utilisation of fly ash; only a strong political will is required to implement the rules that have been put in place for this.

(The writer is an environmental journalist)



FOREIGN EYE



LANKA NO THREAT TO INDIA

Sri Lanka's 'India First' strategic security policy, outlined by the new Foreign Secretary, Colombo, is a timely reiteration of a policy of past 20 plus years, but seldom understood in the northern neighbourhood. In doing so, Colombo, a former Navy chief, becomes the first Sri Lankan official or politician to articulate the nation's foreign policy so comprehensively and cogently, that too in a well-articulated manner, publicly. *(Ceylon Today editorial)*

Primary markets see revival in second half of 2020

New Delhi: The sharp turnaround in the secondary markets with the broader market also participating in the rally, has enlivened the primary markets once again with a slew of initial public offerings (IPOs) from a diverse range of companies set to hit the street in the second half of the 2020 calendar year. Market analysts tracking the development said that a host of promoters are once again rushing to the primary market to make the most of the opportunity where recent IPOs have not only been

oversubscribed by several times but it has also brought back retail investors into the market who hold the key to maintain the rally for IPOs. So in the pipeline now are more IPOs like CAMS, UTI AMC, Angel Broking, Chemcon Specialty Chemicals, etc. that are likely to open in September. Besides, Kalyan Jewellers, NCDEX, Barbeque Nation, Burger King, Bajaj Energy, Lodha Developers are some of the names likely to hit the market in CY20. Of this CAMS and

UTI AMC will be big ticket size IPOs. LIC could also join the bandwagon later this year and could be one of the largest IPO in the country ever - going by the company's size. The government is looking at offloading 25 per cent stake in LIC in tranches, as it is falling short of its divestment target of Rs 2.1 lakh crore this fiscal. For this, it is likely to incentivise the participation of retail investors/employees/policy holders by providing some discount. IANS

Advance tax mop-up falls 25.5% in Q2, led by plunge in corporate tax: Source

Mumbai: Advance tax collection fell 25.5 per cent to Rs 1,59,057 crore in the second quarter of the fiscal, an income tax official said on Thursday. However, there was improvement over the first quarter ended June, when advance tax revenue had plunged 76 per cent to a tepid Rs 11,714 crore as the whole economy was under a stringent lockdown. During the year-ago period to September 15, 2019,

total advance tax collection had stood at Rs 2,12,889 crore, down from Rs 3,70,652 crore a year ago. "Total advance tax collection in the second quarter fell by 25.5 per cent to Rs 1,59,057 crore from Rs 2,12,889 crore y-o-y. While corporates paid only Rs 1,29,619.6 crore in advance tax, down by 27.3 per cent in the reporting quarter, personal income tax collection stood at Rs 29,437.5 crore, down 15 per cent from Rs 34,632.9 crore.

BSNL's 44 pc mobile network equipment from ZTE, 9 pc from Huawei

New Delhi: More than 44% mobile network equipment of state-run BSNL is sourced from Chinese firm ZTE and 9 per cent from Huawei, Parliament was informed on Thursday. While replying to a question on the market share of Chinese companies ZTE and Huawei in India, Minister of State for Communications Sanjay Dhotre said that the government maintains no data of Chinese telecom gear makers. PTI

3.2 lakh households remain un-electrified till August-end under Saubhagya scheme

New Delhi: The number of un-electrified households stood at 3,20,422 till August-end this year under the Saubhagya Scheme, which is meant for achieving 100 per cent universal electrification of homes in the country, Parliament was informed on Thursday. These un-electrified households are in Chhattisgarh, Assam, Uttar Pradesh and Jharkhand. Power Minister R K Singh said in the Lok Sabha, replying to a question, that the

number of un-electrified households identified under the Saubhagya scheme was 3,20,422 as on August 31, 2020. Among the four states with un-electrified households, Uttar Pradesh tops the chart with 2,53,785 households followed by Jharkhand at 60,925, Chhattisgarh at 3,519 and Assam at 2,193 as on August 31, 2020. As per the reply, as many as 2,62,84,350 families were provided electricity connection under the Saubhagya scheme. PTI

GST rate on cars lower than pre-GST regime; auto cost should cut royalty payments: Fin Min sources

New Delhi: Auto companies should cut costs by reducing royalty payments to their parent companies abroad instead of asking the government to reduce GST, finance ministry sources said on Thursday, responding to criticism on high taxes in India. Most globally established companies in the sector have flourished in the current taxation and regulatory regime, which is evident from the huge royalty payouts made by Indian partners to their foreign parent firms, they added. Toyota Motor Corp is not looking at further expansion in India due to the country's high

taxes, the firm's vice chairman of India unit Shekar Viswanathan had reportedly said in an interview earlier this week. Finance ministry sources said India's tax policy regarding the automobile sector has been quite consistent for the last three decades now in the form of allowing foreign investment and incentivising domestic manufacturing. GST rates on automobiles are less than what VAT and excise duty rates used to be in the pre-GST times. All of a sudden, dissent in some quarters on tax rates on automobiles is surprising, they added.

"In fact, these companies should cut down their costs of manufacturing by cutting down the royalty payments to their parent companies abroad instead of asking the government to reduce GST," a source said. Taxes on automobiles are in the highest bracket across the globe without much exception, the sources said. Japan currently has three types of taxes on automobiles - once on the purchase, then an annual automobile tax based on engine size, and finally a weight tax at inspections required once every two years. PTI

Priority plan row: VIL drops faster speed claim in RedX offering, files revised plan with Trai

New Delhi: Faced with regulatory heat on its controversial plan, Vodafone Idea Ltd (VIL) has dropped faster data speed claims, which formed a prominent part of its pay-more-for-priority-treatment offering, and has filed a revised plan with Trai, a source said. The move assumes significance as the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (Trai) late last month slapped a showcase notice on VIL over its priority mobile plan, saying the tariff offer lacked transparency, was "misleading" and not in compliance with regulatory framework.

The source told PTI that the company has now submitted a new RedX plan with Trai and claims of faster data speeds - a major bone of contention - has been done away with. The company's website is also no longer touting claims of faster speeds for RedX plan, which had been under Trai's scanner over the past few weeks. Instead, VIL's website is talking of benefits purely in terms of entertainment privileges (Netflix and Amazon Prime), travel privileges, mobility benefits and other privileges. PTI

Sensex tumbles 323 pts as global markets reel on Fed outlook

Mumbai: Equity indices snapped a two-session rising streak to close with sharp losses with global markets which recoiled after sobering economic assessment by the US Federal Reserve. A weakening rupee and lack of fresh buying triggers further weighed on market mood, traders said. The 30-share BSE Sensex opened lower and stayed in the negative zone throughout the session. It finally finished at

38,979.85, down by 323 points or 0.82 per cent. Similarly, the NSE Nifty shed 88.45 points or 0.76 per cent to close at 11,516.10. Bajaj Finserv was the top laggard in the Sensex pack, slipping 2.23 per cent, followed by PowerGrid, L&T, TCS, ICICI Bank, Kotak Bank, Tata Steel and Bajaj Finance. On the other hand, HCL Tech, Infosys and Maruti finished with gains of up to 2.36 per cent. PTI

Rollout of SAROD-Ports credit for sector

Mumbai: The rollout of SAROD-Ports for affordable and timely resolution of maritime-related disputes is a credit positive for the sector even as its success remains to be seen, ratings agency Ica said on Thursday. Launched on September 10, 'SAROD-PORTS' (Society for Affordable Redressal of Disputes - Ports) for dispute resolution in maritime sector, comprising of major ports, the PPP players operating at these ports as well as non-major ports, the initiative is targeted towards attracting more private sector investments, Ica stated. PTI

