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INDIA SHOULD TALK TO PAK TO
DEFUSE BORDER ROW: FAROOQ

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TIKTOK FILES LAWSUIT AGAINST
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DELHI FACE KXIP
IN IPL CLASH

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USUAL SUSPECTS
SWAPAN DASGUPTAEveryone whistling
in dark on Covid

Looking at two different parts of the world, it is sometimes difficult to believe that the whole world is engaged in a relentless but common battle against a deadly — and often lethal — viral illness that has been dubbed Covid-19.

First, there is the case of the United Kingdom. Prime Minister Boris Johnson — otherwise a smooth-talking charmer — is confronted with a rebellion within his own party and a wave of public resentment over draconian steps his Government has taken to lessen the impact of a “second wave” of Covid-19. Among the steps just announced are restrictions in lockdown areas on people meeting those who don’t live in the same household. In other areas, there are strict instructions against more than six people assembling under the same roof. There are expectations that these restrictions will persist until the New Year. Consequently, Johnson is fearful that he will be the first ruler after Oliver Cromwell to prevent Britons from celebrating Christmas.

The second example is nearer home and centres on the anti-Covid-19 strategies of West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, a feisty lady who had once proclaimed her intention of transforming Kolkata into another London. On Mahalaya, the beginning of the auspicious season — this year’s almanack deems it to be nearly a month, unlike the traditional 10 days — that culminates in the immersion of the Goddess Durga on Vijaya Dashami, she made a momentous announcement. Dispelling Bengali fears that this year’s Durga Puja celebrations will be extremely low key and, in some cases, non-existent, she tweeted that life will be festive during the five-days when the whole of West Bengal turns into a carnival.

The awkward reality is that at present there is no science behind the public health strategies. Everyone seems to be whistling in the dark, evolving strategies and hoping that things will keep ticking until the wonder drug — whether discovered in the laboratories of Putin’s Russia or Johnson’s alma mater Oxford — rescues everyone from this uncertainty

The two examples, drawn from two different parts of the world, reveal something that is becoming increasingly clear: there are no established, universal norms in the global battle against Covid-19. There may well be a shared hope, cutting across national borders, that the miracle vaccine involving fierce competition among different groups of scientists, will rescue the world and usher the return of normalcy. But apart from this common wait for science to deliver us from this Wuhan virus, there is nothing else in common.

Even within countries, there is no civic consensus. Just look at the campaigning styles in the US presidential election.

The Democratic Party and its candidate Jo Biden is treading cautiously, trying to maintain a semblance of social distancing and advising its campaigners to wear masks. The rival Republican camp and incumbent President Donald Trump is not similarly inhibited. He is proceeding with mass rallies and large numbers of his supporters don’t seem to bother with either masks or social distancing.

Meanwhile, the US retains the top slot in the Covid-19 infection league. It is also a control that has dispelled with the idea of a national strategy against the pandemic. The country’s celebration of fierce individualism appears to have spilled over into the realms of public health. All attempts to curb individual freedom at the time of a pandemic is being seen as intrusive and, consequently, un-American.

India, thankfully, doesn’t have a Constitution that celebrates 1.3 billion people doing their own thing, although it is not China where 1.4 billion people are expected to do only one thing. Our Constitution advises citizens to acquire a “scientific temper”. In everyday understanding this implies that, confronted with a serious public health challenge, we are expected to follow specialist, scientific advice and not leave things to individual flights of whimsy. Unfortunately, that’s easier said than done.

At the national level, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has advised utmost caution. Despite the country being in the so-called un-lockdown stage, he has repeatedly emphasised the importance of social distancing and the fanatical use of the face mask. The ongoing session of Parliament has seen staggered sittings of the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha, and MPs are seated in different sections of Parliament House. In Bihar, where campaigning for the Assembly election has begun hesitantly, the ruling National Democratic Alliance is focussing on virtual rallies, despite the uneven nature of internet connectivity.

In West Bengal, where the number of daily cases is around 3,200 and the public health infrastructure is not exactly fit for purpose, there have been random lockdowns whose dates are chosen as if it is a game of Russian roulette. In Parliament, MPs from the Trinamool Congress boasted that the State Government is being guided by a Global Advisory Council headed by a Nobel Prize winner in economics. Presumably they suggested to the Chief Minister that random lockdowns would confuse the virus totally. Presumably they must have also suggested that while it was a danger to young students to sit for the Joint Entrance Examinations, it was safe to go out and boisterously celebrate Durga Puja. It’s all very confusing.

The awkward reality is that at present there is no science behind the public health strategies. Everyone seems to be whistling in the dark, evolving strategies and hoping that things will keep ticking until the wonder drug — whether discovered in the laboratories of Putin’s Russia or Johnson’s alma mater Oxford — rescues everyone from this uncertainty. Like the mathematical modelling by epidemiologists that suggest nearly 70 per cent of India is bound to get infected or those who couldn’t care less because cow’s urine is the deadly virus killer, it is all a game of chance. In this lottery of life there is no science, just plain luck.

Amend farm Bills,
BKS asks Centre

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The RSS affiliated Bharatiya Kisan Sangh (BKS) has joined hands with critics of the three farm sector-related Bills that will come up for passage in the Rajya Sabha on Sunday. This could put up added pressure on the Government to bring in some changes in the Bills to allay the fear of the farmers about continuation of the minimum support price (MSP) regime in future. The Lok Sabha passed the Bill on Friday.

After Akali Deal leader Harsimrat Kaur walked out of the Modi Government to protest against the Bills, the BKS stand shows that the BJP stands completely isolated on introducing these radical measures. Amid rising apprehensions that farm sector Bills passed in the Lok Sabha may not protect the interest of the agriculturists, the BKS has demanded that the Bills must be sent to the Standing Committee for wider consultations and changes.

A day after Prime Minister Narendra Modi blamed the Opposition for misleading the farmers, the BKS said the Bill is “tilted heavily towards the corporate” and would not improve the lives of farmers and should be whetted by the



Members of various farmers’ organisations block Sangrur road during a protest against the Central Government over agriculture related Bills, in Patiala on Saturday

PTI

Standing Committee on Agriculture headed by BJP’s PC Gaddigoudar for the benefit of small farmers before turning into a law.

Opposing the Bills in their current form, the organisation has also written to Prime Minister and Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar, demanding pro-farmer provisions that do not benefit the big firms and corporates.

On Thursday, the Lok Sabha passed two agriculture-

related Bills — Farmers’ Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Bill, 2020, and Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement on Price Assurance and Farm Services Bill, 2020 — by voice vote. On Tuesday, the House passed the Essential Commodities (Amendment) Bill, 2020, which seeks to deregulate food items, including cereals, pulses and onions.

As famers in Punjab,

RSS-affiliated Kisan Sangh wants Bills to be cleared by House panel

Session to end
week earlier as
Covid cases up

To end on Sept 23;
final decision to
be taken Cabinet
Committee

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The rising number of Covid-19 infection among the Members of Parliament has compelled the authorities to cut short the duration of the ongoing Monsoon Session.

The session is now expected to be terminated on September 23 instead of its scheduled October 1 closure.

The decision was taken on Saturday at the Business Advisory Committee (BAC) chaired by Speaker Om Birla, said officials, adding that final decision will be taken by the Cabinet Committee on Parliamentary Affairs.

The meeting was appraised that more than 264 people were found positive in the mandatory test. They included 30 MPs and staffers and media persons.

The present RT-PCR Test has to be taken 72 hours before arrival in the House. Already three sitting MPs have succumbed to Covid-19 and currently 30 MPs are found posi-

tive in the test.

Apart from staffers and media persons, security personnel are also subjected to the mandatory testing. Union Ministers Nitin Gadkari and Prahlaad Patel have tested positive in the tests. Three MPs have already died of Covid-19.

Government officials accompanying their respective Ministers during Bill discussions also have to show a negative report of RT-PCR test taken within the last 72 hours of their visit to the complex.

“Since the commencement of the Session the number of positive cases has gone up, so the Government is thinking of cutting short the session. Next week also many have to undergo mandatory tests and the number of positive cases is rising,” said an official.

Before ending the session, the Government wants to get 11 ordinances passed as laws by Parliament, sources said.

At Lok Sabha’s business advisory committee meeting several Opposition parties said that they are in the favour of the decision, asserting that conducting the full 18-day session could be a risky affair.

The meeting also apprised that among the 264 total cases including MPs, the majority are from the staffers.

CAPSULE

‘ARRESTED SCRIBE WAS
PASSING INFO TO CHINA’

New Delhi: Delhi Police on Saturday said arrested freelance journalist Rajeev Sharma was allegedly passing sensitive information about India’s border strategy and Army deployment to Chinese intelligence. At a press conference, Special Cell DCP Sanjeev Kumar Yadav said Sharma was writing on defence-related issues for some Indian media organisations, as well as China’s Global Times.

INDIA HANDS OVER TWO
MODERN TRAINS TO NEPAL

Kathmandu: India has handed over two modern trains to Nepal that would run between Jaynagar in Bihar and Kurtha in Dhanusa district from mid-December, marking the beginning of the first broad-gauge railway service in the Himalayan nation, officials said on Saturday.

VETERAN RABINDRA SANGEET
EXPONENT PURBA DAM DIES

Kolkata: Veteran Rabindra Sangeet Exponent Purba Dam died at her residence in the city on Saturday, family sources said. She was 85. Dam died of cardiac arrest at her Dhakuria residence in south Kolkata this morning, they said.

NIA averts terror attacks with
arrest of 9 al-Qaeda terrorists

6 arrested from
Bengal, 3 from
Kerala in early
morning raids

RAKESH K SINGH ■ NEW DELHI

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Saturday conducted simultaneous raids at several locations at Ernakulam (Kerala) and Murshidabad (West Bengal) and arrested nine terrorists associated with Pakistan-sponsored module of the UN-banned global terror outfit al-Qaeda.

“The group was planning to undertake terrorist attacks at vital installations in India with an aim to kill innocent people and strike terror in their minds,” the NIA said.

The search operation followed registration of a case (No. RC-31/2020/NIA/DLI) by NIA on September 11 and subsequent investigation into the matter. This led the NIA to learn about an inter-State module of al-Qaeda operatives at various locations in India,



Switches, batteries and other items used to assemble an IED by al-Qaeda terrorist Abu Sufiyan’s house, recovered by NIA, in Murshidabad district on Saturday

PTI

including West Bengal and Kerala.

“The NIA has arrested six terrorists from West Bengal and three terrorists from Kerala in the early morning raids. Large quantity of incriminating materials including digital devices, documents, jihadi literature, sharp weapons, country-made firearms, a locally fabricated body armour, articles and literature used for making home-made explosive devices have been seized from their possession,” the agency said.

As per preliminary inves-

tigation, the arrested accused were radicalised by Pakistan-based al-Qaeda terrorists on social media and were motivated to undertake attacks at multiple places, including the National Capital Region. For this purpose, the module was actively indulging in fund raising and a few members of the gang were planning to travel to New Delhi to procure arms and ammunition. These arrests have pre-empted possible terrorist attacks in various parts of the country, it said.

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Chopper scam: CBI
chargesheet names
Rajeev Saxena,
Agusta former MD

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The CBI on Saturday filed a supplementary chargesheet in the AgustaWestland chopper scam case against controversial businessman Rajeev Saxena and then Managing Director of AgustaWestland International Ltd Giacomino Saponaro.

In its final report filed before Special Judge Arvind Kumar, the CBI has named 15 accused persons, which includes Saponaro and Saxena among others. The court is likely to take up the matter for consideration of the chargesheet on Monday.

The investigation report filed on Friday details the alleged role played by Saponaro and Saxena among others in delivering bribes to politicians, bureaucrats and Indian Air Force (IAF) officials for swinging the deal for supply of the VVIP copters.

Dubai-based businessman Saxena was the director of Interstellar Technologies Ltd, Mauritius.

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Covid-19
IN INDIA

TOTAL

CASES: 53,69,293

DEATHS: 86,229

RECOVERED:

42,68,128

ACTIVE: 10,14,179

INDIA OVERTAKES US TO BAG TOP SPOT
IN TERMS OF COVID-19 RECOVERIES

New Delhi: “In a landmark global achievement”, India has overtaken the US and become the top country in terms of Covid-19 recoveries, the Health Ministry said on Saturday. The country has reported the highest number of recoveries with 42,08,431 Covid-19 patients having recovered from the disease so far, pushing the national recovery rate to nearly 80 per cent.

INDIA’S SINGLE-DAY RECOVERY
MORE THAN FRESH CASES

New Delhi: India’s single-day recovery outstripped the number of new infections as nearly 96,000 people recuperated from the novel coronavirus, even as the total number of cases went past 53 lakh, according to the Union Health Ministry data on Saturday.



MS Dhoni of Chennai Superkings (CSK) appeals unsuccessfully during match 1 of season 13 of the Dream 11 Indian Premier League (IPL) between Mumbai Indians (MI) and Chennai Superkings held at Sheikh Zayed Stadium, Abu Dhabi in the United Arab Emirates on Saturday

IPL

Govt to remove backwardness of Devipatan div dists: Yogi

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Saturday said that Bahraich, Shravasti and Balrampur had been included in the list of aspirational districts as they truly held a lot of growth potential. He said the state government was committed to removing the backwardness of these districts and would take all measures in this regard.