SCRIP	OPEN	High	LOW	LTP	CHANGE
NIFTY 50	11539.40	11587.20	11498.50	11516.10	-88.45
DREDDY	4704.00	4845.55	4654.95	4825.00	197.10
ZEE	215.45	224.65	215.25	220.50	5.10
HCLTECH	794.95	817.50	789.50	806.30	17.05
INFY	995.00	1021.00	995.00	1011.00	9.25
GRASIM	720.40	738.75	716.55	725.90	5.50
MARUTI	7049.50	7112.90	6941.00	7110.00	52.05
HEROMOTOCO	3028.80	3098.00	3030.05	3075.05	18.85
BPL	413.00	419.00	411.55	415.50	2.45
COALINDIA	123.85	125.90	123.55	124.50	0.65
ONGC	73.05	74.30	72.85	73.20	0.15
ULTRACEMCO	3954.80	4023.40	3943.50	3981.00	6.10
APL	524.95	537.00	520.30	529.25	0.75
TITAN	1174.95	1191.55	1168.00	1180.30	-1.40
ASIANPAINT	2000.00	2045.00	2000.00	2008.20	-3.90
CIPLA	751.00	762.00	746.70	751.15	-1.45
M&M	631.00	643.50	627.65	636.95	-2.50
WIPRO	307.25	316.70	307.20	310.90	-1.25
BHARTIARTL	480.00	482.35	474.00	479.60	-2.15
BAJAJ-AUTO	3015.00	3029.95	2985.25	3023.10	-14.85
NESTLEIND	16240.00	16288.80	16090.00	16118.00	-79.80
TECHM	788.00	811.45	781.30	787.50	-4.50
EICHERMOT	2146.00	2161.95	2125.00	2151.00	-12.75
INDUSINDBK	614.75	624.80	610.20	618.00	-3.65
HINDUNILVR	2135.00	2145.00	2122.15	2128.00	-15.50
HDFCBANK	1084.00	1094.00	1078.00	1085.50	-8.15
HDFCLIFE	92.10	98.10	88.30	93.60	-4.90
IOC	83.40	82.80	81.40	82.00	-0.70
AXISBANK	440.95	446.45	438.50	442.00	-4.00
NTPC	89.05	89.45	88.30	88.80	-0.85
JSWSTEEL	286.00	288.80	283.15	285.75	-2.90
BRITANNIA	3848.00	3890.95	3768.75	3803.00	-41.50
HDFC	1750.00	1773.20	1736.50	1749.00	-19.15
GAIL	91.85	91.85	90.50	90.80	-1.05
TATASTEEL	401.95	407.50	399.20	400.00	-4.60
RELIANCE	2320.00	2333.70	2298.15	2296.00	-28.55
SBIN	197.00	198.00	195.00	195.70	-2.50
ITC	180.80	181.50	177.80	178.35	-2.30
SUNPHARMA	516.80	521.90	510.50	511.35	-7.15
KOTAKBANK	1315.00	1326.60	1301.20	1306.00	-19.40
TCS	2480.00	2495.75	2460.00	2466.05	-36.95
ICICIBANK	370.00	371.75	367.40	368.70	-6.00
ITC	915.00	917.95	905.05	906.25	-15.55
BAIFINANCE	3488.00	3517.00	3452.00	3462.05	-59.45
INFRATEL	200.20	201.00	195.55	196.50	-3.65
POWERGRID	171.15	171.40	167.90	168.60	-3.35
ADANIPORTS	352.00	355.50	345.00	346.45	-7.10
BAJAJFINSV	6118.90	6123.65	5990.10	6010.75	-135.20
SHRECEM	20375.00	20375.00	19795.95	19910.00	-477.85
TATAMOTORS	150.80	151.00	146.20	147.75	-3.70
HINDALCO	182.70	182.70	175.35	175.80	-8.00

SCRIP	OPEN	High	LOW	LTP	CHANGE
BSE 500	198.00	203.85	192.00	193.85	-20.85
DREDDY	4700.00	4845.00	4657.20	4826.60	197.10
RELIANCE	2319.00	2344.40	2293.00	2299.35	-6.05
HDFCBANK	1088.00	1094.35	1077.85	1083.25	-8.80
IDEA	11.36	11.43	11.11	11.27	-0.14
TATAMOTORS	150.90	150.90	146.10	147.60	-4.00
HCLTECH	796.90	817.45	789.35	800.00	17.05
BRITANNIA	3844.50	3890.00	3795.25	3813.20	-41.50
SBIN	197.00	198.00	195.05	195.50	-2.50
INFY	996.00	1020.60	994.65	1010.65	9.25
CIPLA	753.00	761.55	746.65	752.05	-1.45
ZEE	215.25	224.60	215.20	221.15	5.90
KOTAKBANK	1322.00	1326.50	1301.50	1305.30	-16.50
INDUSINDBK	612.70	624.65	610.85	617.40	-4.00
ITC	180.80	181.60	177.85	178.55	-2.50
HDFCAMC	2287.00	2331.65	2251.00	2259.80	-3.90
BAIFINANCE	3493.45	3515.80	3457.00	3469.80	-59.45
BANDHANBNK	302.50	309.10	300.80	305.30	-6.00
APOLLOHOSP	1699.00	1787.10	1684.85	1777.35	-11.75
MARUTI	7059.00	7114.00	6944.40	7085.55	-79.80
JBCHEPHARM	918.00	918.15	905.50	906.40	-4.00
ICICIBANK	369.50	371.50	367.40	368.90	-6.00
TCS	2487.00	2495.00	2452.60	2460.05	-36.95
WIPRO	307.00	316.70	307.00	311.65	-1.25
MCX	1686.00	1679.00	1651.30	1761.15	11.15
GAIL	91.50	91.85	90.55	90.70	-1.05
ASIANPAINT	2005.00	2045.00	1999.75	2008.40	-41.50
ASHOKLEY	78.00	79.20	76.85	78.30	-0.70
IDFCFIRSTB	31.70	32.35	31.50	31.95	-0.85
TATASTEEL	404.00	407.40	393.40	398.70	-4.60
LAURUSLABS	1347.20	1425.00	1342.45	1405.50	-41.50
STAR	699.00	732.00	690.60	728.05	-3.90
TECHM	785.00	811.30	780.15	786.95	-4.00
DIVISLAB	3244.35	3264.00	3201.90	3211.15	-52.85
MINDTREE	1261.00	1281.10	1241.35	1274.25	-33.15
BHARTIARTL	481.00	485.00	474.10	478.85	-2.15
PVR	1251.00	1261.10	1214.00	1222.45	-28.65
SUNPHARMA*	517.00	521.80	510.60	511.85	-2.65
CADILAC	388.90	396.40	384.60	394.45	-6.05
M&M	631.00	643.50	627.65	636.95	-2.50
ADANIPORTS	352.00	355.50	345.00	346.45	-7.10
BAJAJFINSV	6118.90	6123.65	5990.10	6010.75	-135.20
SHRECEM	20375.00	20375.00	19795.95	19910.00	-477.85
TATAMOTORS	150.80	151.00	146.20	147.75	-3.70
HINDALCO	182.70	182.70	175.35	175.80	-8.00



TOP GAINERS	TOP LOSERS
HCLTECH	ICICI BANK
INFOSYS	WIPRO
POWERGRID	MCX
ONGC	GAIL
ASIANPAINT	ASIANPAINT
ASHOKLEY	ASHOKLEY
IDFCFIRSTB	IDFCFIRSTB
TATASTEEL	TATASTEEL
LAURUSLABS	LAURUSLABS
STAR	STAR
TECHM	TECHM
DIVISLAB	DIVISLAB
MINDTREE	MINDTREE
BHARTIARTL	BHARTIARTL
PVR	PVR
SUNPHARMA*	SUNPHARMA*
CADILAC	CADILAC
M&M	M&M
ADANIPORTS	ADANIPORTS
BAJAJFINSV	BAJAJFINSV
SHRECEM	SHRECEM
TATAMOTORS	TATAMOTORS
HINDALCO	HINDALCO

SCRIP	OPEN	High	LOW	LTP	CHANGE
ABBOTINDIA	16586.00	17100.00	16361.55	16441.55	-2272.80
MSFL	619.00	625.00	606.65	622.05	-278.65
BAJAJELEC	510.80	520.00	499.50	505.65	-278.65
CGGL	216.20	224.60	216.20	218.20	-278.65
NESCO	555.85	599.00	555.85	585.55	-278.65
AARTIND	1125.00	1129.05	1100.00	1106.50	-278.65
PNBHOSING	331.80	334.45	327.10	332.00	-278.65
INDOCO	284.00	295.00	274.00	281.00	-278.65
ATUL	6949.00	6985.00	6764.10	6828.75	-278.65
HAL	838.10	845.80	828.05	830.65	-278.65
IRCTC	1368.00	1374.90	1359.50	1371.40	-278.65
HESAWARE	452.00	459.95	445.00	448.55	-278.65
IDBI	37.60	37.80	37.40	37.45	-278.65
THYROCARE	795.00	827.0			

US envoy begins second high-level visit to Taiwan

China condemns US visit, warns of retaliation

Taipei: US Undersecretary of State Keith Krach arrived in Taiwan on Thursday for the second visit by a high-level American official in two months, prompting a stern warning and threat of possible retaliation from China.

Beijing considers Taiwan its own and opposes all official contacts between other countries and the self-governing island.

Krach arrived at an air force base in Taipei, the capital, for a three-day visit. Wearing a face mask, he bumped elbows in greetings with Taiwanese Deputy Foreign Minister Harry Ho-Jen Tseng, Krach, the highest-level



US Under Secretary of State Keith Krach, center, gestures after disembarking from a plane upon arrival at the air force base airport in Taipei, Taiwan on Thursday AP

State Department official to visit the island in decades, is to meet Taiwanese President Tsai Ing-wen and other senior officials, the island's foreign ministry said.

The visit by Krach, who is undersecretary for economic growth, energy and the envi-

ronment, follows a high-profile trip in August by U.S. Health Secretary Alex Azar, the highest-level U.S. Cabinet official to visit since the U.S. Switched formal relations from Taiwan to China in 1979.

However, the U.S. Has maintained unofficial ties with

Taiwan since the official diplomatic break and is the island's most important ally and provider of defense equipment.

Ahead of Krach's arrival, the U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, Kelly Craft, had lunch Wednesday with Taiwan's top official in New York, a meeting she called historic and a further step in the Trump administration's campaign to strengthen relations with Taiwan.

Craft said her lunch with James K.J. Lee, director of the Taipei Economic and Cultural Office in New York, was the first meeting between a top Taiwan official and a U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations since 1971, when the China seat at the U.N. Was passed from Taipei to Beijing.

"I'm looking to do the right thing by my president, and I feel that he has sought to

strengthen and deepen this bilateral relationship with Taiwan and I want to continue that on behalf of the administration," she told The Associated Press.

In Taiwan, Krach is to attend a banquet hosted by Tsai on Friday and hold discussions on the creation of a new economic and commercial dialogue, according to Taiwan's de facto ambassador in the U.S., Hsiao Bi-khim. He will also attend a memorial service for former President Lee Teng-hui, who led the island's transition to democracy and died at age 97 in July.

Krach's visit and Craft's lunch with Lee are certain to exacerbate mounting tensions between Washington and Beijing over the coronavirus pandemic, trade, technology, Hong Kong and the South China Sea.