Yogi said that this region also held spiritual importance being a part of the Buddha Circuit.

"There is need to prepare an action plan for integrated and inclusive development of the region as per six parameters of development fixed by the NITI Aayog," he said.

Yogi also reviewed the progress of work of the Buddha Circuit under Swadesh Darshan Yojana and termed it as an important project which would enrich the tourism scene in the state.

The chief minister was reviewing the development projects of the Devipatan division comprising Gonda, Balrampur, Shravasti and Bahraich districts here on Saturday.

There are 12 ongoing projects in the division worth over Rs 50 crore each, out of which five are in Gonda, three in Balrampur, two in Shravasti and two in Bahraich. The total cost of these projects is Rs 1,493.20 crore. Of this, a sum of Rs 964.57 crore has been released so far.

Minister for Khadi Development and MSME Sidharth Nath Singh, who is also the incharge of Gonda district, and Cooperative Minister Mukut Bihari Verma along with people's representatives of all the districts were present in the meeting presided over by the chief minister through video conferencing.

The chief minister asked officials to guard against any delay in the development works as it unnecessarily escalated the

‘Recruit of 31,661 teachers within a week’

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

After announcing a major recruitment drive on Friday, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has directed officials to complete the process for recruitment of 31,661 teachers in the Basic Education department within a week.

He reiterated his government's commitment to providing opportunities for employment, including jobs to youth of the state. A government spokesman said that the Basic Education department had conducted the Teachers Eligibility Test (TET) for recruitment of 69,000 teachers on January 6, 2019. He said as



per the government order issued on January 7, 2019, the cut off percentage in this test was fixed at a minimum 65 per cent for general category and 60 per cent for backward and other reserved categories.

He said some examinees filed writ petitions in the High

Court against this GO and the court, on March 29, 2020, passed an order in favour of the state government on the main petition of Ram Sharan Maurya.

In this regard, deciding the Special Leave Petition (SLP) No. 11198/2020 Ram Sharan Maurya versus State government and others, the Supreme Court on May 21, 2020, directed the state government to complete the recruitment process on all the posts except the posts of those assistant teachers which were held by Shiksha Mitras. Hence, the chief minister had ordered to fill up 31,661 posts in a week's time, the spokesman added.

drinking water schemes should be fast tracked," he added.

Asserting that an effective surveillance system could save many lives from COVID-19, the chief minister said at least 10-15 persons should be contacted in the contact tracing of each case.

He said that Gonda district had all sufficient facilities for Covid treatment and it should be used to the fullest. He noted that there were only 10 patients in the 300-bed dedicated Covid hospital of Gonda and wondered if not much interest was being taken to admit the patients.

The chief minister said the Shravasti jail project estimate would not be revised and it should be completed in time. He asked the officials to improve power supply in the district.

The chief minister said that all the districts had pockets of Tharu and Vantangia tribals and they should be joined into the mainstream of society with empathy and provided the fruits of welfare schemes.

project cost. He said every project should be undertaken on a fixed timeline while maintaining quality norms.

He said to achieve timely completion of the projects, it was important to award works to agencies which had sufficient manpower and capacity to execute the work on time. He said that utilisation certificates should also be made available after completion of 75 per cent of the work so that the remaining funds were released.

The chief minister asked officials to generate jobs under MGNREGA schemes and strive hard to make all roads pothole-free before the festival season.

He said that this area was also flood-prone so apart from relief work, the estimation of loss to crop, property and human lives should be made at the earliest to ensure early disbursement of financial assistance to the affected people.

The chief minister stressed on completing the work on Shravasti airport and Krishi Vigyan Kendra at the earliest to make them operational.

CM extends help to IIT scholar for blood cancer treatment

Lucknow (PNS):Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has given a support of Rs 10 lakh to a research scholar of IIT suffering from blood cancer.

Yogi Adityanath also directed the Sanjay Gandhi Post-graduate Institute of Medical Sciences to provide best treatment to the scholar and help him in every possible way.

The chief minister got information about the scholar's disease and condition from social media.

As per reports, IIT research scholar Ashish Dixit is suffering from blood cancer. While taking the humanitarian initiative, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath made a concession to the rules to help Ashish Dixit. As the research scholar's father is in government service and he

himself is getting scholarship, there was hindrance in getting government help.

On getting information about the scholar's illness from social media, Yogi Adityanath himself contacted the family and gave them financial help.

Meanwhile, Yogi Adityanath will hold a meeting with industrialists and investors on September 21 through video conferencing to listen to their problems.

MSME Minister Siddharth Nath Singh, Chief Secretary RK Tiwari along with all district magistrates and deputy commissioner of District Industries Centre will also join the meeting. The role of Udyog Bandhu in the industrial development of the state will also be discussed.

Congress to take up unemployment issue

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Congress MLC Deepak Singh on Saturday said that the party would take up the issue of unemployment and non-recruitment of candidates despite clearing examinations, from streets to Parliament.

"Priyanka Gandhi spoke to 12,460 candidates through video-conference. On humanitarian grounds, she has demanded filling up of vacancies and if this is not done the Congress will struggle from road to Parliament for the demands of the candidates," Deepak Singh said.

Meanwhile, Priyanka Gandhi Vadra on Saturday shot off another letter to Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath over the problems of the unemployed youth in the state.



"Several people have been forced to take this matter to the courts. Many amongst these are youth whose lives are filled with pain with struggle. Their painful stories sad-

dened me... Some of them are even on the verge of getting into depression. They have the responsibility of managing their homes too," the letter reads.

Maintain high standard of Covid treatment: CM

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Observing that Uttar Pradesh had quite a low COVID-19 death rate and high recovery rate, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Saturday directed officials to maintain high standards of Covid treatment and control.

Presiding over a high-level Unlock review meeting at his official residence here on Saturday, the chief minister said that the government and private Covid hospitals should have adequate supply of oxygen with proper back up.

He also asked officials to ensure that the oxygen was available at the prescribed rates.

The chief minister especially reviewed the Covid situation in Lucknow, Kanpur Nagar, Prayagraj, Jhansi, Ayodhya, Meerut and Gorakhpur and directed officials to strengthen health services in these districts.

Principal Secretary (Health) Alok

Kumar apprised the chief minister of the situation in Kanpur Nagar. Kumar said contact tracing was hundred per cent in Kanpur Nagar.

The chief minister said the online OPD service eSanjeevani had proved to be quite successful. He said for wider reach of this service, it should be publicised well.

Yogi asked the officials to continue mass awareness programmes for protection and treatment of Covid. He said public address system should be used for making the people aware of Covid protection measures.

The chief minister stressed on extensive contact tracing, testing and door-to-door survey to contain the spread of the novel coronavirus.

Yogi asked officials to maintain all the health services in the Covid hospitals. He also asked them to ensure that the doctors and the nursing staff took regular rounds of wards, the paramedics moni-

tored the condition of the patients intensively and the ambulance services were run effectively.

Those present in the meeting included the Medical Education Minister Suresh Khanna, Chief Secretary RK Tiwari, Infrastructure and Industrial Development Commissioner Alok Tandon, Additional Chief Secretary (Finance) Sanjeev Mittal, Additional Chief Secretary (Home & Information) Awanish Kumar Awasthi, DGP HC Awasthi, Additional Chief Secretary (Health) Amit Mohan Prasad, Additional Chief Secretary (Medical Education) Rajneesh Dube, Additional Chief Secretary to CM SP Goyal, Additional Chief Secretary (MSME) Navneet Sehgal, Additional Chief Secretary (Rural Development and Panchayati Raj) Manoj Kumar Singh, Principal Secretary to CM Sanjay Prasad, Principal Secretary (Health) Alok Kumar, Secretary to CM Alok Kumar, Director of Information Shishir and other senior officers.

Bundelkhand e-way work going on in full swing

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The Uttar Pradesh Expressway Industrial Development Authority (UPEIDA) said the work on Bundelkhand Expressway for linking it with Agra-Lucknow Expressway was going on in full swing and 16 per cent of the physical work had been completed.

The UPEIDA said all the pending works and other issues relating to the construction of the main carriageway and the service road were being expedited.

UPEIDA Chief Executive Officer Awanish Awasthi said here on Saturday that directives had been issued to the contractors to expedite the construction of structures and flyovers on the expressway.

Reviewing the progress of the expressway project through video conferencing, Awasthi also issued directive to accelerate the work on shifting utilities like electric poles, tube well, high tension power lines and other utilities falling in the path of the expressway.

He also directed officials to

ensure prompt disposal of the problems in completing the earthwork for the expressway.

During the video conferencing, senior officials of the construction companies were also present.

Asking the contractors to ensure quality control, Awasthi said the work on construction of bridges over the rivers Betwa and Yamuna be started. The CEO said he would soon inspect the work site.

Awasthi also talked to the district magistrates of the districts through which the expressway passes and directed them to expedite the construction work in their jurisdiction.

The Bundelkhand Expressway, originating from Bharatkoop in Chitrakoot, will pass through Banda, Mahoba, Hamirpur, Jalaun and Auraiya and link with the Agra-Lucknow Expressway near Etawah at National Highway No. 91.

The length of the 4-lane Bundelkhand Expressway is 296 km and the construction work has been divided into six packages.



NOTICE

I, Army No. JC 542113-M Sub Sunder Singh S/o Late Himmat Singh, Unit 15, Kumaon (Indore) C/o 56, APO, hereby declared that in my service records inadvertently the date of birth of my Wife (Smt. Uma Devi) 07.08.1978. While his correct date of birth 01.01.1979 may be recorded; my service records.

NOTICE

I, Army No. JC 541223-L Sub Surinder Kumar S/o Shri Bihari Singh, Unit 15, Kumaon (Indore) C/o 56, APO, hereby declared that in my service records my son's (Kapil) date of birth inadvertently 17.07.2000. While his correct date of birth 01.01.1999 and same has to be incorporated in my service records.

NOTICE

I, Army No. 4202962-L Rank Naik Harak Singh S/o Shri Amar Singh, Unit 15, Kumaon (Indore) C/o 56, APO, hereby declared that in my service record inadvertently the name of my son is Anshul Singh while the correct name of my son is Anshul Singh and same has to be incorporated in my service records.

New agri laws to destroy India's farm sector: AKY

Lucknow (PNS): Reiterating his strong opposition to the three bills for the reforms in agriculture sector passed by Parliament, Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav said the legislations were a big conspiracy of the Bharatiya Janata Party-led Central government to destroy the farm sector of the country.

Akhilesh Yadav, in a statement here on Saturday, said the BJP governments in Uttar Pradesh and at the Centre had "religiously" pursued anti-farmers and anti-youth policies.

He said the BJP government was benefiting the corporate sector and was adamant on destroying the agriculture sector. The SP chief said that after a few years, the corporate sector would rule the agriculture sector and farmers would be reduced to mere tenants on their own land.

He said with the implementation of these legislations, the system of minimum support price ensuring remunerative price to the farmers for their agriculture produce would fade away and the status of the farmers would be reduced to mere labourers.

Questioning the claims of the BJP that it was a pro-farmers party, Yadav said, "The BJP has created a new crisis for the farmers as during the pandemic, the entire nation is suffering



from economic crisis and inflation is galloping and there is all-round distress."

The SP chief said the Central government, instead of providing relief package to the farmers facing distress, had brought new laws to destroy them and deprive them of their rights.

Yadav said that ever since the BJP came to power, it had only added to the woes of the farmers.

He said that for the kharif crop, the farmers ran from pillar to post for procuring urea fertiliser and they got the farm input at much higher prices than the control rate.

Yadav said there was no let up in the crisis faced by the sugarcane farmers. "Even as the new sugarcane crushing season is about to commence, the sugar mills are yet to clear arrears of over Rs 15,000 crore of the last crushing season.

Youth killed in firing

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Within 24 hours of the sensational killing of a gram pradhan, Jaunpur was rocked by yet another sensational murder of a youth whose father was also injured in the attack and is battling for his life in the district hospital.

The incident took place in Bharauli village in Shahganj Kotwali police station area of Jaunpur on Saturday morning.

The video of the incident has gone viral on social media. In the video, three or four people are seen trying to snatch the gun from a boy's hand. In the meantime, the boy shoots the other boy who is trying to stop him and he dies at the spot. The incident was reported immediately at the police station and police officers reached the spot and started investigation.

According to the information gathered so far, Ishtiaq of the village was having a dispute with his neighbours over the passage. Apart from that, some villagers said they had an old rivalry and they had a fight on Friday as well. The police knew about the fight but did not take any action against them.

However, the neighbours started fighting with each other again on Saturday morning. In the firing, Ishtiaq and his son Osama were injured and were taken to a nearby hospital where Osama was pronounced dead.

Ishtiaq is in a critical condition as he was shot in the stomach and throat. He was later shifted to the district hospital. A case has been registered and efforts are on to nab the accused.

A heavy police force is also patrolling in the village to avert any fresh clash. In Hamirpur, an intermediate student (18), hailing from Dhamna hamlet of Rath, was brutally hacked to death with an axe by his neighbour on Saturday morning.

The motive behind the killing is yet not confirmed and the police claimed to be investigating the matter.

In Lakhimpur Kheri, a youth hailing from Nighasan tried to rape his sister-in-law (elder brother's wife) when she was cooking food on Saturday afternoon. His brother was out for work. When the victim objected and raised alarm, the accused threw acid on her and went back to his room.