China condemned the visit on Thursday and warned it could retaliate.

At a daily briefing Thursday, Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin said Krach's visit violates U.S. Commitments to China and "bolsters the separatist forces of Taiwan independence and undermines China-U.S. Relations and peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait," adding that Beijing had "lodged solemn complaints" with Washington over the matter.

"We urge the U.S. To fully recognize the high sensitivity of the Taiwan issue... Immediately stop official exchanges and actions of improving substantive relations with Taiwan, and handle Taiwan-related issues cautiously," Wang said. "China will make necessary responses in accordance with the development of the situation." AP

Poison was on water bottle in Navalny's hotel room: His team

Moscow: The nerve agent used to poison Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny was detected on an empty water bottle from his hotel room in the Siberian city of Tomsk, suggesting he was poisoned there and not at the airport as previously thought, his team said on Thursday.

Navalny fell violently ill on a domestic flight in Russia last month and was subsequently airlifted to Berlin for treatment. Germany says he was poisoned by a Novichok nerve agent. Russia says it has seen no evidence he was poisoned.

A video posted on Navalny's Instagram account showed members of his team searching the room he had just left in the Xander Hotel in Tomsk on Aug. 20, an hour after they learned he had fallen sick in suspicious circumstances.

"It was decided to gather up everything that could even hypothetically be useful and hand it to the doctors in Germany. The fact that the case would not be investigated in Russia was quite obvious," the post said.

It showed his team bagging



several empty bottles of "Holy Spring" mineral water, among other items, while wearing protective gloves.

"Two weeks later, a German laboratory found traces of Novichok precisely on the bottle of water from the Tomsk hotel room," the post said.

"And then more laboratories that took analyses from Alexei confirmed that that was what poisoned Navalny. Now we understand: it was done before he left his hotel room to go to the airport."

Russia has carried out pre-investigation checks, but said it needs to see more medical analysis before it can open a formal criminal investigation into the case. AFP

Outgoing US ambassador to China to help Republican campaigns

Beijing: Outgoing U.S. Ambassador to China Terry Branstad said he will help out Republicans campaigning in his native Iowa after returning home next month.

Branstad also told Hong Kong's Phoenix TV that he considered the phase one trade deal between China and the U.S. As the biggest achievement of his three years in China. Branstad, 73, said he would be working on behalf of President Donald Trump, Senator Joni Ernst and others, but not in any official role.

"My son is very involved in (Trump's) campaign, and I will be a volunteer to help him, to help Joni Ernst and other friends for the election in Iowa. But I will strictly be a volunteer," Branstad told the station in a report broadcast Thursday.

Ernst, the state's junior

senator, is locked in a tight race, with Democrats hoping to capture her seat on the way to flipping the Senate.

As Iowa's governor, Branstad was an early Trump supporter and has served as his top envoy to China during the most tempestuous period in relations since diplomatic ties were established in 1979.

Branstad was governor of the major farming state for 22 years over two spans, from 1983 to 1999 and 2011 to 2017. Early in his first term, he met Xi Jinping, now China's leader, when the then county-level Communist Party official visited Iowa on a 1985 trade trip.

The phase one trade deal reached between the U.S. and China in January amid the ongoing tariff war between the sides represented a truce but did not address the more fundamental complaints of the

American side.

Still, Branstad said he believed it was ultimately in the best interests of both sides to follow-through with it.

"This was a long and difficult process," Branstad said. "They worked long and hard to reach an agreement that I think is fair and reciprocal. And it's going to make a difference for both of our countries."

Branstad will leave at time when tensions between the sides are also running high over Taiwan, the South China Sea, the coronavirus pandemic and allegations of spying and technology theft. In July, the U.S. Ordered the closure of China's consulate in Houston, calling it a "center of malign activity." China retaliated by ordering the shuttering of the U.S. Consulate in the southwestern city of Chengdu. AP

Spain court considers removal of Catalan chief from office

AP ■ MADRID

Spain's Supreme Court is Shearing lawyers' closing arguments over whether to bar Catalonia's separatist-minded regional leader from public office.

Catalan regional president Quim Torra is attending the final hearing of his appeal of a ruling by a lower court last year. That court, in Barcelona, ruled that Torra was unfit to hold public office for 18 months for having violated electoral law.

Torra had refused to remove a banner reading "Free Political Prisoners and Exiles" during an official election campaign period, during which public officials are prohibited from using public buildings to display political propaganda.

Former model accuses Trump of sexually assaulting her in 1997

Washington: A former model has accused US President Donald Trump of groping and forcibly kissing her in 1997 — the latest allegation made against the Republican incumbent just weeks before he seeks reelection.

Amy Dorris told Britain's The Guardian that Trump sexually assaulted her in his VIP suite at the US Open tennis tournament in New York — claims he denied via his lawyers.

"He just shoved his tongue down my throat and I was pushing him off. And then that's when his grip became tighter and his hands were very gropey and all over my butt, my breasts, my back, everything," Ms Dorris said in an interview.

"I was in his grip, and I couldn't get out of it," she added.

Trump has faced more than a dozen allegations of sexual misconduct, including a claim by prominent American columnist E. Jean Carroll that he raped her in a department store changing room in the mid-1990s.

But he brushed them aside in his run for the White House. Shortly before the 2016 election, a tape recording emerged from 2005 in which he was heard boasting about how his fame allowed him to "grab" women by the genitals when he wanted.

Trump dismissed this as "locker room banter" but subsequently apologised. AFP



A child sits between plastic bags as migrants pull their belongings in Kara Tepe, near Mytilene the capital of the northeastern island of Lesbos on Thursday AP

Ukraine urges Jewish pilgrims stuck at border to turn back

Kyiv (AP): Ukraine on Thursday strongly warned thousands of Hasidic Jewish pilgrims who have been stuck on its border for days that it won't allow them into the country due to coronavirus restrictions.

Ukrainian authorities said about 2,000 people have gathered at the border with Belarus, in hope of traveling to the Ukrainian city of Uman to visit the grave of an important Hasidic rabbi who died in 1810, Nachman of Breslov.

Thousands of the ultra-Orthodox Jews visit the city each September for Rosh Hashana, the Jewish new year. It's celebrated Sept. 18-20 this year, and some pilgrims had

home. Also, Israeli Higher Education Minister Zeev Elkin tweeted Thursday that efforts to help the pilgrims enter Ukraine have failed, and called on them to return to Israel.

As thousands of pilgrims spent days in the no-man's land between Belarus and Ukraine, some sleeping in makeshift tents and others on the ground, Ukraine and Belarus bickered over the standoff.

On Wednesday, Ukraine's presidential office accused Belarusian authorities of issuing misleading signals to the pilgrims that they would eventually be allowed to cross the border. Belarusian officials shot back accusing Ukraine of inhumane treatment of the pil-



grims, and offered to provide buses to drive the pilgrims to Uman and back to Belarus. Ukraine's presidential office alleged Wednesday that Belarusian authorities' actions could be rooted in the latest tensions between the two neighbors following Belarus' controversial presidential election. Ukraine has joined the United States and the European Union in criticizing the Aug. 9 vote, in which President Alexander Lukashenko extended his 26-year authoritarian rule, as neither free nor fair and urged Belarusian authorities to end their crackdown on protesters.

managed to get to Uman before Ukraine closed its borders in late August amid a surge in COVID-19 infections. Thousands of others traveled via Belarus, which hasn't barred foreign visitors from entering.

On Thursday, Ukraine's Interior Ministry official Mykhailo Apostol reaffirmed that the pilgrims will not be allowed to cross the border. Ukraine has shut its borders to foreigners, and no exclusions will be made for the Hasidic pilgrims," Apostol told reporters.

It's getting colder and we suggest that they come back to Belarus, buy tickets and go

Belarus activists make list of police from protest crackdown

Kyiv: The main opposition candidate in Belarus' disputed presidential election said Thursday that activists are compiling a list of law enforcement officers who were allegedly involved in violence against protesters denouncing the results of the vote.

Nearly 7,000 people were detained and hundreds were brutally beaten by police during the first several days of post-election protests in Belarus that are now in their sixth week. Opposition supporters claim the Aug. 9 vote was rigged to reelect President Alexander Lukashenko to a sixth term

and are demanding his resignation. Lukashenko's main challenger in the election, former English teacher and political novice Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya, said on Thursday that the opposition was drawing up a list of individual officers involved in the police crackdown.

"We have been given the names of those who were beating and torturing people," she said in a statement.

"We are preparing a list of officials and law enforcement officers who have taken part in lawless repressions." Human rights groups are working with opposition activists to identify the offi-

cers and officials, Tsikhanouskaya said, adding that the list will be shared with the United States, the European Union and Russia.

Tsikhanouskaya, who left for Lithuania in the wake of the election under pressure from Belarusian authorities, said the opposition will name the list in honor of Alexander Taraiovsky, a protester who died in Minsk the day after the election as police dispersed peaceful demonstrators.

Authorities initially said an explosive device Taraiovsky intended to throw at police blew up in his hands and killed him. AP

No, we do not live in forests, Austrians after Trump forest remark

Berlin: The Austrian government has spoken up to correct US President Donald Trump's claim that people in its country live in "forest cities."

Trump recently cited Austria and other European countries as models of good forest management that US states like California, which has seen devastating wildfires lately, should learn from.

Calling in to Fox News on Tuesday, Trump said that "you look at countries, Austria, you look at so many countries. They live in the forest, they're considered forest cities. So many of them. And they don't have fires

like this. And they have more explosive trees."

In an article Thursday for the London-based Independent, Austria's agriculture minister sought to set the record straight.

"There have been both serious and humorous conversations on social media about the 'exploding trees' (Trump) mentioned, as well as the fact that he claimed we live within 'forest cities' which never catch fire," Elisabeth Koestinger wrote.

"As Austrians, fortunately blessed with a healthy sense of humour, we normally take such clichés about our country in our stride." AP

Pak to introduce legislation to curb rape, child abuse

Islamabad: Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan has said that his Government will soon introduce a three-tier legislation providing for registration of sex offenders, exemplary punishment for rape and child abuse and effective policing.

Khan made the announcement while addressing a joint sitting of parliament after passage of a number of Financial Action Task Force-related bills on Wednesday. "Such incidents ruin the lives of victims and their families also have to suffer," he was quoted as saying by the Dawn newspaper. Khan was referring to the gangrape of a French-Pakistani woman in front of her three children in Lahore on Sept 9 which sparked widespread outrage. PTI

UK's Johnson warns of tougher measures in COVID-19 fight

London (AP): British Prime Minister Boris Johnson warned Thursday that authorities will have to impose tougher measures to combat the spread of COVID-19 and protect "the Christmas holidays as the government prepared to introduce stricter measures in northeast England.

Johnson's comments came amid reports that the government plans to impose a 10 p.m. curfew on pubs and restaurants in response to a recent jump in confirmed coronavirus cases. Local officials asked for more restrictions now to prevent a tighter lockdown later.

Johnson wrote in a piece published in The Sun newspaper that the only way to be certain the country can enjoy the winter holidays is to be tough now.

He said he wants to stop the surge, arrest the spike, stop the second hump of the dromedary, flatten the second hump. Over the past two days, opposition lawmakers had criticized Johnson's handling of the COVID-19 crisis and accused his government of lacking a cohesive plan to tackle a second wave of the pandemic. A shortage of testing capacity is a particular concern, with people around the country complaining they were unable to book appointments for tests or

Over the past two days, opposition lawmakers had criticised Johnson's handling of the COVID-19 crisis and accused his government of lacking a cohesive plan to tackle a second wave of the pandemic.

directed to testing centers far from their homes.

Widespread testing is seen as crucial to controlling the spread of the virus because it allows those who are infected to self-isolate while helping health officials identify hot spots and trace those who are infected. Daily infection rates have risen to levels not seen since late May, forcing the British government to impose limits on public gatherings.

Figures released late Wednesday showed 3,991 new confirmed cases during the previous 24 hours, up from 3,105 a day earlier.

Newcastle City Council leader Nick Forbes said the measures expected for the northeast of the country are seen as preventative. Forbes

told the BBC there is concern that the average age of people testing positive with the virus is going up.

Last week, 60% of the people that were being tested were between the ages of 18 and 30. That is now starting to reach into older age groups as well, he said. We know that when it starts to affect older people, that's when you start to get the hospitalisations and, sadly, also the mortality, too. Details about the new restrictions remain thin. Labour lawmakers representing northeast England called for further information.

Local leaders elsewhere in the country are also demanding government action and more testing to stave off a second wave of infections.

London Mayor Sadiq Khan called for action to counter chaos and confusion. He told London Assembly members that testing troubles were putting lives and livelihoods in jeopardy. We've known for months now that come the autumn demand for testing would increase, Khan said.

This crunch point should have been foreseen and then avoided. And unless the government massively ramps up testing capacity in London, we'll be back to where we started: trying to halt the spread of the virus in the dark."

Lawyer says Assange charged under contentious US law

London (AP): An American constitutional law expert said Thursday that the United States indicted WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange under an extraordinarily broad spying law that has been used in the past for politically motivated prosecutions.

Speaking during Assange's extradition hearing in London, human rights lawyer Carey Shenkman called the century-old Espionage Act one of the most contentious laws in the United States.

Shenkman, who co-wrote a book on the history of the act, testified as a witness for Assange, 49, who is fighting his extradition from the UK to the US.

US prosecutors indicted Assange on 17 espionage charges and one charge of computer misuse over WikiLeaks' publication of secret American military documents a decade ago. The charges carry a maximum sentence of 175 years in prison.

Assange's defense team argues that he is a journalist and entitled to First Amendment protections for publishing leaked documents that exposed US military wrongdoing in Iraq and Afghanistan.

His lawyers say he is facing a politically motivated prose-

cution that will stifle press freedom and put journalists around the world at risk.

Shenkman also said in a written witness statement that the administration of President Donald Trump has prosecuted disclosures of national security information more aggressively than any presidency in US history.

He said there were eight Espionage Act prosecutions of media sources during former President Barack Obama's two terms more than any previous administration and eight in less than four years under Trump. Shenkman said there has never been a successful prosecution of a publisher under the act, although there have been attempts, including over the 1971 Pentagon Papers leak of documents about the Vietnam War.

Leaker Daniel Ellsberg faced 12 Espionage Act charges and faced up to 115 years in prison, but the charges were dismissed in 1973 because of government misconduct against him.

Ellsberg, one of the most famous whistleblowers in living memory, came to Assange's defense on Wednesday, telling London's Central Criminal Court that he and the WikiLeaks founder had very comparable political opinions.

The case, which is being held under coronavirus social distancing restrictions, has been plagued by technical glitches as witnesses give evidence by video link. Shenkman testified with a cellphone pressed to his ear after audio problems.

Shenkman acknowledged during a testy cross-examination by Clair Dobbin, a lawyer for the US government, that he was part of a team that represented Assange several years ago.

He said it was not relevant to his analysis of the Espionage Act, and noted he was a very junior lawyer at the time.

In the food chain of lawyers, I was plankton, he said. "The US government says WikiLeaks put the lives of US informants in conflict zones and others at risk by publishing secret documents.

Defense witness John Sloboda, co-founder of the organization Iraq Body Count, said WikiLeaks was careful to ensure names were removed before publication. He disagreed with a suggestion by a prosecution lawyer that Assange took a cavalier attitude to redaction.

Sloboda, who was involved in the publication of the Iraq war papers in 2010, said they were over-redacted for caution.

Trend Slazer

Bhumi celebrates sisterhood

Actor BHUMI PEDNEKAR plans to watch her new film, *Dolly Kitty Aur Woh Chamakte Sitaare*, with her sister Samiksha Pednekar, and calls it a special sister screening.

"Samiksha and I will watch the film together once it releases this week. We watched the film together at Busan the first time and for me the film's journey literally started with my sister by my side. We had the best time together there. We've now made a plan to watch the film again and it will be our special sister screening!" she said.



'Completing the film, *The Wife* was a challenge during this pandemic as

we were shooting out of Mumbai. There the major concern was that if someone from the team contracts COVID, then we would need at least 21 days quarantine and keep the shoot on hold. The cycle would keep going if the number of cases increased.'

—Gurmeet Choudhary

Superstar RANVEER SINGH has been urging authorities to consider and declare Indian Sign Language (ISL) as the 23rd official language of India.



He recently signed a petition to aware people on this cause. Ranveer's independent record label InClnk, which he has formed with Navzar Eranee, also released sign language music videos.

For the actor's efforts, the deaf community in India wholeheartedly appreciated him by putting out a heartfelt thank you video for him.

Takes a lot to be a star: Ellie

ELLIE GOULDING is a globally popular singer, who won two BRIT Awards and has been nominated for Grammy and Golden Globe awards in the past. The road to stardom has not been easy for the singer, who admits not always having a huge amount of confidence.



"I wanted to be a singer when I was 14. I think I was always singing, playing the guitar, writing music and imagining myself performing. But I didn't have huge amount of confidence so that was something I had to build and work on. It takes a lot of work on yourself to eventually get used to that kind of attention and spotlight," Ellie said.

Tourism boards are hopeful that MICE events will be among the early segments to rebound and spur tourism globally, says SAKSHI SHARMA

History is evidence of how epidemics have had a direct and an immediate impact on airlines, travel aggregators and agencies. And undoubtedly, the travel and tourism sector is the first and worst hit due to the COVID-19 pandemic. These unprecedented times have forced the tourism boards to re-think radically. Nevertheless, their sight is fixed firmly on the future. Ideas are being floated as to how they will be able to function under such chaotic situations.

Recently, it was demonstrated that events can be held to everyone's satisfaction even under these conditions. Gradually, some progress is being made to hold some exchange events and economic activities as the travel restrictions are being relaxed and participant numbers are increasing.

Alexandra Kaszay, managing director, Vienna's The Hofburg Congress Centre, tells us that meeting one another and communicating face-to-face will come again. "The longing for that is huge, that's the message we're getting from most conversations. People will have to adjust to events with fewer guests on site and instead more participants joining in externally," she says.

In line with the safe and gradual resumption of events, the Singapore Tourism Board (STB) is starting to accept applications for organisers to pilot Meetings, Incentives, Conventions and Exhibitions (MICE) events of up to 250 attendees from October 1. There will be pilot events taking place under this arrangement such as the Singapore International Energy Week (SIEW) Conference, in October.

The move takes into account the importance of the MICE sector and its interest in the business events, and, in turn, a ray of hope for a fresh beginning of travel. This resumption will help MICE retain critical capabilities, while safeguarding jobs and livelihood in the industry and other related sectors. It is a major part of the tourism ecosystem and that of the economy as a whole, as it supports numerous ancillary businesses, thus, contributing to jobs and growth.



Opening up bidding processes for MICE now will help build liquidity across the travel supply chain. It can, hence, spur tourism in India and at large.