According to Station House Officer of Nighasan, DK Singh, the woman was admitted to the community health centre and the family had filed a complaint. However, the accused later went to commit suicide by hanging himself from a tree near his house. A villager noticed it in time and rescued him. He too was admitted to community health centre in a serious condition. Singh said that a case was not registered so far as the family members were trying to resolve the issue within the family.

Bid to streamline facilities for patients

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Nine officials have been deputed at Level-3 hospitals to streamline facilities for Covid-19 patients regarding the availability of beds and coordination with adjoining districts.

Divisional Commissioner Ranjan Kumar said they have deputed officials for 24x7 service at Level-3 hospitals to look into the availability of ICU beds.

“It will solve the problem of ambulance coordination and patients will not have to face the problem of unnecessary waiting. We have deputed nine officials for three Level-3 hospitals — RML hospital, KGMU and SGPGI — and they will ensure that patients are given treatment immediately. We have made arrangements to have a contact person and liaison officer. They will streamline things regarding which patients have to be admitted and whether the beds are available or not,” he said.

Asked about surge in the number of cases in areas which have been worst-hit (Gomtinagar and Indiranagar), he said rapid response teams have been strengthened and the results will show in some time.

“We have reviewed all the things, increased the manpower and formed new teams. We have analysed everything and we are closing in on the gaps everywhere. Results will soon start showing,” he said.

On Saturday, District Magistrate Abhishek Prakash carried out a sudden inspection of Aliganj CHC to review the facilities being provided



People stand in queues waiting for their turn to get tested, at Ram Manohar Lohia Institute of Medical Sciences

Pioneer

under door-to-door surveillance, contact tracing testing and monitoring of cases in home isolation. He also issued directions that data should be fed the moment a person tests positive for coronavirus. Thereafter, he visited the Silver Jubilee CHC where he carried out an inspection of the rapid response teams.

An official at the CMO office, while giving details regarding age profiles of patients, said that 1,712 are below 10 years of age, 3,359 between 11 & 20 years, 21,079 between 21 & 40 years, 13,817 between 41 & 60 years and 4,357 above 60 till now. He added that there are 391 ICU beds, 600 HDU beds, and 3,000

isolation beds in the district. Meanwhile, with the Covid hospital starting at KGMU, a senior doctor said the existing facilities would continue. “We were planning to keep Covid and non-Covid facilities at separate points but with the increase in the number of beds up to 500, we cannot have this facility at the new Covid hospital which is not spacious enough to have 500 beds, hence facilities will continue at both the places. Also, the CM had said that both the facilities should continue,” he said.

Regarding the increasing number of deaths, the official said it was because the patients were reaching the hospital late, but on an average they were

having nearly 80 per cent recoveries.

Meanwhile, the Virology Lab of KGMU created a record of testing 6,740 samples in 24 hours. The lab at the department of Microbiology is conducting testing of nasal & throat swab samples since February. It is also the first state lab to start Covid testing. The lab started off with 100 tests per day. The team, under the supervision of Dr Amita Jain, tested 6,740 samples in 24 hours, which is also state's highest test figures in a day.

Meanwhile, the department of Surgical Oncology at KGMU continues to serve cancer patients and provide clinical services. A doctor said that

even during the initial two months of lockdown, the services remained uninterrupted.

“Over the last six months, 7,772 cancer patients have been attended to in OPD and 1,130 admitted to the department. During this period, 380 complex head and neck cancer surgery, thoracic, colorectal & hepato-biliary procedures and 369 minor procedures have been carried out in the department. This is nearly 82% of the last year's surgical volume. Due to strict adherence to screening protocol, none of our post-operative patients tested positive for coronavirus during their stay at the hospital and were discharged safely,” he said.

He added that the department had also administered chemotherapy to 2,073 patients during this period following all safety precautions. “Providing cancer care during these turbulent times has not been easy. There was manpower shortage resulting from simultaneous Covid care duties at KGMU and the constant challenge of keeping the caregivers safe. The department has continued to serve cancer patients with zeal and enthusiasm,” he said.

Besides, director of Balrampur Hospital Dr Rajeev Lochan pointed out that they tested more than 300 samples from Central Drug Research Institute on Saturday and 185 from Civil hospital. “Civil hospital was earlier sending their samples to KGMU but they will be sending it to us now. Our capacity has increased and we can test more samples,” he added.

SGPGI to have 36 more ICU beds

Lucknow (PNS): To meet the increasing demand of patients requiring intensive care, SGPGI has expanded its ICU services. Director Dr RK Dhiman said that a 36-bed ICU is being activated in a phased manner and it will be called Rajdhani Covid Hospital-2. To start with, 18 beds have already become functional and 18 more will be available soon.

He said the ICU is fully equipped with all facilities like ventilators, HNF, BIPAP machines, multipara monitors and two dialysis machines. “This is in accordance with directives issued from the state government from time to time. Prof Afzal Azim will look after this ICU unit,” he said.

He pointed out that they currently have 210 beds in the existing Covid facility.

“The capacity of this hospital is 210 beds, including 120 ICU beds. We are making 36 private rooms in the existing



facility, raising the capacity to 246 beds. In the wake of coronavirus pandemic across the country, the number of Covid-19 patients is increasing,” he added. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath had issued directions for the increase in the number of critical care beds in RML hospital, KGMU and SGPGI.

Meanwhile, to maintain discipline for the sake of patient welfare, the KGMU

administration has taken stern disciplinary action against 68 employees of various cadres. KGMU spokesperson Dr Sudhir Singh said the services of two employees services have been terminated while four have been suspended, two served final notice, 34 served show-cause notice and 23 called for explanation while disciplinary proceeding has been initiated against three employees.

Man shot dead by friend during verbal spat

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

A man was shot dead by his friend during a verbal spat at his medical store in Hasanganj on Saturday night. The victim was rushed to KGMU Trauma Centre where he was declared brought dead.

As per reports, Ashutosh Trivedi (36) of Khadra became jobless due to the coronavirus pandemic and consequent lockdown. On Saturday evening, he was sitting at the shop of his friend Jai Singh when the two locked horns over some issue.

Later, Jai Singh whipped out a pistol tucked in his waist and opened fire.

Initial reports said Ashutosh, along with some of his friends, including Singh, was sitting at the shop when the incident took place. A police spokesman confirmed Ashutosh's death and said his father accused Singh.

The spokesman said the family named Singh in the murder case and a manhunt had been launched for him. He said the police had detained some persons in this connection.

Leader of fraudsters' gang arrested

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The STF sleuths claimed to have nabbed the leader of a gang of fraudsters that had duped several to the tune of crores on the pretext of 60 per cent yearly profit on investment in a ponzi scheme. The accused, identified as Hariom Yadav of Gosainganj, was recently named in the case of fraud by Gosainganj police and a team led by SHO DP Kushwaha had nabbed nine directors of Alaska Real Estate, Alaska Commodities and Alaska Enterprises — all owned by Hariom Yadav.

The team recovered three mobile phones, five cheque books, one passbook, Aadhaar card, laptop and Rs 700 in cash. Before foraying into the crime world, Yadav struggled to make ends meet even as he opened a sweet shop and then worked with a pathology firm and as a sales advisor in a private bank. He then joined a real estate company. He started taking commission from farmers to sell their land and later set up his own company in which he floated ponzi schemes to lure investors. He was arrested by Krishna Nagar police in February last year on the charges of carrying black money (Rs 5 crore) and sent to jail. However, he was released on bail later.

Animal husbandry scam: Fraudster lands in STF net


Lucknow (PNS): The Special Task Force claimed to have nabbed the fraudster wanted in the animal husbandry scam in which a Madhya Pradesh businessman, Manjeet Singh Bhatiya, was duped of Rs 9.72 crore.

The accused, identified as Santosh Mishra of Gomtinagar, masqueraded as a journalist to visit Secretariat in 2012. He also disclosed his link with a fraudster, Hariom Yadav, who ran Alaska Real Estate Developers and had defrauded several people.

Police said they started a probe into the case which was lodged at Hazratganj Kotwali and in which Santosh Mishra was also named. During investigation, it surfaced that Mishra was the UP head of a news channel and was involved in a case of fraud. The police started keeping a tab on

Mishra. On Saturday, an informer tipped off the police about Mishra's plan to flee the city. A team chased his car and nabbed him. Mishra said he first met Chandrashekhar Pandey of Prayagraj and later came in contact with Ashish Rai, who is said to be the leader of the gang of fraudsters. He said Ashish used to do him favours in lieu of small works (recommending cases with police and administration). Ashish later got Mishra introduced to Anil Rai, who was the news channel editor.

Mishra confessed to have recommended Ashish Rai's case to different senior government officials after latter's name surfaced in the animal husbandry case. He also confessed to have taken Rs 1.15 crore from Hariom Yadav, who was named in a case of fraud and was arrested later.

**Canara Bank**
A GOVERNMENT OF INDIA UNDERTAKING

Branch: Gomti Nagar II, Lucknow

POSSESSION NOTICE {for immovable property}
The Authorized Officer of Canara Bank under the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets & Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 and in exercise of powers conferred under Section 13(12) read with Rule-3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002, issued demand notice on the date mentioned against account and stated hereunder calling upon the borrowers/guarantors/mortgagors to repay the amount mentioned in the notice being together with further interest at contractual rate on the aforesaid amount and incidental expenses, costs, charges etc. within sixty days from the date of receipt of said notice. The borrowers/guarantors/mortgagors having failed to repay the amount notice is hereby given to the borrowers/guarantors/mortgagors and the public in general that the undersigned has taken the possession of the Property described herein below in exercise to powers conferred on him/her under section 13(4) of the said act read with the Rule-8 of the said Rules on the date mentioned hereunder. The borrowers attention is invited to the provision of Sub-Section (8) of section - 13 of the Act, in respect of time available to redeem the secured assets. The Borrowers/Guarantors/Mortgagors in particular and the public in general are hereby cautioned not to deal with the property. Any dealing with the property will be subject to the charge of Canara Bank for the amounts and interest thereon. Details of the mortgaged Property of which the possession had been taken is as follows.

Name of the Borrowers/Guarantors	Details of the Mortgaged Property	Date Demand notice Date of possession	Amt. Due as per demand Notice
Mr. Chowdhary Wakeel Ahmad S/o Mr. Chowdhary Basher Ahmad and Chowdhary Basheer Ahmad S/o Mr. Chowdhary Haseeb Ahmad and Surety Mr. Asif Khan S/o Mr. Khan Mohammad	All that part and parcel of the property consisting of Flat No. 180/113 Takiya Azam Beg, Chik Mandi, Ward Wazirganj Lucknow Measuring 145.21 Sqm. (1562.50 Sqft) within District Lucknow. Bounded as under: East: Property of Wahid Khan, West: Others Property, North: Lane about 18', South: Lane and Nala.	07.08.2019 18.09.2020	Rs. 16,45,593.39 + Intt. from 01.09.2020 & others exp.

Date:- 20.09.2020 Place:- Lucknow Authorized Officer

**सेंट्रल बैंक ऑफ़ इंडिया**
Central Bank of India

Regional Office:
Raghubir Niwas, Civil Lines, Ayodhya

DEMAND NOTICE
NOTICE U/S 13(2) OF THE SECURITISATION AND RECONSTRUCTION OF FINANCIAL ASSETS AND ENFORCEMENT OF SECURITY INTEREST ACT 2002
Our Branches, At The Request Of You, The Following Borrowers/guarantors, Granted To you Various Credit Limits And Out Of Total Amount Due To Us You Have Defaulted In Repayment Of Entire Amount. As You Have Defaulted In Repayment Of Your Full Liabilities We Have Classified Your Dues As Non-performing Asset In Accordance With The Guidelines Of The Bank/directions Or Guidelines Issued. By Reserve Bank of India. We Also Inform You That Inspire Of Our Repeated Notices And Oral Request For Repayment Of The Entire Amount Due To Us, You Have Not So Far Paid The Same. You Are Aware That The Various Limits Granted By Us Are Secured By The Following Assets (secured Assets.)