Raymond LIM, area director, India & South Asia, STB, says, "Overall, visitor arrivals from India to Singapore have seen good growth in the past few years. This can be attributed to the increased air connectivity between Singapore and India. There is a healthy flow of business travel at both sides due to the well-connected economic exchanges. The leisure destination position that Singapore enjoys among the Indian consumers are also other reasons why it is one of the top MICE source markets for Singapore, particularly for meeting and incentive travel. This is a key sector with quality visitors providing high tourism yield."

He adds, "The evolved Indian MICE traveller tends to seek out more unique experiences. In this aspect, we are home to a diverse range of events and MICE venues, including unconventional destinations, which can provide creative solutions for event owners. Beyond the meeting room, business travellers and delegates can enjoy a wide range of unique and interactive leisure experiences."

Neliswa Nkani, hub head — MEISEA,



South African Tourism, believes that MICE is soon going to be consumer-centric. She says, "Companies and destinations will need to incentivise both corporates and suppliers. We have collaborated with policy-makers, industry leaders and media to educate about travel trade." According to organisations like

UNWTO, WTTC and others, MICE events have wider implications for destinations as wherever events go wider, tourism activities follow attracting a lot more leisure tourists in the ensuing months and years. Prashant Chaudhary, Representative of Russian Union of Travel Industry in India believes that Russian

Tourism will emerge stronger from the COVID-crisis and these events will lead the way. "It has already begun," says he.

It is noteworthy that the country recently hosted one of the leisure shows ODYKH in its original physical format in Moscow. Prashant shares, "The MICE sector of tourism is being opened. It impacted the larger domestic, inbound and outbound of the tourism markets. Russian charter flights are already seeking permissions and landing slots to Goa, probably the most popular destination for Russians in India."

Arzan Khambatta, head, Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO) India, tells us that the convention and exhibition industry has been one of the fastest-growing emerging sectors in the recent years. "Rich cultural background and tourism resources help us meet the needs of different events," he says.

Well, given the current situation, COVID-19 has definitely impacted the industry in many ways. But the tourism boards are hopeful that MICE will be among the early segments to rebound and spur tourism globally. In the coming months, they plan to work extensively with MICE agents and corporates in India to facilitate arrivals once travel restrictions are lifted completely.



KUSHAN MITRA



A CLASS APART

The Kia Sonet blows the competition out of the water. No, really it does!



In a chat with Kia Motor's chief designer Karim Habib at the Auto Expo, he spoke about the Kia Sonet whose concept had just been unveiled at the show. While the Sonet retained the brand's signature and smart 'Tiger Nose' grille design, Habib indicated that it had been inspired by a baby elephant for the Sonet's design. After spending a day with the new car from the Korean carmaker, let me assure you of two things. One, it is an elephant because it is going to trample the competition. Two, it certainly doesn't handle like an elephant on the roads.

Why? Because it is saying a lot when you compare a car, whose highest spec variants would cost around 12 lakh rupees to a luxury car that costs four times as much. But in terms of trim and cabin refinement, particularly on the GT-line cars, the Sonet is unbelievably good. You really have to start nitpicking to find a flaw in the cabin of the Sonet. You could argue that it is a bit busy and that the plastic on the bezel of the screen is a bit shiny, but overall in terms of how nice the Sonet feels inside, it really blows the competition away. Possibly the Hyundai Venue, the Sonet's mechanical brother from another mother can face up to it because the engine and gearboxes are the same. But I prefer the Sonet's cabin. Over here, there is a case to be made that the vehicle that is launched later has superior interiors, I feel the Creta is better than the Seltos for example. But as far as sub-compact SUV-design cars go, the Sonet leads the pack.

Some say that I can prattle on about plastics, the metal feel, the quality of the infotainment system and the seats more than I do about the extreme speeds and handling characteristics of cars. But the Sonet will for 99 per cent of owners be a daily commuter. While you might want your daily commuter to be able to go very fast and stick to a corner like industrial glue, most importantly, you want it to be comfortable. After spending four hours driving around Delhi and Gurugram, the Sonet's cabin is one that I really would not mind being stuck in. Given its sub-four meter length, it isn't the most spacious car but has more space than most competitors.

Another aspect of this car where it literally beats the competition is in its choice of kit, starting with a huge high-quality 26-centimetre widescreen. With Apple Play enabled, you can use the split screen mode to get other bits of information. On Android Auto, there is an option to use the entire screen. You do not get such screens in cars that cost 50 lakh and you do not get a branded sound system as well unless you are paying 60-70 lakh. The GTX+

specification of the Sonet doesn't just have wireless charger, ventilated seats and a panoramic sunroof but also a BOSE sound system. Then there is an air purifier that Kia claims has a virus shield. You sit inside and you really get amazed at just the level of kit you get on the Sonet. Maybe the top-spec cars will cost a lot, but even if they touch 15 lakh, it is impossible to argue that they are not good value.

But how is it to drive? Quite nice actually! I drove the 1-litre 120PS turbocharged petrol with the intelligent manual transmission and well, my thoughts on the IMT aside, I'm still not quite used to the concept of a clutchless manual. The engine did its job well and once you do figure out the IMT, you realise that the ability to control the torque makes a difference to an AMT gearbox car. This turbo petrol engine puts the Sonet (and venue) at the top of the performance charts for sub 4-metre cars, and it comes with the IMT as well as a seven-speed Dual-Clutch automatic. The Sonet also comes with a naturally aspirated 83PS 1.2 petrol engine available with a five-speed manual transmission as well as a 1.5 CRDi diesel in two power levels, 100PS for the six-speed manual and 115PS for the six-speed automatic. I also got to drive the diesel automatic, but let us get to that later.

The 120PS turbo engine is plenty fast and once you get the hang of it, that is how to ride the turbocharger. It can be extremely great fun to drive since it is a small and relatively light car. Also,

yes, it does feel slightly floaty around the corners at speed. Genuinely, I can't wait for the turbo engines in something like a Hyundai i20, but it is fun on the Sonet. Coming back to the IMT, once you start getting the hang of the car, you can have some fun if you know nice empty stretches of tarmac, but it will still take me some time to really get to grips with the fact that while my left hand is working my left foot isn't. The diesel automatic with the 115PS engine also feels nice to drive, and the larger engine block in the front does give the front slightly more bite. While you can have fun and go fast, the Sonet is not a racer but it is a great, comfortable ride.

Toyota made some noises about not expanding in the Indian market earlier this week. While the Innova and Fortuner have done very well in the Indian market thanks to their bulletproof reliability and superb resale value, the world's largest carmaker has failed to crack the meat of the market. The Etios Liva was a cop-out and while the Etios sedan was a good reliable car and became very popular with taxi drivers, it got caught out by the four-metre rule. To blame high taxes when your product strategy failed is not exactly fair because you see the Hyundai-Kia group. Both carmakers, neither of them 'well-known' in India when they came, have cracked the market. Toyota executives in India can buy a Kia Sonet and see for themselves where they went wrong in India. The 6,500 plus orders it got on the first day, well those guys bet on a winner before they knew just how good it would be.



A Golf in all but name

It is very hard to make a case for the Volkswagen T-Roc but it is a really nice car

There is a myth out there, actually a partial fallacy, that it was the Beetle that created the colossus of German manufacturing, the Volkswagen Group. Yes, the Beetle laid the foundations for the post-World War II creation of the German carmaker. Some of us know the story really well, that it was British Army engineering corps officer Ivan Hirst, who realised that the British invasion force needed vehicles to move about. He also felt the need to employ the local population. After seeing the production die and tooling at Wolfsburg, he put together a production for the car we know, and some love, as the Beetle. Millions were produced in post-War Germany. In the 60s, along with the Volkswagen Van, the Beetle became a symbol of counterculture in the United States. Now, Germany and even the United States moved on from the Beetle by the 70s but the car remained a best-seller in Mexico through the 90s. Over 21 million were produced giving birth to a popular quiz question of the Beetle being the most sold car in the world.

First, we need to correct that fallacy. If a single brand is considered, it is the Toyota Corolla with over 44 million sold that is the most sold single car brand of all time. Second, a lot of the Beetle's spectacular numbers were thanks to its popularity in Brazil and Mexico. It was not the Beetle that created the Volkswagen hegemony that we know and we love today, the corporate overlords of Audi, Bentley, Bugatti, Ducati, Lamborghini, MAN, Porsche, SEAT, Scania and Skoda. But the car that gave it the financial wherewithal to create such an empire was the Golf. And it is the Golf, which through its eight generations, the latest being launched last year, that is the biggest selling Volkswagen of all time with 35 million sold until last year.

The Golf is the car that formed the basis of so many other Volkswagen cars as the carmaker moved to its platform architecture. Even the new MQB architecture that the Group bases its small and mid-sized cars on was essentially designed for the Golf. Many Volkswagen fans I know in India have always

been disappointed that Volkswagen India never brought the Golf into the country. Yes, there was the Jetta, the sedan based on the Golf, a few variants of the new Beetle that was the Golf in a dress as well as other models based on the Golf from Audi and Skoda. But the Golf itself as well as the legendary Golf GTI hot hatchback never made it to India even as an import.