Branch:- PARASRAMPUR


Sr. No.	Name And Address Of Borrowers/Owner/Mortgagor	Description of the property	Outstanding Amount
1.	Borrower:- M/s Shanti Rice Mill Proprietor Savita Devi W/o Rajesh Kumar Dubey Address:- Village Suraila, Post Parasrampur, District Basti Guarantor:- 1) Kusum Devi W/o Krishna Chandra Pandey Address:- Jadai Pur, Post Parasrampur, District Basti 2) Arun Kumar Dubey S/o late Sadhu Prasad Dubey, Address:- Village Suraila, Post Parasrampur, District Basti 3) Rajesh Kumar Dubey S/o Late Sadhu Prasad Dubey Address:- Village Suraila, Post Parasrampur, District Basti 4) Rakesh Kumar Dubey S/o Late Sadhu Prasad Dubey Address:- Village Suraila, Post Parasrampur, District Basti	1) All Part and parcel of the property consisting of Equitable Mortgage Plot No. 78 in Village Suraila, Post Parasrampur, Tappa Banagwa, District Basti. Total Area 1010 sqmt (8 biswa) owner Savita Devi W/o Rajesh Kumar Dubey Boundries:- East - Khet of Ram Lautan, West - Land of Ganga Prasad, North - Land of Savita Devi, South - Remaining part of Plot No.78. 2) All Part and parcel of the property consisting of Equitable Mortgage Plot No. 78 of in Village Suraila, Post Parasrampur, Tappa Banagwa. Total Area 1011.09 sqmt (8 biswa) owner Savita Devi w/o Rajesh Kumar Dubey Boundries:- East - Land of Ram Lautan, West - Remaining land of Ganga Prasad, North - Khet of Sadhu Prasad Dubey, South - Remaining land of Plot No. 78 3) All Part and parcel of the property consisting of Equitable Mortgage Plot No. 64.65 of in Village Suraila, Post Parasrampur, Tappa Banagwa. Total Area 72 sqmt. owner Mrs. Kusum Devi W/o Krishna Chandra Pandey Boundries:- East - Land of Kripanath, West - Land of Shri Verma, North - Rasta from Parsa to Parasrampur, South - Land of Ganga Prasad.	Rs. 85,10,791/- + Interest as on 14.09.2020

Branch:- SGJS AKBARPUR

Sr. No.	Name And Address Of Borrowers/Owner/Mortgagor	Description of the property	Outstanding Amount
2.	Borrower:- (1) M/s Ram Awadh Chawal Udyog Address:- Kurki Bazar, Akbarpur, Ambedkar Nagar.(2) Ram Sakal Rajbhar S/o Ram Awadh Address:- Kayanuddinpur, Rukanuddinpur Ambedkar Nagar. Guarantor:- Suresh Kumar Singh Address:- Vill Sonava Post-Sonava Ambedkar Nagar	Equitable Mortgage of Properties: Plot No.1361, Area : 1.288 Hectare Situated at Village Dawoodpur, Tehsil-Akbarpur Distt, Ambedkar Nagar. Boundries:- East - Plot of Rajdeo and others, West - Plot of Raj Bahadur and others, North - Chak road, South - Chak road.	Rs. 51,46,309/- + Interest as on 27.08.2020 Date of NPA 29.10.2018

for the reasons started above, we hereby call upon you to discharge in full your liabilities to us with in a periods the date of this notice, failing which we will be exercising the powers under section 13(4) of the securitisation and reconstruction of financial assets and enforcement of security interest act 2002, against the secured assets mentioned above. please take note that after receipt of this notice, you shall not transfer by way of sale, lease or otherwise any of the secured assets referred to in this notice, without prior consent of the secured creditor. we draw your attention of section 29 of the securitisation and reconstruction of financial assets and enforcement of security interest act 2002, which awards imprisonment upto one year of with fine, or with both, if you contravene the provisions of the act.
The Borrowers Attention is Invited To Provisions Of Sub-section (8) Of Section 13 Of The Act, In Respect Of Time Available, To Redeem The Secured Assets.

Place: Ayodhya, Date- 20.09.2020 Authorized Officer, Central Bank Of India

**UCO BANK**

ZONAL OFFICE : DHANSHREE COMPLEX, 1ST FLOOR, D-63/8-1M, TULSIPUR, MAHMOORGANJ, VARANASI

POSSESSION NOTICE (For Immovable Properties)
Whereas,
The undersigned being the authorised officer of the UCO Bank, under the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act 2002 and in exercise of powers conferred under Section 13 read with the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002, issued 60 Days Demand Notices dated mentioned against each account calling upon the respective borrower/s to repay the amount as mentioned against each account within 60 days from the date of notice (s) date of receipt of the said notice (s).
The borrowers having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the borrowers and the public in general that the undersigned has taken possession of the property/ies described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him/her under section 13 (4) of the said Act read with rule 9 of the said rules on this Date mention below.
The borrowers in particular and public in general is hereby cautioned not to deal with the property/ies and any dealings with the property/ies will be subject to charge of UCO Bank, Prayagraj for the amount, interest and expenses thereon.

Sl No.	Name of Ac/Borrower/Owner of Property & Address	Name of Branch	Description of mortgaged property	Demand Date Possession Date	Balance Out Standing
1.	Mrs. Shyama Devi Chaturvedi w/o Sri Vinodhwasini Prasad Chaturvedi and Mr. Sri Vinodhwasini Prasad Chaturvedi s/o Sri. Ganesh Prasad both r/o LIG Flat No.12 Naseebpur Bakhtiyari Housing Scheme, Prayagraj	Prayagraj Mumford Ganj (1611)	All that part and parcel of the property consists of land and building Flat No.12 First Floor, measuring 35.40 square meter as per Bahi No.1, Zild No.5845, Page No. 203 to 216, Sl. No. 5090/2007, Registered on 11.12.2007 at Sub-Registrar-First Allahabad, situated at LIG Flat No.12 Naseebpur Bakhtiyari Housing Scheme, District- Prayagraj standing in the name of Mrs. Shyama Devi w/o Vinodhwasini Prasad Chaturvedi and Mr. Sri Vinodhwasini Prasad Chaturvedi s/o Sri. Ganesh Prasad, Both r/o.LIG Flat No.12 Naseebpur Bakhtiyari Housing Scheme, Prayagraj. Details of Boundaries (As per Deed) East: GAP, West: GAP, North: GAP and South: LIG Flat No.10	28.01.2020 15.09.2020	Rs.4,92,064.00 (Rs. Four lakh ninety two thousand sixty four only) + Interest & other charges as on 27.01.2020.
2.	Mrs. Sabiha Wajid w/o Sri Sikander Ali Khan and Mr. Sikander Ali Khan w/o Mr. Hamid Khan, both r/o 675, Kathara, Dariyabad Prayagraj	Prayagraj Mumford Ganj (1611)	All that part and parcel of the property bearing House No. 137A/2A, consists of land and building Arazi No. 243 Mi, measuring 168 square meter as per Bahi No.1, Zild No. 2621, Page No. 349 to 382, Sl. No. 5313/2013, Registered on 27.07.2013 at Sub-Registrar-Sadar, situated at Mauza-Dariyabad, Pargana and Tehsil -Sadar, District- Prayagraj standing in the name of Mrs. Sabiha Wajid w/o Mr. Sikander Ali Khan r/o 675, Kathara, Dariyabad, Prayagraj. Details of Boundaries (As per Deed) East: 7 feet wide lane, West: 7 feet wide lane, North: House of Gulam and South: Part portion of Arazi.	28.01.2020 15.09.2020	Rs.6,95,586.00 (Rs. Six lakh ninety five thousand five hundred eighty six only) + Interest & other charges as on 27.01.2020.
3.	Mrs. Asha Devi w/o Sri Uma Shankar Pathak and Mr. Praveen Kumar Pathak s/o Mr. Uma Shankar Pathak both r/o 407/108, Beniganj, GTB Nagar, Prayagraj	Prayagraj Mumford Ganj (1611)	All that part and parcel of the property consists of land and building Arazi No. 1665 Mi, measuring 66.20 square meter as per Bahi No.1, Zild No. 4949, Page No.27 to 52, Sl. No. 4928/2017, Registered on 07.07.2017 at Sub-Registrar- Sadar, situated at Mauza-Kasari Masari, Pargana and Tehsil-Sadar, District- Prayagraj standing in the name of Mrs. Asha Devi w/o Sri Uma Shankar Pathak r/o 407/108, Beniganj, GTB Nagar, Prayagraj. Details of Boundaries (As per Deed) E: House of Dr.Pandey, W-Part of Arazi, N:lot of others and S:10 feet wide road	28.01.2020 15.09.2020	Rs.14,58,415.28 (Rs.Fourteen lakh fifty eight thousand four hundred fifteen & paise twenty eight only) + Interest & other charges as on 31.08.2019.
4.	Mrs. Kiran Devi w/o Rajesh Prasad Tiwari and Mr. Rajesh Prasad Tiwari s/o Mahadeo Prasad Tiwari both r/o Pathartal, Koraon, Prayagraj Uttar Pradesh	Prayagraj Koraon (0784)	All that part and parcel of the property consists of land and building Arazi No. 26 Mi, measuring 230 square meter as per Bahi No.1, Zild No.880 Page No. 179 to 200, Sl. No. 607/2013, Registered on 22.02.2013 at Sub-Registrar-Koraon, situated at Mauza-Pathartal Tappa- Daiya, Pargana- Khairagarh and Tehsil- Koraon, District - Prayagraj standing in the name of Mrs. Kiran Devi w/o Mr. Rajesh Prasad Tiwari r/o Pathartal, Koraon, Allahabad Uttar Pradesh. Details of Boundaries (As per Deed) East: Koraon to deghat road, West: Land of Chandrika etc., North: Part of seller land and South: Land of Sunita Devi.	26.11.2018 16.09.2020	Rs.3,32,890.68 (Rs.Three lakh thirty two thousand eight hundred ninety & paise sixty eight only) + Interest & other charges as on 31.10.2017.

Note : The above notice be also considered as 30 days notice for sale under rule 6,8 and 9.
Date : 19-09-2020 Place : Prayagraj Authorized Officer - UCO Bank

Youth held for raping, threatening girl

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

A youth was accused of raping a BSc-III student and threatening her after she lodged a case against him at Sarojininagar police station on September 9. The accused, identified as Sumit Anand, threatened the girl to withdraw the case even as the police had launched manhunt for him. The victim alleged that Sumit had a criminal bent of mind and had a good rapport with low-run cops.

In the FIR, the girl stated that Sumit forcibly made her sit inside his car at the gun-point on her way back home from college in Chhabagh. She alleged that Sumit and his friends raped her.

“My father is unwell these days and Sumit threatened me with dire consequences. He also threatened to upload the video of me in a compromising position on social media. Fearing for my father’s life, I kept mum. Sumit forcibly entered my house, broke the gate, set on fire a portion of the house and also threatened to kill me and my parents,”

she alleged. On Friday, the Sarojini Nagar police arrested him. Sumit was absconding since he was accused of rape.

BODY OF MISSING WOMAN RECOVERED

Body of a missing woman, who was a resident of Thakurganj, was recovered from Sursa river in Hardoi on Saturday. As per reports, the deceased was identified as Anjali of Bhunwar in Thakurganj. She, along with her husband Subhash of Unnao, was living at a house on rent in the locality. Subhash works as a ward boy at a private hospital and he had lodged a missing report with the Thakurganj police on Friday. He had stated that he, along with his mother, had gone to a hospital to consult a doctor for her and found Anjali missing on returning home.

On Saturday, Kachauna police recovered the body of a woman and passed the information to their counterparts in neighbouring districts. Subsequently, the Thakurganj police contacted Subhash, who reached Hardoi and identified the body as that of his wife. The police said the woman had her stomach banded and it seemed that she underwent some surgery.

UPSEE at 206 centres today

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Uttar Pradesh State Entrance Examination (UPSEE-2020) for entrance to various engineering institutes across the state will be conducted by Dr APJ Abdul Kalam Technical University (AKTU) on Sunday. UPSEE-2020 coordinator Vineet Kansal said that 206 exam centres have been set up in and outside the state for successful conduct of entrance exam.

Of these, 187 examination centres have been made in the state and 19 outside. Outside the state, the exam centres are

in Delhi, Chandigarh, Dehradun, Patna, Mumbai, Bhopal, Jaipur, Ranchi, Roorkee and Kolkata. He further said that arrangements have been made for proper sanitisation and social distancing at all exam centres. He said the exam would be conducted in three shifts.

“The first shift will begin at 9 am. Candidates will have to report an hour in advance. All the candidates will be subjected to thermal scanning at the exam centres. The candidates whose temperature is found to be above 99.4°F in thermal scanning will be scanned again

after 15 minutes and if the temperature remains the same, they will have to write the exam in isolation rooms. For this, isolation rooms have been made at all the exam centres,” he said.

He added that WhatsApp chatbots would be coordinated from war rooms at the exam centres.

“Monitoring and coordination will be done through chatbots at all the exam centres. Information of all the 206 exam centres will also be available to nodal officers. All the nodal officers will give information of exam centres to the war rooms,” he added.

SCHOOLSCAN

STORY-TELLING

Satwik Srivastava, a class VI student of City Montessori School, Aliganj Campus II, won the first prize in inter-school story-telling competition, organised online under the aegis of educational-literary institution ‘Yogyapeeth’. The competition was organised with a view to developing students’ skills of presentation, instill in them self-confidence and test their general knowledge, wherein students of various known schools of Lucknow had participated.



Two women among 3 hurt in road mishap

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Three persons, including two women teachers, suffered injuries after a speeding roadways bus ploughed into a van in which they were travelling, in Malihabad on Saturday morning.

The teachers, identified as Manju Mishra of South City and Anjum Siddiqui of LDA Colony (Kanpur road), were going to their respective schools in Hardoi for some work. The van was being driven by Rajkumar of Malihabad.

According to eyewitnesses, a speeding roadways bus knocked the van from behind at Garhi Jindaur locality in the area. Occupants of the van got trapped inside the mangled vehicle.

Villagers rushed to the rescue of the victims who were pulled out after van’s door was dismantled. The villagers later rushed the victims to Malihabad community health centre from where they were referred to KGMU Trauma Centre. The condition of van driver was said to be critical.

Importance of safety management practices in MSMEs discussed

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

From MSMEs’ perspective, a lot of modern electronic gadgets like smart TVs, cameras, tracking devices, AI system, fire hydrants, medical devices, traffic devices and sensors are required to be manufactured and installed and also a trained workforce is needed to operate these gadgets in order to ensure maximum safety and healthy work environment. These gadgets are not only going to create a healthy work environment but also will assist in boosting their manufacturing capacity and improved productivity in the state which will further enhance employment opportunities, skilling of staff and generating more profits.