But now we have the Volkswagen T-Roc, a twenty lakh crossover-y car from the German carmaker. Frankly, the T-Roc is the purest expression of the Golf to have ever come to India. While it is nicely kitted out, with twin-tone upholstery and a virtual cockpit display, if you have been in a Golf in the recent past, you know you are somewhere familiar. When you would see the sticker price of the T-Roc, you would understand why Volkswagen never brought the Golf to India. With an ex-showroom price just under twenty lakh, it is very difficult to make a use-case for this car, no matter how nice it is to drive. While I should write another column on Volkswagen India's dramatic shift away from Diesels — they say it is to do with the government policy. Although I believe it is more of a perception thing since Dieselgate became equated with Volkswagen, the 150PS 1.5TSI petrol engine on the T-Roc is quite smooth particularly mated to the seven-speed DSG gearbox on the car.

Frankly, if you do not need the extra rear space afforded by the likes of the Creta and Seltos, say if you are single or a young couple, the T-Roc has more than enough boot space to carry the luggage for a week-long getaway and drives way nicer than the competition. The interior feel with its usage of light and dark tones is bright and the cabin genuinely feels cheerful. If it is the Golf you have been waiting for, this is as close to one you will get in India for now. I believe the T-Roc will have limited sales but serves a statement. If the forthcoming Taigun in 2021 is built and drives as well as the T-Roc, I will finally believe that the Skoda-Volkswagen group will have a winner on their hands.

Disinfect most-touched spots, stay aware on how to protect yourselves and others around, follow physical distancing, wash hands and sanitise frequently, wear masks, step out only when necessary — these are some of the norms which became mandatory in 2020. However, no matter how much precautions we take at our end, there are certain external contacts which can't be avoided. For example, packaged food products, given the fact that footfalls at restaurants have seen a sharp dip and online deliveries are becoming the new and more convenient dine-out. And when the mainstream selling channel went down, delivery did become the only option for food outlets to work on their businesses. And to survive in this competitive market, packaging is one thing food industry has been focussing upon with more creative ideas to build the trust of consumer.

And undeniably, the world of packaging has seen a prominent change. Following the best of safety measures, packaging food properly has become the most important segment in the food industry. However, the fear still lingers that the Coronavirus could reach our homes through home deliveries.

Well, a lack of complete awareness can be an issue here. Recently, a delivery boy tested positive in Delhi, who had delivered food packages to around 70 households. However, the families did not report any cases. It proved how the virus cannot be transferred through food unless one comes directly in contact with an infected person. As the World Health Organisation (WHO), it is highly unlikely that the virus can be transmitted through food.

Lack of this knowledge has impacted several businesses, making it tougher for the industry to survive. While this certainly came as big relief for the industry but it needed to reassure customers of the same. And hence, the process of packaging has become very important. The factors that are given utmost importance are:

PERSONAL HYGIENE

Food handlers' personal hygiene is critical to keep food safe for which hygiene measures like washing hands with soap or alcohol-based sanitisers, monitoring of body temperatures are being regularised. Workers are equipped with masks and gloves. Sanitisation norms are being stressed upon in kitchens and grocery stores strictly. It's made sure that cooked food is not touched by bare hands. Right usage and discarding of PPE is being implemented strictly to ensure the safety of food packages. After the food is put into the container, all risks of attracting the virus are eliminated. The packet is sanitised and then put in the carry bag, which is also sanitised.

The cooked food and groceries are packed in an extra outer bag apart from the primary carry bag, which contains the items to add another layer of protection as and when they are dispatched. The delivery personnel's temperature is being monitored regularly as a key measure. Downloading Arogya Setu app and marking the personnel green is helping keep a



IT'S A PACK-UP!

While home deliveries may have seen a surge due to dine-ins seeing sharp dips. However, Amit Bagga points out that it's also due to how innovative and safer food packaging methods won over the trust of consumers



better track.

The order payment is now preferably not collected via cash on delivery but is online or prepaid. As the delivery personnel reaches a customer's home, it is mandated that there will be no close contact.

Many food delivery apps have also enabled an option for people to choose if they want their package to be left at their doorstep to avoid any contact with the delivery boy. If



they don't choose it, he will have to maintain a healthy seven meter distance. The customers are also given instructions on how to open a package.

This is a very important piece of infor-

mation as it means building consumer faith to accept packaging without any doubts or fear. The customers are informed that their package has reached their doorstep and are advised to use disposable gloves while receiving it. The outer packaging to be discarded right outside. The customer should wear the gloves rightly and discard them after taking the cooked food out of the inner packaging and then sanitise hands to avoid any cross-contamination. It is important to reheat the food, which results in complete elimination of the risk to attract the virus.

Through these steps, customers are being educated. Any packaging would fail if these simple measures were not adopted to build customer trust back.

This is how restaurants and grocery store brands are now changing their positioning and getting more aligned towards safer food packaging and delivery. Social media has become the main channel of this communication. Perception and misinformation is changing the consumer behaviour but soon elimination of the virus transmission fear from packaging will bring a revolution in packaging and a much-needed positive change in the industry.

LOOK AND FEEL

The focus is also on the nice, good-looking appearance of the packaging so that it provides a positive feel to the customer.

TASTE AND TEXTURE

For restaurants, the material used to prepare food that can retain a dish's taste and texture is equally important. A customer that's used to experience food at a dine-in now has to be given closest experience on delivery. A good and safe packaging will all lose their marks if the food doesn't taste well.

ECO-FRIENDLY PACKAGING

One-time use and Coronavirus-resistant packaging have become the new essentials. While over the last few years, eco-friendly has been the focus in packaging but today, the one-time use packaging is contradicting this concept of sustainability. So keeping this in mind, new eco-friendly, bamboo paper, non-toxic packaging containers are being worked upon. Customers are becoming more aware than before about anything that impacts immunity or raises health and environmental concerns.

For insatnce, Maharashtra has already banned packaging, which wasn't eco-friendly. The new packaging material contain 51 microns, the ideal quantity. For safety, glass jars for condiments are also helpful as they're eco-friendly, washable and can be brought to use in homes again. And remember, *mitti-handis* (mud containers)?

Thus, while the packaging industry has been evolving, material related to packaging are also finding a new face. Even a few healthcare companies are coming up with sanitisers specifically to be sprayed on delivery packages to ensure the disinfection of the packaged material. Well, one could say, packaging is only getting better!

(The author is co-founder, Daryaganj.)

R E C I P E S

DRIED ROSE SLAB WITH NUTTY DELIGHT

WHAT YOU NEED

- Dried fig, chopped: 1/2 cup
- Dates, chopped: 1 cup
- Mamra almonds: 1/3 cup
- Cashew nuts: 1/3 cup
- Walnuts: 1/3 cup
- Pistachios: 1/3 cup
- Raisins: 1/3 cup
- Gulkind: 2 tbsp
- Nutmeg powder: 1/4 tsp
- Desi ghee: 2 tbsp
- Rose jam: 2 tbsp
- Fennel powder: 1/4 sp
- Cardmom powder: 1/4 cup
- Rose water: 1/2 cup
- Dried rose petals: 1 cup

METHOD

- To prepare the nutty delight, soak the chopped figs in warm water for four hours, strain water and pat dry well.
- Granulate figs along with the dates and raisins to smooth paste with the help of rose water.
- Chop mamra almonds, cashewnuts, walnut and

pistachios.

- Heat desi ghee in a heavy bottomed pan, add gulkind stir well and saute for a minute.
- Add chopped dates, nut mixture, nutmeg powder, rose water, fig mixture and stir to combine well.
- Cook for a couple of minutes.
- In a bowl, mix rose jam, fennel powder and cardamom powder.
- Take a tray with a height of four inches, grease it with desi ghee and rose jam mixture.

- Sprinkle dried rose over it and pour nutty delight mixture into the tray.
- Level it well with a spatula.
- On the top side of nutty delight, again grease some desi ghee and a thin layer of rose jam mixture generously sprinkle with dried rose petals and allow it to get set.
- Once set, spray desi ghee on knife and cut neatly into slabs.

Courtesy: Saffron Gourmet Food.



TANDOORI CHICKEN

WHAT YOU NEED

- Chicken (whole): 2
- Hung yoghurt: 1 kg
- Kashmiri red chilli powder: 80 gm
- Salt to taste
- Garam masala: 15 gm
- Cumin powder: 5 gm
- Lemon juice: 5 ml
- Ginger garlic paste: 20 gm
- Kebab masala to taste

METHOD

- Marinate the chicken with salt, ginger garlic paste, red chilli powder, beaten curd, cumin powder, and garam masala.
- Keep aside for one hour.
- Place on seekh and cook till done.
- Take out the chicken from the seekh and sprinkle with kebab masala and lemon juice.
- Serve hot.

Courtesy: Zoheb Ali Qureshi, Executive Chef, Cross Border Kitchens.

COTTAGE CHEES WALNUT CAPRESE TOAST

WHAT YOU NEED

- Walnuts, chopped: 1/2 cup
- Whole-grain toast: 4
- Cottage cheese: 1/3 cup
- Multi-coloured cherry tomatoes, halved: 1 cup
- Thinly-sliced basil: 1 tbsp
- Freshly-ground black pepper to taste
- Balsamic syrup: 1 tbsp

METHOD

- Pre-heat oven to 180

degree C and arrange walnuts evenly on a small baking sheet.

- Bake for eight to 10 minutes.
- Check frequently until toasted.
- Spread cottage cheese evenly over each slice of toast.
- Layer with tomatoes, roasted walnuts, fresh basil, black pepper, and a drizzle of balsamic syrup.
- Serve and enjoy.

Courtesy: Chef Sabyasachi Gorai.