These views were expressed by director-general of Fire Services, UP, RK Vishwakarma in his keynote address at the UP Chapter of PHD Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PHD-CCI) virtual seminar on ‘Importance of safety management practices in MSMEs in UP’ on Saturday. The objective was to deliberate upon the imperative importance of safety management practices in MSME units besides regular maintenance of safety equipment and proper skill training to the workforce employed in this sector to ensure a healthy, happy and safe work environment across the state. The session also shed light on latest trends and

technologies in fire and electrical safety and control devices in today’s era. Vishwakarma spoke about all the activities done by UP Police to ensure safety in the state. Joint director, UP Fire Service, JK Singh spoke on the overall scenario of safety management practices and efforts that the fire department is ensuring across the state. He also summarized the basic set of rules and standards set by the Fire department for every MSME units of the state. He said that only installation of safety and control devices in any unit is not the solution but it’s equally important for the industry units to ensure regular maintenance and proper skill training for all the employees.

CITYBRIEFS

SAROJININAGAR, AMAUSI TO BE HANDED OVER TO NAGAR NIGAM

District Magistrate Abhishek Prakash has issued directions for handing over Sarojininagar and Amausi industrial area to Nagar Nigam. It has been pending for four years. In a meeting held by district-level Udyog Bandhu, the DM was apprised of the issue and he immediately gave directions for a quick resolution of the problem by holding a meeting of the departments concerned such as UPSIDA and Nagar Nigam with the industrialists. LMC officials asked UPSIDA for payment of Rs 7 crore for the works of road repair, sewage, water supply. The UPSIDA officials said they have spent a huge amount in these areas. It was further discussed

that the area should be handed over to LMC. The industrialists said that there was a need to remove encroachments. The DM issued directions for formation of a joint team to remove encroachments.

MERIT LIST

The complete provisional merit list of all under-graduate courses have been announced for Lucknow University admissions for 2020-21 session. Lucknow University spokesperson said the list is available on the website. The tentative dates for PhD interview of session 2019-20 are September 26-30. Subject-wise and batch-wise schedule will be announced on LU website on Sunday.

RS approves amendments to insolvency law

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Rajya Sabha on Saturday passed amendments to the insolvency law for suspension of fresh insolvency proceedings for at least six months starting March 25 amid the coronavirus pandemic, with Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman saying a decision on extending the suspension of relevant provisions will be taken next week.

In the wake of the COVID-19 situation, the government decided to suspend the provisions starting from March 25 for six months by promulgating an ordinance in June.

Default on repayments from March 25, the day when the nationwide lockdown began to curb coronavirus infections, would not be considered for initiating insolvency proceedings for at least six months.

The six-month period is ending next week.

The Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (Second Amendment) Bill, 2020, seeks to replace the ordinance issued in June, was passed by a voice vote after a brief discussion.

Replying to the debate, Finance and Corporate Affairs Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said the suspension of provisions will end next week.

“At the moment, amendment to the Code gives me a provision to only extend till one year. If at all, because it is coming to an end on September 25 this year, September 24 itself we have to make an announcement about what is going to happen. But even if I do, it means by March it should be ending...,” the minister said.

The minister also clarified that insolvency proceedings against corporates defaulting on loans prior to March 25 will continue and the amendment will not stall those cases.

A majority of the opposition parties also supported the bill but urged the government to provide interest waiver on loans to farmers and poor people suffering due to the COVID-19 crisis.

During the debate on the bill, many members expressed fears over its possible misuse by corporates even as they hoped that it will help in reviving the economy.

On members’ queries regarding liability of personal guarantors in the IBC, Sitharaman said the corporate debtor often has guarantors.

“So, for comprehensive corporate insolvency resolution and liquidation we felt it was necessary that the insolvency of the corporate debtor as well as its guarantors are considered together to whatever extent it is possible,” Sitharaman said.

On queries about the urgency to bring the ordinance in the first place, Sitharaman said that “between ses-

sions if there is a need for ordinance because the ground situation demands it, I would think a responsive government’s duty is to at least use the ordinance to show that we are there with the people of India.”

“So to that extent, I am sure the House will appreciate that as and when the government decides for ordinance it is because of that, and whenever the next session happens we come back,” she said.

Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the minister said, businesses faced trouble.

So it was decided “that it was better to suspend Sections 7, 9 and 10 of IBC so that we can prevent corporate persons, which are experiencing distress on account of the unprecedented situation, being pushed into insolvency proceedings”.

Sections 7, 9 and 10 deal with initiation of corporate insolvency reso-

lution process by financial creditor, operational creditor and corporate debtor, respectively. The minister further said the IBC is a critical part of business now, and cited data to show how the code had performed.

Citing data for NPAs of commercial banks during 2018-19, she informed the House that Lok Adalats recovered 5.3 per cent, Debt Recovery Tribunals (DRTs) recovered 3.5 per cent and SARFAESI recovered 14.5 per cent. On the other hand, IBC ensured 42.5 per cent of recovery.

Sitharaman further said that most of the resolutions are happening to make the company to be a going concern only.

“Priority is to keep the company to be a going concern rather than to liquidate them at the earliest,” she said adding that 258 companies were saved from going bankrupt through the IBC process, while 965 firms went for liquidation.

राजस्थान राज्य पथ परिवहन निगम

कार्यालय मुख्य प्रबंधक, सी.बी.एस आगरा, जयपुर।

केन्द्रीन/स्टील/वाहन उधार स्थल देने वाला।

केन्द्रीय बस स्टैण्ड, सिन्धी केम्प, जयपुर पर विभिन्न स्टॉल/कन्टीनो, सुलभ कॉम्पलेक्स के लिए लाइसेन्सधारी नियुक्त किये जाने हैं। प्रस्ताव देने की अन्तिम तिथि 22.09.2020 को दोपहर 2:00 बजे तक है। इस सम्बन्ध में विस्तृत जानकारी निगम वेबसाईट www.rsrtc.rajasthan.gov.in पर एवम् राज्य लोक उपापन पोर्टल (SPPP) पर (UBN is RTC2021.SLOB001551) भी देखी जा सकती है।

मुख्य प्रबंधक

राज,संवाद/सी/4673/2020-2021

U.P. RAJYA VIDYUT UTPADAN NIGAM LTD. OBRA-SONEBHADRA

E-Tender Notice

Tender No: T-09/SE-O&MC-I/OGD-1/2020-21 online e-Bids are invited for the work of "Annual Cleaning of different Areas of OGD-I & II, 5X200 MW BTPS, E-tender has been uploaded on 11.09.2020 on <http://etender.up.nic.in> Estimated cost of work is Rs. 74,79,594.00 only. E.M.D. cost Rs. 1,50,000.00, Tender Cost Rs.1180.00 Last date of submission 03.10.2020 at 18.00 Hrs. SE-, O&MC-I Total Quality of work, tender specification and other terms & condition is as per tender document available on the e-tender portal. Concerned superintending engineer has right to cancel any or all e-Bids without assigning any reason. **Corrigendum, addendum, Extension if any shall be uploaded only on the above website.** Bidders are advised to visit the website regularly for updated information from time to time.

No. 203 Date 18.9.2020 SAVE ELECTRICITY IN THE INTEREST OF NATION

NOTICE INVITING E-TENDERS (FIRST CALLING)

No. 1445 / 14/ 2020-21
The Executive Engineer P.W.D. Raebareilly on behalf of Governor of Uttar Pradesh invites the percentage rate bids online from the eligible and approved Contractors registered with UP PWD, class 'A, B, C & D'. The Bidders may submit bids for any or all of the works. Bidders are advised to note the minimum qualification criteria specified in Clause 4 of the Instructions to Bidders to qualify for the award of the contract.

SL. No.	DIST.RICT	Name of Work	Esti-mated cost (Rs.in Lakhs)	Bid Security (Rs.in Lakhs)	Cost of Bid Document	Time of Completion	Address of Executive Engineer of the Executing work	Address of Super-intending Engineer	Address of Chief Engineer
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1	Rae-bareilly	Protection work of approach road of (4x18 mtr. Span) Minor Bridge at Churuwa Sehng Bankagarh link Road in Km.-5	11.00	1.10	785.00	03 Month	Provincial Division, P.W.D. Raebareilly	Lucknow Circle, P.W.D. Lucknow	Central Zone, P.W.D. Lucknow
2	Rae-bareilly	Protection work of approach road of Minor Bridge at Lucknow - Varanasi Road to Sarikhera- Gurdueen khara link road in Km.-4	11.00	1.10	785.00	03 Month	--- Do ---	--- Do ---	--- Do ---

The Rate adopted in the BOQ all Other taxes but excluding GST Taxes.

Cost of Bid Document: as per column 6 (non-refundable) To be deposited in the account of UP e-tender online Account through e-tender portal by Internet Banking only. All concerned please note that the bidding process will not move onward if the bid document's Cost (Tender Fee) is not paid through e-tender portal by Internet Banking.

Bid Security (EMD): Bids must be accompanied with security of the amount specified for the work in the table as per column 5. Bid security will be deposited in the account of UP e-tender online Account through e-tender portal by Internet Banking only. All concerned please note that the bidding process will not move onward if the bid Security (EMD) is not paid through e-tender portal by Internet Banking. No other form of bid security will be accepted.

The bidders are required to submit the following:-
1-Cost of Bid Document (Tender Fee) - Certificate of proof of payment in the account of UP E-tender online Account by Internet Banking which will be generated when payment made through e-tender portal by Internet Banking.
2-Bid Security (EMD) - Certificate of proof of payment in the account of UP e-tender online account by Internet Banking which will be generated when payment made through e-tender Portal by Internet Banking.
Bids can be downloaded online from date 26.09.2020 at 9:00 AM to 05.10.2020 at 12:00 Noon and bid can be submitted online on or before 05.10.2020 at 12:00 Noon. The technical bids will be opened online on date 06.10.2020 at 12:30 PM. According to the provisions of Government Order No. 12018/307078-2-2018/42/17/2021 (Date 03-01-2018 after opening of the technical and financial bids, the bidder has to submit original documents personally in department/ office. In the event of non submission of original documents by the bidder, the appropriate action will be taken in accordance with the provisions of G.O.

All terms & conditions can be seen on website <http://etender.up.nic.in>

(Dinesh Kumar Kureel)
Executive Engineer
Provincial Division,
P.W.D. Raebareilly

U.P.: 155173, Date : 18.09.2020
विज्ञापन वेबसाईट www.up.gov.nic.in पर उपलब्ध है।

21,907 more test positive in Maha

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Maharashtra logged a new high of 23,501 recoveries for the second consecutive day on Saturday, while 400-plus Covid 19-triggered deaths were recorded for the third consecutive day and 21,907 more people tested positive for Coronavirus in various parts of the state. A day after a record 22,078 recovered patients were discharged from various hospitals, Maharashtra bettered its earlier record daily tally of recoveries on Saturday, as 23,501 were discharged from hospitals in the state after full recovery.

As a result, the total number of patients discharged from various hospitals after full recovery since the second week of March this year went up to 8,57,933. The recovery rate rose to 72.22 per cent. The mortality rate in the state

stood at 2.71 per cent. The state health authorities pegged the number of “active cases” in the state at 2,97,480. On Saturday, as many as 425 more people succumbed to the pandemic in various parts of the state. With fresh deaths, the total number deaths in the state mounted to 32,216. With 21,907 fresh infections – which incidentally lower than the highest tally of 24,886 recorded on September 11, the total number of infected cases in the state jumped from 11,67,496 to 11,88,015. Of the 425 deaths, Pune accounted for a maximum of 55 deaths, while there were 50 deaths in Mumbai, 37 in Thane, 36 in Nagpur; 26 each in Satara and Sangli, 25 in Kolhapur, 16 each in Raigad and Solapur, 14 in Aurangabad, 13 each in Akola and Yavatmal, 11 each in Ahmednagar and Bhandara, and 10 deaths in Palghar.

FROM PAGE 1

AMEND FARM BILLS, BKS ASKS CENTRE

A further 15 MPs, including the Congress’s P Chidambaram -- who this morning hit out at the BJP and Prime Minister Modi over the farm Bills -- have expressed their inability to attend. Both these developments should help the BJP since it brings down the majority mark.

The BJP, on its own, has 86 members, and, with its NDA allies, it can go up to 105 votes. It cannot, however, count on the three Akali Dal MPs, who have been given a three-line whip to vote against the Bills.

The BJP, which has issued a three-line whip of its own, will also count on “friendly” regional parties like Odisha’s BJD and Andhra Pradesh’s YSR Congress - to vote in its favour. Jagan Mohan Reddy’s YSR Congress has six MPs and Naveen Patnaik’s BJD has nine MPs in the RS. Sources say the Government is confident that around 135 MPs will vote in support of the farm Bills.

The Congress-led Opposition, on the other hand, which includes the Trinamool Congress and its 13 MPs, will be on the back foot on Sunday. The Congress itself has 40 seats and can count on several regional and smaller parties - such as the BSP (four seats), the Samajwadi Party (eight seats) and Delhi’s AAP (three seats).

Shiv Sena that has three members in the Rajya Sabha with whom the Congress has formed a tripartite Government in Maharashtra will decide after a late night meet on Saturday.

The Government has said the Bills will help small and marginal farmers by empowering them through written agreements and farmers can sell their produce at competitive prices anywhere in India.

However, farmers fear this means they will no longer be able to sell at an MSP.

CHOPPER SCAM: CBI CHARGESHEET NAMES RAJEEV SAXENA, AGUSTA FORMER MD

The CBI had earlier this year sought sanction from the Centre to prosecute former Defence Secretary Shashi Kant Sharma but has not named him as an accused in the chargesheet for want of permission from the Government. The agency told the court that it may file another supplementary chargesheet in the matter later. The first chargesheet in the case was filed in September 2017 naming former IAF Chief SP Tyagi and 11 others.

Besides Saxena and Saponaro, those named in the supplementary chargesheet are Sandeep Tyagi, Praveen Bakshi, Partap Krishan Aggarwal, then managing director of IDS Infotech Ltd.,

India, Narendra Kumar Jain, Rajesh Kumar Jain of Kolkata, Sunil Kothari, then managing director of OM Metals Infotech Pvt. Ltd, KV Kunhikrishnan, former GM, Westland Support Services Ltd., New Delhi, an associate of Christian Michel James, Deepak Goyal, an official of Gautam Khaitan, IDES Infotech Ltd., Mohali/Chandigarh, (through its managing director P.K. Aggarwal), Aeromatrix Info Solutions Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi (through its director Gautam Khaitan), Neel Madhav Consultants Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi (through its director Sandeep Tyagi), Mainak Agency Pvt. Ltd., earlier at Kolkata, now New Delhi (through its directors Sandeep Tyagi & Sanjeev Tyagi and Interstellar Technologies Ltd, Mauritius (through its director Rajiv Saxena).

NIA AVERTS TERROR ATTACKS WITH ARREST OF 9 AL-QAEDA TERRORISTS

The arrested accused are Murshid Hasan, Iyakkul Biswas and Mosaraf Hossen, all residents of Ernakulam, Kerala. Those arrested from Murshidabad are Najmus Sakib, Abu Sufiyan, Mainul Mondal, Leu Yeon Ahmed, Al Mamun Kamal and Atitaur Rehman.

Murshid Hasan is the leader of the gang and those arrested from Kerala are also originally residents of West Bengal, NIA officials said.

Fire crackers were being attempted to be converted into an Improvised Explosive Device (IED) and the NIA recovered switches and batteries from Abu Sufiyan’s house during the searches, they said.

The group was also planning to go to Kashmir for weapons delivery to their cohorts to hit vital installations there. The arrested accused will be produced before the relevant courts in Kerala and West Bengal by the NIA that will seek police remand to subject them to custodial interrogation to unravel the larger network and the deep-seated conspiracy for custody and further investigation, they further said.

The initial findings suggest the arrested ultras are highly radicalised and were getting instructions from foreign handlers, including Pakistan-based al-Qaeda operatives, in cyber-space. Besides targeting vital installations in India, the module was also tasked to carry out targeted killings. For the planned mass killings, the group was in the advanced stage of procuring arms, including automatic rifles and pistols besides ammunition and explosives.

The module was trying to establish a well organised network with separate verticals for different tasks in various parts of the country, including the Northeast and Jammu & Kashmir, on the instructions of the Pakistan-based handlers, the official said, adding some of its members were trying to develop expertise in IED-making.

Move to rename Manduadih as Banaras railway station

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Hectic efforts are going on to replace Manduadih as Banaras railway station and in this direction, work to paint new station nomenclature at sign boards and other places has already been started here on Saturday. Just a day ago, the Governor Anandiben Patel had given her 'no objection certificate' (NOC) to the proposal of Union Home Ministry and with the completion of all the official formalities, now efforts have been started to change the name of sign and display boards, coaches of trains originating/ terminating at Manduadih, offices and other places.

In this direction, the Divisional Railway Manager (DRM) Vijay Kumar Panjiar, along with other senior officers of Varanasi Division of North-Eastern Railway (NER), visited Manduadih railway station to see the progress being done to display new nomenclature by removing old name. This ancient holy city is known by three popular names apart from others and they are Kashi, Banaras and Varanasi. The city has a Kashi station and two stations with the name of Varanasi (Varanasi Junction and



Banaras, new name of Manduadih railway station, being painted in Varanasi on Saturday

Pioneer

Varanasi City) but it has no station with its most commonly used name Banaras. Earlier, Varanasi Junction (Cantt.) was known as Banaras but with the efforts of the then Chief Minister Sampurnanand, its name was changed into Varanasi Junction. However, at that time its station code remained the same as BSB. The change of Manduadih's nomenclature was made with the efforts of former MOSR Manoj Sinha (now Lt. Governor of J&K). After getting NOC from UP Governor in this direction, Railway Minister Piyush Goel also expressed his happiness in

one of his tweets. Now with the replacement of Manduadih (code-MUV) as Banaras its new station code would be BSBS. Since coming into the power of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who is also a local parliamentarian, in 2014, the Railway had given a major thrust to develop Manduadih railway station when it saw a remarkable growth in all the fields including increase in number of platforms from three to eight, introduction of several important trains and development of its second entry side as an international standard station.

Today, the station gives a look as an airport.

According to information, by Monday the painting or replacement of new name in the station premises would be done and within a week, the new station code would also be seen in Railway's and IRCTC websites.

Besides, the names of all the coaches and trains originating or terminating from the station would be changed soon. Some of the popular trains like Shivganga (New Delhi), Gyan Ganga (Pune), Janshatabdi (Patna) and many others originate/ terminate from this station. In the recent years, the BJP-led NDA Government had changed the names of several stations. Sometime back, the name of Mughalsarai station was changed as Pt Deen Dayal Upadhyay Junction while Allahabad City as Prayagraj Rambaug in this region apart from some others in the country.

During the NDA regime, while changing the nomenclature, the Railways has also given new station codes in new names as MGS has been changed into DDU and ALY into PRRB as now MUV has been replaced as BSBS.

162 new COVID-19 patients found

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

As many as 162 new COVID-19 cases have been detected here on Saturday, increasing the total number of cases to 11,459. Besides, the district also saw three more deaths, increasing the toll to 188. During the day, the follow-up negative reports included 207 patients. Out of them, 197 patients recovered from home isolation and the total number of patients cured at home has increased to 7,031. Besides, 10 recovered from the hospital and the number of patients who have been discharged

from the hospitals has reached 2,605. The total number of cured patients is now 9,636, leaving 1,635 active patients. The recovery rate has improved to 84.09 per cent but mortality rate increased to 1.64 per cent.

Chief Medical Officer (CMO) Dr VB Singh has also informed that in the first report of the day by 11 am, 95 positive patients were detected out of 1,573 reports received. Till then, the total test reports received were 1,63,925 and the results of 4,585 are awaited. Out of them, 1,52,533 were negative, while 11,392 positive. The

total number of samples collected was 1,78,774. Earlier, a male aged 62 from Madhauri (Bhullanpur) succumbed to COVID-19 at SSH BHU while a male aged 80 from Kali Mahal and a male (55) from Dharshauna (Cholapur) died at Apex and Meridian Hospitals respectively. Besides, with the addition of 17 new red zones, the total number of hotspots has increased to 1,880 including 379 red zones. Four green zones have been converted into red zones again. There are 1,501 green zones including 22 new ones.

Meanwhile, Medical

Superintendent (MS) of Sir Sundaral Hospital (SSH), Banaras Hindu University (BHU) has issued three notices in which it is said that the charges of dialysis, processing of convalescent plasma and CT Scan and MRI investigation from the COVID-19 positive patients admitted to the hospital have been waived off with immediate effect till further notices.

In this direction, the patients should fill the forms and claim back for reimbursement of concerned charges from the concerned departments.

BJP leaders plant saplings at many places

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) workers launched a massive plantation drive on Saturday under the ongoing Service Week, being observed on the occasion of 70th birthday of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who is also a local parliamentarian. Senior party leaders, ministers and others, along with the party workers reached different places and planted saplings. They also highlighted the importance of plantation in maintaining the environment. They also appealed to the local people to promote plantation.

In this direction, state party's co-incharge Sunil Ojha reached Shailputri Mandir premises and planted a sapling. On the occasion, the party workers also planted saplings in the temple premises and



UP minister Neelkanth Tiwari planting a sapling in Varanasi on Saturday

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appealed to the people to keep the city clean and green. Regional party's president (Kashi Pranth unit) Mahesh Chandra Srivastava planted sapling at Subhash Nagar Park in front of his residence at Parade Kothi.

Besides, UP Minister of State (Independent Charge) Dr Neelkanth Tiwari planted a sapling at Arra Math premises near Bhadour Chungi area. He was accompanied by several senior party leaders. Similarly, another UP Minister of State (Independent Charge) Ravindra Jaiswal reached Sarnath area and planted sapling in the premises of Water Treatment Plant. Party MLA Saurabh Srivastava planted saplings at two places, Cantonment Board Junior High School premises and Navodita Nagar Colony, Mehmoorganj.

Indian Bank holds loan camp

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Indian Bank on Saturday organised a loan distribution camp at the zonal office, here to distribute loans among beneficiaries of the Prime Minister Street Vendor's Atma Nirbhar Nidhi (PM SVANidhi) Scheme. Chief guest and Regional General Manager of the bank Vinay Kumar Singh informed, the aim behind to hold the camp is to provide loan to those who are engaged in their short enterprises so that they could increase their income and improve their living standard in the present adverse situation of COVID-19. Singh also handed over cheque/pass-book to more than 70 beneficiaries under the scheme.

Zonal Head of the bank TG Shashidhar informed, the bank has so far approved/ distributed the total loan of ₹ 92 lakh to as many as 921 beneficiaries and added, the necessary directives have been issued to the branches for approving the loan applications, under this scheme, on priority basis. Sub-Zonal Manager KN Singh and many others were



Zonal chief TG Shashidhar presenting loan at a camp of Indian Bank in Varanasi on Saturday

Pioneer

present on the occasion.

DIRECTIVE: Aiming at facilitating the street vendors who have suffered a lot during the lockdown due to COVID-19 pandemic, the District Magistrate Kaushal Raj Sharma on Saturday directed zonal officers of Varanasi Municipal Corporation (VMC) to ensure their registration under the Prime Minister Street Vendor's Atma Nirbhar Nidhi (PM SVANidhi) Scheme within four days so that loan could be distributed among them by getting

their application approved from the banks.

It may be said here the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs had on June 1 last launched the PM SVANidhi Scheme with an aim to provide affordable working capital loans to street vendors to resume their livelihoods that have been affected due to COVID-19 lockdown. There will be no penalty on early repayment of the loan under the scheme. Chairing a meeting at camp office here, the

DM reviewed the progress under scheme and asked the zonal officers of five zones of VMC to search remaining street vendors against the target and ensure that their application forms are filled up and registration within four days so that they could be provided loan by getting approved from the banks. Against the total 2,936 applications under the scheme, a total of Survey Reference Number (SRN) has been generated and as many as 1,491 applications have been completed in Amadpur Zone, while as many as 4,746 SRN has been generated and 2,451 applications have completed in Bhelupur Zone, informed the Project Officer of DUDA to the DM. Similarly, out of 5,622, a total of 2,498 applications have been filled and as many as 5018 SRN has been generated in Dashaswamedh Zone, while as many as 1082 applications have been filled and a total of 2,226 SRN has been generated in Kotwali Zone. Out of 9,953, a total of 4,668 applications have been filled and as many as 8,765 SRN has been generated in the trans-Varuna Zone.

366 more test positive in Prayagraj

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ ALLAHABAD

In the case of coronavirus, the number of cured people was more than those who got infected on Friday. A total of 411 people were cured of the infection in a single day, which is a record so far. On Wednesday, 406 patients were free of infection. The Nodal Officer for Corona, Dr Rishi Sahai said that the total number increased to 12,247 with 411 patients becoming infection free. At the same time the total number of infected people in the district has increased to 16,107 with 366 new infected being detected late on Friday night. In addition, home isolation of 350 people has been completed. The number of active cases in the district has increased to 3,634.

Dr Sahai said that 330 patients are admitted to different hospitals. Most patients are in Swaroop Rani Nehru Hospital. According to the report, there are 154 infected from Prayagraj admitted to the Covid Hospitals here. Of them, 50 patients are admitted in Railway Hospital, 28 in Covid Care Centre Kalindipuram, eight in Unani Medical College, 63 in two private hospitals, 35 in Beli. The remaining 3,331 people are in home isolation. Apart from this, 61 people have been discharged from hospitals.

Of the total 10 persons were discharged from Covid Care Centre Kalindipuram,

11 from Railway Hospital, two from Unani Medical College, nine from Beli, 11 from two private hospitals and 18 from SRN Hospital. Apart from this, samples have been taken for testing of 2,796 suspects and reports of 2,356 people have come negative.

Dr Rishi said that 214 people have been found infected with antigen test, 122 from RTPCR and 30 in Trunot among those coming positive on Friday. At RTPCR, 63 people were tested in a private lab. He said that more than 50 people have been tested positive in private hospitals.