CHEESY VADA PAV

WHAT YOU NEED

- Pav/bread: 2
- Butter: 2 tbsp
- Paneer: 1/2 cup
- Potato: 1/8 cup
- Jeera powder: 1 tbsp
- Britannia Cheese slice
- Salt to taste
- Chilli powder: 1 tbsp
- Coriander powder: 1 tbsp
- Chaat masala: 1
- Green chilli: 1 tbsp
- Fresh coriander: 1 tbsp
- Oil for frying
- Besan
- Mint chutney
- Britannia cheese cubes

METHOD

- In a mixing bowl, add paneer, potato, all the powders, green chillies and coriander, and mix well.
- Place the cheese cubes inside the patty.

- In a bowl, add besan, all the podwers to prepare the batter.
- Dip the patty in the batter. Then dip the patty in the oil and fry till it turns golden brown.
- Assemble the vada pav.
- On the bun, spread mint chutney, place the patty and then the cheese slice.
- Serve with ketchup/tomato sauce.

Courtesy: Britannia Cheese Starchef.



MAXWELL CAREY OZ TO SERIES WIN



Glenn Maxwell and Alex Carey pose with Royal London ODI series trophy after the duo helped Australia win third game AP

AP ■ MANCHESTER
Glenn Maxwell and Alex Carey struck centuries in a 212-run stand to help Australia reach a record target of 303 at Old Trafford with two balls remaining and secure a ODI series win over England.

Mitchell Starc started the third and deciding game on Wednesday by taking wickets from the first two balls of the match, and ended it by sweeping a four for the winning runs under lights as the Australians consigned England to its first loss in a bilateral ODI series at home since 2015.

It was a record ODI chase at the Manchester venue — bettering England's 286-4 against New Zealand in 1986 in a 60-over match — and gave Australia a famous series win over the world champions to take back Down Under from their white-ball tour that also included a 2-1 loss in a T20 series.

Replaying to 302-7, Australia slumped to 73-5 only for Carey

and Maxwell to produce Australia's highest sixth-wicket partnership in ODIs and turn the tide. While Carey was the steadier of the pair with his 106 off 114 balls, Maxwell delivered some trademark big hits — he had seven sixes, all over the short boundary on one side of the ground — for his 90-ball 108.

"Maxy is in the team to do a specific role, and that's to be able to take the game away from opposition but also be that guy to counterattack and swing momentum in changing rooms," Australia captain Aaron Finch said.

"What makes him so damaging is he can play all around the ground. I don't think there're many bowlers in the world that can trouble him when he's having one of those days. The way he navigated that innings and took it deeper and deeper... He did that perfectly."

Maxwell eventually fell with 15 balls left and Australia needed 14 off the last two overs. Carey couldn't see the tourists

home, either, departing for 106 to a fabulous diving catch by Mark Wood off the seventh-to-last ball.

"It probably wasn't the ideal situation when I came in but being the last batter, I suppose I had a bit of license to go for it right from the start," Maxwell told Sky Sports.

"We thought if we could take it as deep as we could, myself and Alex, we might be a chance at the back end."

Starc entered, with Australia needing 10 off the last over bowled by legspinner Adil Rashid, and smashed his first

ball down the ground for six. After two singles, Starc swept Rashid round the corner and the ball sped to the boundary rope, sealing a three-wicket win and sparking cheers from his teammates on the balcony.

England captain Eoin Morgan said Australia were "too good for us", adding: "To lose two wickets for no runs and then post over 300 is a huge positive for us. I think Jonny Bairstow was outstanding today. Carey and Maxwell played outstandingly well."

Playing without Steve Smith for the third straight game this series after the star batsman failed to recover from a knock to the head, the Aussies looked in big trouble after Marnus Labuschagne's sloppy run-out left them five down, with just bowlers to follow Maxwell.

England will regret a no-ball by Archer — his first in ODI cricket — off which he had Carey caught at third man when on 9. Wicketkeeper Jos Buttler also dropped a tough chance off a nick by Maxwell when 44.

"Small opportunities that we might have taken advantage of might have changed the game," Morgan said, "but when you've been beaten by a better side, you have to put your hand up."

It was England's only series loss of its international summer — during which all of its games have been played in a bio-secure bubble without fans — after taking on the West Indies, Ireland, Pakistan and Australia in various formats.

Brief scores: England 302/7 (Jonny Bairstow 112, Sam Billings 57; Adam Zampa 3/51) lose to Australia 305/7

'We had nothing to lose'

Manchester: Australia's Glenn Maxwell said "we had nothing to lose" after his century helped seal a dramatic ODI series win over world champions England on Wednesday.

Asked what he was feeling as he walked out to bat,

Maxwell said: "I was probably feeling we had nothing much to lose. I suppose coming in at 70/5, it is probably hit or bust at that stage."

"If you lose another wicket in the next five or 10 overs it is pretty hard to expect the

36-hour quarantine for Eng, Aus players

New Delhi: The Indian Premier League franchises will be heaving a sigh of relief as all the 21 Australian and English players arriving to the UAE from the United Kingdom will have to undergo just 36 hours of quarantine instead of the earlier prescribed six days.

All the franchises which have English and Australian players arriving after the white ball series in the UK had appealed for reducing the quarantine period and the BCCI under Sourav Ganguly's leadership has been able to successfully sort the issue out with local authorities in the UAE.

"Yes, I can confirm that all the English and Australian players have to now undergo 36-hour quarantine instead of six days. The matter has been sorted and most of the teams will now have their big stars available from the first game itself," a senior IPL functionary privy to development told PTI.

The likes of Steve Smith, David Warner, Jofra Archer, Jos Buttler will arrive in the UAE late on Thursday night (UAE time) and on arrival will undergo RT-PCR test for Covid-19.

"The BCCI did a great job in reducing the quarantine period to 36 hours. This means teams like Chennai Super Kings (Josh Hazlewood and Tom Curran), Rajasthan Royals (Smith, Buttler, Archer) will have all their players available from their first game. Ditto for Kings XI Punjab that has Glenn Maxwell in its roster and Delhi Capitals that has Alex Carry," a franchise official said. PTI

(Glenn Maxwell 108, Alex Carey 106; Chris Woakes 2/46) by three wickets.

MI will miss Malinga's experience: Rohit

PTI ■ ABU DHABI

Mumbai Indians captain Rohit Sharma on Thursday conceded that "incomparable" Sri Lankan pace legend Lasith Malinga, who has opted out of this year's IPL, will be severely missed by his defending champion team given his "unbelievable" past performances.

The 37-year-old Malinga, who is IPL's highest wicket-taker with 170 scalps to his credit, has pulled out citing personal reasons in a major blow to the four-time champions.

"I don't think it is easy to come and fill his boots. He has been a match-winner for Mumbai. I have said it many times, whenever we sort of find ourselves in trouble, Malinga was the one to bail us out from that," Rohit said in a pre-season online press conference.

"His experience will be missed, what he did with MI is unbelievable and it is unfortunate that he is not a part of the team this year."

"We have got likes — (James) Pattinson, Dhawal Kulkarni, Mohsin (Khan) and these are the names that we are looking to replace Malinga with. But obviously what Malinga did for Mumbai, it is not just comparable," he added.

Talking about his own role, Rohit said he will continue to open.

"I opened the entire tournament last year and I will continue to do that. Again I keep all the options open, whatever the team wants, happy to do that."

"Even when I play for India, message from my side to the management has always been the same 'do not close any doors' keep all the options open and I will do the same here as well," he said.

India's white-ball vice-captain also felt that correct reading of conditions would be crucial to his team's fortunes. "The challenge for us will be



Rohit Sharma on Thursday conceded that "incomparable" Sri Lankan pace legend Lasith Malinga, who has opted out of this year's IPL, will be severely missed by his defending champion team given his "unbelievable" past performances.

played here," Rohit said. "I think mentally it is about going out there and understanding what the pitch is doing, and based on that, you need to plan your game — whether it is your batting or bowling. So we have had a good chat around the group about that," he elaborated.

Talking about the opening match against the Chennai Super Kings, he said Mumbai is ready for the challenge.

"CSK are probably one of the successful IPL teams and you can't take them for granted... They will come out all guns blazing. None of us have played cricket for months now, so obviously everybody wants to start on a high."

"So, we will be expecting a great contest between the two and we need to focus on what we need to do as team and all our bases are covered," Rohit signed off.

Need to be mindful of Hardik's workload: Jayawardene

Abu Dhabi: Monitoring comeback man Hardik Pandya's workload is paramount for Mumbai Indians coach Mahela Jayawardene as he intends to groom a "few more finishers" for the upcoming edition of IPL.

Hardik will play his first game in a year on Saturday having undergone back surgery for stress fracture last year.

"Hardik is coming back from an injury. So we will have to be mindful of that but he is looking very good in the nets. Both the players (Pandya brothers) have been fantastic for MI over the last three or four years. It brings a lot of energy to the group," Jayawardene said during

MI's virtual media conference. The Sri Lankan legend was asked whether Hardik will again be assigned the finisher's job.

"We have used him (Hardik) in different roles in the past and we will look into that. We will have quite a number of other players who can fit into that role as well, so whenever the opportunity is there we ask anyone to finish the game off," said the former Sri Lanka captain.

"It doesn't just fall on Hardik but it is one of his responsibilities, so we want to try and challenge players in different ways in this camp, so we will continue to do that," he said. PTI



Nitish hopes to learn from Morgan's leadership qualities

PTI ■ ABU DHABI

Kolkata Knight Riders left-handed batsman Nitish Rana is excited to play alongside Eoin Morgan and hopes that he will imbibe some of reigning World Cup-winning skipper's leadership qualities.

The England limited-overs skipper was bought at the auction for ₹5.25 crore as he's set to reunite with the franchise after his stint from 2011-2013.