Corona on Friday took many officers and employees, including the Sister Incharge of SRN Hospital, a High Court Officer, advocate in its grip. The nodal officer for corona confirmed this. Among those being tested positive included senior traffic officer of the railway, advocate of the High Court, Deputy Director of Agriculture, assistant manager of PNB based in Civil Lines, assistant account manager of CDA pension, health visitor of Saidabad CHC, primary school teacher at Kaurihar, AO of LIC, one officer of High Court, SDM Sadar's ardali, AG office Senior Record Officer, RAF's Sub Inspector, Assistant Professor of Allahabad University, Registrar of Sadar Tehsil, Manager of Union Bank based at Handia, Sister Incharge of SRN Hospital, Additional Personal Secretary

of High Court, Branch manager of HDFC based in Civil Lines. Families, relatives, acquaintances coming in contact with all of them will be screened and tested for COVID-19. People are being contacted for this purpose.

Meanwhile, four people died on Friday due to a deadly virus. All of them were residents of the city. After death, the last rites were performed at the ghat at Phaphamau. The treatment of all four was going on in Swaroop Rani Nehru Hospital. According to the Health department report, a 57-year-old man from Georgetown who tested positive succumbed to corona besides, a 73-year-old elderly person from Thatheri Bazaar, a 56-year-old man from Jagmal Ka Haata and a 60-year-old man from Daraganj died due to coronavirus.

PLASMA THERAPY STARTED: Plasma therapy for treatment of Covid patients has kick-started in the Blood Bank of Allahabad Medical Association (AMA) from Saturday. It was inaugurated around 4 in the evening. According to AMA officials, the blood bank also received the first plasma donor.

AMA office-bearer Dr Anoop Chauhan said that plasma therapy has been ineffective in the trial of ICMR, but this therapy is not forbidden. Its positive results have also been seen on some people. At the same time, former

office-bearer Dr Ashok Agarwal said that AMA has been approved by the Drug Controller of India to start the therapy. It will be started commercially.

It may be pointed out here that after studying this on 464 patients in 39 hospitals of the country, it was declared ineffective by ICMR. The scientist Dr Arpana Mukherjee of the ICMR had said that therapy does not affect the patient's death. Also, it is unsuccessful in protecting the patient from going into critical condition. Prior to this, Delhi AIIMS had already said it was ineffective after studying 30 patients. Local Assistant Drug Commissioner Udaybhan Singh said that the Drug Controller of India has approved, but on what basis they are not aware of it.

The Pathology department of Moti Lal Nehru Medical College is going to start plasma therapy as research. Head of Department Prof Vatsala Mishra said that it will be started as a research from next week.

Preparations are underway for this move. Some people who have recovered after getting corona infected have been approached to donate plasma. Seven to eight people have been marked. The Ethical Committee of the college has approved the research. It will be tried only after acceptance of the infected patient and cured patient.

Building of Atique demolished

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ ALLAHABAD

In Puramufti under the neighbouring Kaushambi district, a building of Atique Ahmed was demolished by the district administration on Saturday. This building was raised on a Gram Panchayat land just behind Sallahpur police outpost on Kanpur Road.

The Yogi Government has launched a crusade against mafia dons in the state, and under this action Atique Ahmed of Prayagraj is a big target. This Sallahpur land was illegally grabbed by the gangmen of Atique and a building

was raised there on a plinth area of 600 sq metres, besides boundary wall to claim possession on a bigger area.

On Saturday morning officials reached there with JCB machines and heavy police force to demolish the unauthorised construction.

It may be mentioned here that properties of Atique Ahmed and his near and dear ones worth crores of rupees were either razed to ground or the officials put a seal on them in Prayagraj during the past couple of weeks.

This Sallahpur property was owned by the inlaws of

Mohammad Ashraf, younger brother of Atique and also the prime accused of BSP MLA Raju Pal murder case.

However, the brother inlaw of Ashraf said that their construction was authorised and legal, and they will move the court against this action of the administration.

Their house was built before the marriage of their sister with Ashraf, so it was not having any connection with Atique gang.

RLY LAND FREED FROM ENCROACHMENTS: In Kydganj Naibasti area Railway land was freed from

encroachments on Saturday. Houses raised on Railway land by the side of railway tracks were demolished with bulldozers.

Railways had given notice to the encroachers six months in advance, but they did not remove their illegal constructions.

Ultimately the Railway authorities had to resort to demolition of the illegally built houses on Railway land.

Now those who have received notices from the railways in other areas have started shifting to safe places with their belongings.

AIKSCC flays move to invite MNCs in agriculture sector

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ ALLAHABAD

Working Group of AIKSCC has bitterly criticised the Prime Minister for diverting attention of the nation from the promises he made to the farmers of the country of securing their income and openly inviting MNCs and corporate to freely loot the labour of Indian farmers. He is trying an old trick of linking the farmers' anger to opposition parties, instead of coming clean and answering for his own politicking and betrayal of interest of farmers and agricultural workers. Debate is not Opposition versus Government, but Farmers versus Government Policy. Farmers continue to suffer high indebtedness, uprooting, displacement and are being forced to commit suicides without unnerving rulers.

AIKSCC has stood on its own firm ground to fight for 'Karja Mukti, Poora Daam' ever since the BJP government of MP ruthlessly fired upon and killed peacefully demonstrating farmers in Mandsaur

in 2017.

The Prime Minister is throwing sawdust in the nation's eyes when he is claiming that despite the three bills the 'appropriate' (uchit) MSP and procurement will continue, 'as it was' earlier. 'Earlier', the MSP was only for 23 crops, it was never 'uchit' and procurement benefit accrued to only 6 per cent farmers as per govt's Shanta Kumar Commission confessed. It wanted to stop procurement by FCI and Nafed, storage and supply of foodgrain in PDS. AIKSCC struggle is for procurement of all crops, on MSP at C2+50%.

The Prime Minister would pass a law to guarantee MSP and procurement of all crops and not one to permit MNCs / corporate to do contract farming and purchase crops outside of Mandis. To cover up his government's withdrawal from its responsibility, the PM has called these agro giants as more options and a 'Suraksha Kavach' for farmers. Stopping government procurement will end options for farmers.

Farmers all over the world

are protected by their governments from companies. After harvest the crop has to be sold, or else it will perish and lose value. It is sold in nearby mandis and can't be carted without a heavy cost. 'Freedom' to sell anywhere and get the best price is a hoax call. Government procurement and price assurance are the only checks on unscrupulous corporate who monopolise and squeeze the peasant.

The Bills provide for contract farming which will enable corporate to pool land of small farmers, contract it, force them to buy costly inputs and sell their crop at predetermined prices. Contracts bind farmers, deny them profitable open market sale – exposes another falsehood propagated by the government. The producer peasant will be saddled with losses due to price crash and crop loss and more debts, the profit will be pocketed by the company.

There is apprehension that control over crops sown through input controls and the free import/ export by

companies in the absence of Government Controls, will lead to glut in the market due to cheap imports of wheat, rice, oilseeds, pulses, soya, milk and milk products and others. That will further undermine 'aatmanirbharta' of the Indian peasants and ultimately evict them from agriculture.

No country has grown by handing over its food control to foreign exploiters. The Modi Government is doing just that.

AIKSCC is determined to safeguard the interest of the farmers and fight to the finish for its twin objective of 'Karja Mukti, Poora Daam'. It is preparing for a series of protests as outlined above.

AIKSCC calls upon all farmers, peasants, agriculture workers, tribals, fishermen, rural traders all over the country and trade unions, parties, democratic forces to join the movement. This movement is also against the New Power Bill, 2020 which ends all subsidies for the farming community and the weaker sections and against the massive hike in diesel and petrol prices.

5-yr contract in govt jobs is a false propaganda by opposition: Dy CM

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ ALLAHABAD

Five-year contract in Government services and retirement at the age of 50 is a false propaganda by the spine less opposition, said the Deputy Chief Minister Keshav Prasad Maurya here on Saturday.

There is no such plan of the government, but the Samajwadi Party, Congress, Bahujan Samaj Party, and the leftists are out to misguide the youth and propagating falsely that the UP Government was bringing one such bill.

The Central and the State Government of UP are gaining popularity by their initia-



Deputy Chief Minister Keshav Prasad Maurya holding a meeting during his two days visit to Prayagraj

Pioneer

tives in public interest, but the opposition parties are out to politicise these steps with false propaganda.

He also referred to the agitation of the misguided farmers and said that fearing their elimination from the market, the middlemen are spreading rumours and to protect their interest the Congress and other opposition parties are fanning disturbance.

The Prime Minister had come out with a clarification that the government will serve the interest of the farmers who are being misguided by the middlemen and the opposition.

Kumar: Govt to carry out audit of COVID-19 deaths in Kanpur

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Principal Secretary (Medical Health) Alok Kumar said the government had decided to carry out an audit of all the COVID-19 deaths in the city. Addressing a high level meeting, Kumar said the objective of the audit was to identify if there was any human error behind these deaths, especially whether the rapid response team (RRT) delayed the admission of the patient or there was delay in starting the treatment. The principal secretary, however, claimed a decline in

the deaths of COVID-19 patients, while admitting that the deaths had peaked in August when 238 patients had died in 30 days. Kumar said in the first 20 days of September, Kanpur Nagar had witnessed around 130 COVID-19 deaths but what was a greater cause of concern was that over 400 fresh coronavirus positive cases were being detected almost every day. He said to check the COVID-19 deaths, cooperation and coordination from every section was essential. The principal secretary said at present the priority was

on tracing the persons who came in contact with the affected person as now there was more movement as compared to the past when lockdown was imposed. He said there were many reasons for deaths and one was that even the coronavirus affected people were taking medicines on their own for cold and fever due to which the infection spread to the lungs and by the time he/she reached hospital for test and treatment, the infection had already spread dangerously in the lungs causing many problems.

Kumar said there was no crisis of oxygen as being projected by the media, adding that all efforts were being made to ensure easy and quick availability of oxygen at the prescribed rates. He said the government was keeping a strict vigil on the companies manufacturing oxygen and said if there was any report of hoarding and black-marketing, strict action would be taken against the person, hospital or medical store. All top officials of the district administration were present in the meeting.

Step up surveillance and contact tracing: Shekhar

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Kanpur Divisional Commissioner Dr Raj Shekhar, while expressing concern over the spurt in the number of coronavirus positive cases in the district, said that surveillance and contact tracing had to be stepped up in the right earnest. He said Kanpur Nagar was a city with a large population and on account of this there was a vast spread of the novel coronavirus. The divisional commissioner said that people should to understand the importance of social distancing and use of face masks as they protected one from contracting the infection. He said to fight the COVID-19, the district, police, medical personnel and the people would have to join hands. Shekhar said all the divisional officials would not leave

New assignments to health officials

KANPUR (PNS): Additional Director Health Dr RP Yadav has been shifted as Additional Director (Operations) at the Health Directorate. He has been replaced by Dr SN Bajpai of Ursula Hospital. In another reshuffle, District TB Officer Dr GK Mishra has been made the Mukhya Nagar Swasthya Adhikari and Dr Jyoti Saxena the chief medical officer of KPM Hospital. Similarly CMS of Kanshiram Hospital, Dr SK Pandey, had been posted as Additional Director (Health) at Health Directorate. Dr RC Bhatt has been made medical superintendent while Dr Neeta Rani and Dr Kiran Sachan have been made chief consultants.

headquarters without prior sanction and review meetings would be held regularly in every department. He said strict monitoring would also be done of all the works, including the implementation of government schemes, and

delays would not be tolerated. The divisional commissioner said if the officials faced any problem, they could directly apprise him through SMS. He said a special WhatsApp group of all the officials would be created so

that they could apprise the authorities of the details sought. Shekhar said the implementation of government schemes was being monitored by the chief minister and the chief secretary and laxity would certainly not be tolerated. Later, Shekhar visited Kanpur Nagar Nigam and inspected the COVID-19 Control and Command Centre. He said the duty of the control room was to keep a strict vigil and remain watchful so that prompt action could be taken at the earliest. He interacted with the district administration and health officials and said unitedly one can fight the pandemic. He said people should also ensure that they maintained social distancing, used masks, washed hands frequently and refrained from moving out unnecessarily.

Expert throws light on standards of auditing

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Central Indian Regional Council member Prakash Kabra, while addressing a webinar on 'Standards of Auditing' on Saturday, said auditing standards provided minimum guidance for the auditor that helped in determining the extent of audit steps and procedures that should be applied to fulfil the audit objective. He said these were in fact the yardsticks against which the quality of the audit results were evaluated. He added that to ensure that information provided in the financial statements were of high quality and were acceptable globally, the chartered accountants had formulated these standards. Kabra said audit documentation was an important standard which laid down the basic principles of audit documentation. He said these principles needed to be kept in mind by auditors while complying with the requirements of SA 230 and specific documentation requirements of other Standards on Auditing. Kabra said it could also save one from major problems when an audit performed became the subject matter of litigation and investigation. He said the objective was to prepare documentation that provided sufficient and appropriate record of the basis for the auditor's report and evidence that the audit was planned and performed in accordance with the SAs and applicable legal and regulatory requirements. Discussing documenta-

tion, Kabra said it was considered the backbone of an audit and the work that the auditor performed, the explanations given to the auditor, the conclusions arrived at, were all evidenced by documentation. He said poor documentation may depict poor performance in an audit. He said it supported the auditor's basis for a conclusion about achieving the auditor's objectives and provided evidence that audit was planned and performed. Discussing SA 580, Kabra said that when management refused to provide necessary representations, the auditor should qualify or disclaim his or her opinion. He said the refusal to provide written representations implied management's unwillingness to accept responsibility and accountability for the financial statements. He said the SA 580 dealt with the auditors' responsibilities in obtaining written

representations from management on matters which were material to the financial statements when other sufficient appropriate audit evidence could not reasonably be expected to exist. He SA 315 dealt with identifying and assessing the risks of material misstatement through understanding the entity and its environment. He said the International Auditing and Assurance Standards Board (IAASB) had issued International Standard on Auditing (ISA) for international use. Kabra added that one of the key changes to the International Standard on Auditing (ISA) 315 had been to tighten up the audit requirements to clarify the methodology for identifying and assessing risk to improve audit quality. He said the revision also emphasised the importance of identifying potential fraud and thus it required strict controls.