The 34-year-old will be joining the side after leading England to their maiden World Cup glory in 2019 and Rana, who led Delhi to domestic level, is excited.

"I hope I also have that sort of leadership quality so that it helps in my domestic team and I grow as a player," Rana said in a media interaction.

"He is one such rare left-handed batsman who dominates white ball cricket. He's a World Cup-winning captain of a successful country. I'm looking forward to learning many things from him."

On the slow pitches in the UAE, a pace-heavy KKR line-up will have

limited spin resources in Sunil Narine and Kuldeep Yadav.

Rana, who bowls part-time offspin, is also looking forward to get some more overs under his belt this time.

"Bowling is not a new thing to me. I've been bowling in domestic cricket. It's good that spinners will get an advantage here so that I also will get some grip. I've improved as a player and a bowler. Hope I get more overs and help the team."

The left-hander said he does not have a fixed batting slot and is ready to serve the team at any position. "I will bat as per team demand. I don't have a fixed batting slot. I'm available to serve the team at any spot."

Having served long injury lay-offs respectively, the 2018 U-19 World Cup winning duo of Kamlesh Nagarkoti and Shivam Mavi are back in full throttle, Rana said.

"Nagarkoti was unfortunate to be injured for two years. He's back strong. But this time, both of them are back in full rhythm and clocking 140kph-plus consistently. It will be challenging for any batsman. I hope they will do well," he added.

Virat not fazed by empty stands at IPL

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Royal Challengers Bangalore skipper Virat Kohli on Thursday said his teammates have become "acceptive" of living in the IPL bio-bubble and there is no "desperation" for a change of environment as they approach the tournament proper from September 19.

RCB landed in Dubai on August 21 and have been training for more than two weeks, including some intra-squad practice games.

"To be honest we have become more acceptive of the situation around us. Acceptance is the biggest change I have experienced (since day 1 here)," said Kohli in a virtual media conference organised to honour citizens who have become "COVID Heroes" amid the pandemic.

"When we spoke of the bio-bubble for the first time, we discussed about appreciating the things we have and the situation. All of us have become very relaxed in that environment."

It will be the first time that IPL matches will be held in the absence of a packed crowd but Kohli said it is the need of the hour.

"All of us have thought about it (initially) and it would be a strange feeling and I won't deny that. But the feeling has changed little bit after the training sessions and practices games," he said.

"At the end of the day

you just need to understand why you started playing the game, you started playing for the love of it. Crowds are main part of the game but that is not what you play for."

"I can only say one thing that our intensity levels will not drop, I can assure you. There is a larger reason why all this is happening."

Kohli was joined by teammates Parthiv Patel and the young Devdutt Padikal in the interaction.

"It has sunk in (staying in bio-bubble). We did not put saliva on the ball during practice games and are taking care of ourself. It is very important to be safe,"



Virat Kohli on Thursday said his teammates have become "acceptive" of living in the IPL bio-bubble and there is no "desperation" for a change of environment as they approach the tournament proper from September 19.

CA working in tandem with Royals over Smith's concussion

PTI ■ DUBAI

Crickets Australia on Thursday revealed that Steve Smith is following "concussion protocols" which are crucial for his return to cricket in the IPL and asserted that it is "not willing" to compromise with the fitness of the Rajasthan Royals skipper.

CA said it is working in tandem with RR to ensure his smooth return to competitive action after missing the entire England ODI

series due to the concussion suffered during training.

"Crickets Australia has strict protocols when it comes to head impacts and concussions and, as we've seen over the last 12 months, we're not willing to compromise on those," CA's head of sports science Alex Kountouris said in a statement.

"Steve is making progress and working with our medical team through the concussion protocols required to return to play," he added.

RCB to honour Covid heroes by wearing tribute jersey

New Delhi: Royal Challengers Bangalore players will sport the jerseys with the "My COVID Heroes" written on them all through the IPL to pay tribute to all those on the frontline in the battle against the pandemic.

The slogan honouring the "COVID Heroes" will be printed on the back of the playing as well as the training jerseys, the team announced on Thursday. PNS

said Patel. "Honestly, it is my third year with the team, I have never seen this kind of environment before in my career. Everyone is smiling and that is what is important," he added.

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Draxler wins for PSG at the death

AP ■ PARIS

Julian Draxler's header deep into stoppage time gave Paris Saint-Germain a 1-0 home win against Metz and spared the defending champion a fourth straight match without scoring.

After losing the Champions League final 1-0 to Bayern Munich last month, PSG opened its league campaign with a 1-0 defeat at Lens followed by a 1-0 loss at home to Marseille on Sunday in which three PSG players were sent off.

PSG finished this game with nine men after center half Abdou Diallo was red carded for a second yellow midway through the second half and left back Juan Bernat limped off injured near the end.

After missing a host of chances, another embarrassing setback looked likely for PSG until Metz goalkeeper Alexandre Oukidja failed to properly clear Angel Di Maria's cross from the left.



Rafael Nadal returns the ball to Pablo Carreno Busta during their second round match, at the Italian Open tournament AP

half, but we missed all of our good chances," Tuchel said.

Key midfielder Marco Verratti was sidelined with a minor injury, while striker Kylian Mbappé was also absent as he continues his recovery from the coronavirus. Mbappé could return for Sunday's difficult match away to coach Patrick Vieira's Nice.

PSG was also missing Neymar, left back Layvin Kurzawa and midfielder Leandro Paredes against Metz. They were suspended after being sent off following a stoppage-time brawl against Marseille. Neymar claims he was racially abused during the game by Marseille defender Alvaro González.

But the league's disciplinary commission said on Wednesday night that so far there is not enough evidence to summon the players for a hearing.

The disciplinary commission suspended Kurzawa for six games, while Neymar and Paredes each got a three-game ban plus one game suspended.



Rafael Nadal returns the ball to Pablo Carreno Busta during their second round match, at the Italian Open tournament AP

SINGLES

INDIA DROP TO 109 IN FIFA RANKINGS

Zurich: The Indian men's football team has dropped by one place and are placed at the 109th position in the latest FIFA rankings. India have 1187 points and have not lost or gained any since the last update which took place in July. Meanwhile, Belgium remain at the summit ahead of France and Brazil, while England continue to occupy fourth place. Portugal (5th,+2) have moved into the top five thanks to victories over Croatia (8th,-2) and Sweden (18th,-1).

LEEDS, SOUTHAMPTON ELIMINATED IN CUP

London: Premier League teams Leeds and Southampton lost to lower-tier opposition in the second round of the League Cup. While a second-stranded Leeds team lost a penalty shootout 9-8 to third-tier Hull after a 1-1 draw in regulation, Southampton fielded a full-strength lineup but still lost 2-0 at home to second-tier Brentford. Everton eased past fourth-tier Salford 3-0 thanks to goals by Michael Keane, Gyfi Sigurdsson and Moise Kean, while Aleksandar Mitrovic scored Fulham's goal in a 1-0 win at Ipswich.

FANS BARRED FROM BUNDESLIGA OPENER

Munich: Fans will not be allowed into the stadium when Bayern Munich hosts the opening game of the Bundesliga season because of a local spike in coronavirus cases, the mayor of Munich said on Thursday. But games in other cities scheduled to proceed with fans on Saturday and Sunday.

HARIKRISHNA SLIPS WITH 2 LOSSES

Chennai: Indian Grandmaster P Harikrishna slipped to fifth spot from a share of lead after a win-less day at the Saint Louis Rapid and Blitz online chess tourney, where he lost to Ian Nepomniachtchi and world number one Magnus Carlsen. Harikrishna, who shared the lead with Lev Aronian after three rounds, lost the fourth round of the Rapid event to Nepomniachtchi, then drew with Armenian Aronian before losing the sixth to Carlsen.

BAIRSTOW ENTERS TOP-10 IN ODI RANKINGS

Dubai: Englishman Jonny Bairstow broke into the top-10 following a string of good performances against Australia. Bairstow topped the series aggregate with 196 runs to re-enter the top 10. The previous best for him was ninth position in October 2018. Agencies

Messi nets 2 in friendly win

AP ■ BARCELONA

Lionel Messi scored his first goals of Barcelona's pre-season as coach Ronald Koeman left Luis Suárez and Arturo Vidal off his team for a second friendly match.

Messi netted two goals and set up one more in a 3-1 victory over second-tier Girona, Barcelona's second training match since Koeman took over as coach.

The goals were also Messi's first since his failed attempt to leave the club this offseason.

Barcelona posted a photo on Twitter of Messi and Koeman clapping hands when the star forward was substituted along with most of his teammates with half an hour to go. It

seemed meant to deliver a message of unity between the player and manager amid one of the most tumultuous periods in the club's recent history.

Girona offered little resistance to Barcelona's attack, formed by new signing Francisco Trincao, Philippe Coutinho, Antoine Griezmann and Messi.

Messi's perfectly placed pass sent Trincao clear for the Portugal forward to square the ball to Coutinho, who only had to scoop in the 20th-minute opener. Messi doubled the lead in the 45th with a shot from outside the area that went in off the upright.

Samuel Saiz got Girona on the scoreboard after half-time before Messi got his brace with a shot that took a deflection off a defender to fool the Girona goalkeeper.



Liverpool edged closer to landing the services of their coveted asset as Bayern Munich officials on Thursday said the club has agreed a transfer for Spain midfielder Thiago Alcantara. Bayern Munich coach Hansi Flick praised Thiago while confirming he has bid goodbye FC Bayern/Twitter