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Auto drivers block road

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Dozens of auto-rickshaw drivers went berserk and blocked the road near Ramasrey Park at Bara Chauraha on Saturday afternoon. Circle Officer (Traffic) reached the spot and pacified the protesters. According to reports, when auto driver Sitanshu Sonkar of Colonelganj was picking up passengers near Ramasrey Park, a traffic crane worker tried to take out the ignition key from his auto-rickshaw. On protest, the worker beat up the auto driver, injuring him. Meanwhile, workers of two other cranes also reached there and tried to lift the auto. This led to heated arguments with other auto drivers present on the spot and they went berserk and scuffled with the crane operators and cleaners. They accused the crane workers of extortion and blocked the road with around four dozen auto-rickshaws. CO (Traffic) Tripurari



Irate autorickshaw drivers informing police officials about the incident.

Pandey and Kotwali police reached the spot and pacified

the auto drivers. The CO (Traffic) said after

investigation, the guilty would be punished.

343 more test positive

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Kanpur Nagar reported 343 fresh cases of coronavirus infection till Saturday evening. Chief Medical Officer Dr AK Mishra said 343 more people had tested positive for coronavirus infection between Friday evening and Saturday evening, taking the count of confirmed cases to 22,532. He said a total of 56 cases were discharged and 5892 COVID-19 patients had been cured in the city so far, and at present 4882 active coronavirus cases were undergoing treatment. The CMO said 13 COVID-19 deaths were reported in the city till Saturday evening taking the toll to 587. He said a total of 6222 samples were sent for testing in the district.

KDA to realise compounding charges

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Kanpur Development Authority Vice Chairman Rakesh Kumar Singh has sought the files of city petrol refuelling stations and sealed buildings from the engineers of the enforcement squad. As most of the petrol pumps have carried out illegal construction on their premises during the past few months, the KDA would recover compounding charges from them. The KDA vice chairman said under the Compounding Scheme of 2021, illegal construction could be regularised till January 20 next. He said with the connivance of KDA engineers, owners of many petrol pumps and buildings had made illegal construction. With the files of these petrol pumps and buildings, spot inspection would be carried out to ascertain facts, he added. Sources said that after completing the construction in many sealed buildings in Ashok Nagar, Arya Nagar, Jawahar Nagar, Kidwai Nagar, Brahma Nagar, P Road, Nawabganj and Jajmau, people had started living there. This has deprived the KDA from recovering compounding charges from them due to "suvidha sulk" already received by some KDA engineers. Besides, as against the installation of rainwater harvesting system in 212 buildings during the current financial year, the work was done in only 81 premises so far. The KDA vice chairman has sought report of action initiated against the guilty builders. The target to set up 40 megawatt solar energy plant is also yet to be completed. Singh said the beautification of pond constructed under Jawaharpuram Scheme involving an expenditure of Rs.6 lakh and many other ponds, including the one situated at Jhakarkati Bus Terminal, would be taken up soon. He said as against the target of planting 80,000 saplings, 66,000 had already been planted. A drive is on to plant the remaining 14,000 saplings, he added.

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Youth drowns

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

A youth drowned in the river Ganga at Shuklaganj ghat on Saturday morning. Divers recovered his body which was sent for autopsy. According to reports, Ankit Sahu of Yashoda Nagar and his friends Abhishek Gautam, Saurabh Verma and Anuj Pandey left their houses on pretext of studying with other friends. From there, they decided to go for bathing in Ganga and moved towards Shuklaganj ghat. Under the old Gangaghat bridge, when all the four entered the water, Ankit suddenly slipped into deep water and started drowning. Seeing him drowning, his friends came out of water and raised an alarm. Hearing noise, divers present there jumped into the river and recovered the body of Ankit. The kin of the deceased also reached the spot.

NCL donates ₹5 cr for ambulances

CORRESPONDENT ■ SONBHADRA



NCL CMD Prabhat Kumar Sinha met CM UP Yogi Adityanath on Friday and handed over a cheque of ₹5 crore for procurement of 50 ambulances under CSR. This initiative will help them to strengthen the fight against Covid-19. Director (Personnel), NCL Bimlendu Kumar was also present on the occasion. CMD 'Sinha briefed about NCL's coal operations in UP and MP. He assured adequate amount of coal dispatch to thermal power plants of UP taking coal from NCL. He also briefed about CSR activities in Sonbhadra, Varanasi and other districts of UP. CMD also apprised about the measures taken by NCL in Sonbhadra to fight Covid-19. CM Yogi

Adityanath appreciated the contribution of NCL in the energy security of the nation. He also praised NCL's effort in fighting Covid pandemic. He also assured the state's support to NCL. During his visit CMD also met UP Chief Secretary Rajendra Kumar Tiwari and discussed mining, CSR and other issues of the company. Earlier an MoU was signed between the CSR wing of NCL and UP State Disaster Management Authority to give Rs 5 Crore to UP gov-

ernment for the procurement of 50 ambulances under its CSR initiatives. During the past five years NCL has undertaken development works of about ₹80 crore under CSR in UP. The projects include solar power electrification of 80 PHCs, financial aid for solid waste management in 13 panchayats of Varanasi, construction of eco park near Banaras railway station, around 15,000 furniture in 1,800 government schools, smart classrooms in schools, construction of roads, developing skills of youth etc. NCL is a mini-ratna company based out of Singrauli (MP) and Sonbhadra (UP) with four mines in UP producing more than 20 per cent to 22 per cent of its coal production annually and supplies it to the major TPP of UPRVUNL.

DRM inspects Manduadih coaching depot

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI



DRM, Varanasi Division of NER, VK Panjiar, conducted an inspection of the project works being done at Manduadih coaching depot on Friday. He directed the agency to properly manage the placement of sick coaches and repair of sick line floor repair work scheduled to be started next week and to carefully determine the rail level in view of low elevation of lifting tackle during the work. He also

instructed to relocate washing pit No 1 in 40 metres empty space towards Varanasi Junction (Cantt.) railway station to increase the 30 metres proposed straight line for ACWP and remove unusable coaching depot from engine

testing line of DLW from western corner. He instructed the agency concerned that the proposed work on washing pits 3 and 4 should be done on time and maintain quality of work by dismantling old RPF barracks creating hurdles. He also gave several other instructions. He was accompanied by SDE (Coordination) Rajiv Agarwal, SDME (Carriage & Wagon) Satyaprakash Srivastava, AE NK Pathak and coaching depot officer (Manduadih) Shailesh Kumar Singh.

Surat-Chhapra clone spl to run from Sep 21

CORRESPONDENT ■ GORAKHPUR

As per the decision taken by the Railway Board the movement of 09065/09066 Surat-Chhapra-Surat Superfast weekly clone special train will be done from September 21 from Surat every Monday and from September 23 from Chhapra every Thursday. Clone special trains will be fully reserved. The fare of these trains will be like Humsafar Express, said CPRO PK Singh. The 09065 Surat-Chhapra superfast weekly clone special train from September 21 till further orders will depart from Surat at 08.30 hours on every Monday, from Bhusawal at 13.30 hrs, from Itarsi at 17:50 hrs, from Jabalpur at 21.30 hrs, the second day from Prayagraj Chheoki at 03.10 hrs, from Varanasi at 07.00 hours and from Shahganj at 09.40 hours and reach Chhapra at 14.30 hours. The 09066 Chhapra-Surat superfast weekly clone special train from September 23 till further notice on every Wednesday will leave Chhapra at 08.30 hrs, from Shahganj at 14.00 hrs, from Varanasi at 16.10 hrs, from Prayagraj Chheoki at 19.25 hrs, the second day from Jabalpur at 01:05 hours, from Itarsi at 04.45 hours,

from Bhusawal at 09.25 hours and will reach Surat at 14.45 hrs. The train will have 18 coaches, including two of generator-cum-luggage, 12 of third AC, and four of sleeper class. Meanwhile the movement of 09465/09466 Ahmedabad-Darbhanga-Ahmedabad weekly clone special will be done from September 25 from Ahmedabad every Friday and from Darbhanga from September 28 every Monday. The 09465 Ahmedabad-Darbhanga weekly special will leave Ahmedabad from September 25 at 20:40 hrs on every Friday till further notice, the next day from Ratlam at 01:30 hours, from Ujjain at 03:10 hours, from Guna at 08.00 hrs, from Bina at 10:30 hours, from Jhansi at 12:40 hours, from Kanpur Central at 16.45 hours, from Lucknow at 18:30 hours, from Faizabad at 20:35 hours, from Shahganj at 22.55 hours, on third day from Chhapra at 04.00 hrs, from Samastipur at 08.30 hrs and reach Darbhanga at 09.30 hrs. The 09466 Darbhanga-Ahmedabad weekly special train from September 28 every Monday will leave Darbhanga at 04.00 hrs and after stopping at Samastipur, Chhapra, Shahganj, Faizabad, Lucknow etc reach Ahmedabad at 16:20 hours.

‘Development at cost of nature harmful’

CORRESPONDENT ■ MIRZAPUR

Renowned thinker, KN Govindacharya, said that any development at the cost of nature was detrimental in the long run so it should be done keeping the ecological balance in mind. While interacting with media on Friday, he said Ganga was the lifeline of the nation and indigenous cow was the way to enhance per capita income. He said that in British era the ratio between a person and livestock was 1:10 and at that time the country was richest in the world. After independence it came down to 1:1 which made the nation poorer, he said. Expressing his anguish over the interference of technology in common life, he said that it should be regulated by law. It was not only influencing common life but market and even world politics, he added. He said that his study trip was taken out from Devprayag and was to culminate

at Gangasagar on October 2 whose purpose was to highlight the strength of our nation. He said that environment and indigenous technology were



enough to make the nation powerful. While interacting with the intellectuals of the society he discussed issues related to prevailing scenario. Among those who attended the meeting were Rakesh Shukla, Gangasagar Dubey, Rajpati Ojha, Balendumani Tripathi, Manoj Jaiswal, Dev Prakash Pathak, Vishnu Sonkar. It was convened by Sushil Dubey.

MEETING: Divisional Commissioner Preeti Shukla while addressing a meeting at L-2 hospital directed the administration to continue the precautionary measures against Covid-

19. She was apprised by the DM 26 patients were admitted in L-1 hospital and 16 in L-2. The DM gave details about the treatment, diet and facilities available for patients and said that the recovery rate was satisfactory. The DC directed ACMO to remain in touch with the patients in home isolation and updated with their condition.

NABBED: Kachhawaan police have arrested two women and recovered 14 stolen sarees from them. Amit Gupta, a resident of Kachhawaan market lodged an FIR that two unidentified women entered his shop for purchasing sarees but instead took away 14 of them from there. Police during patrolling intercepted two suspects at Kachhawaan road railway crossing. On seeing them the women tried to dodge them but were caught. They were identified as Geeta and Puneeta, residents of Mahmoooganj, Varanasi. Police recovered seven sarees each from them.

Virtual kavi sammelan organised

CORRESPONDENT ■ GORAKHPUR

A kavi sammelan was organised in a virtual form under the presidency of Chief Rajbhasha Officer Arvind Kumar Pandey on the last day of the Rajbhasha Week celebration-2020 on Friday, CPRO PK Singh said. The Rajbhasha Week celebrations were organised at headquarters, Gorakhpur, under the aegis of NER Rajbhasha department from September 14 to 18. The kavi sammelan was started by Nisha Rai with a Saraswati Vandana. In

his presidential address Chief Rajbhasha Officer Pandey said that the kavi sammelan was very interesting. Poetry is an effective weapon that can change the thinking of society in a moment, said Pandey. He expressed happiness over the successful organisation of the Rajbhasha Week. Poets invited to the kavi sammelan mesmerised the audience with their compositions. They were Dr Charushila Singh from Gorakhpur, Rajesh, Bhushan Tyagi, Nisha Rai, Prabhakar Mishra, humorous poet PK

Deewana, Bareilly etc. Devendra Natkhath through his piece paid respect to the official language, Hindi in this way, "aabhooshanon mein keemat jyaada bindee ki hogi...". The welcome address was delivered by Deputy Chief Rajbhasha Officer Omkar Nath Singh. The kavi sammelan was conducted by Rajbhasha Officer Dhruv Kumar Srivastava. Rajbhasha Officer Mohammad Arshad Mirza proposed the vote of thanks. Senior translator Anamika Singh was also present on the occasion.

NTPC Rihand sends fly ash to Ropar

CORRESPONDENT ■ SONBHADRA



CGM (O&M) of Rihand Project (RSTPP), a leading unit of NTPC Limited, Anant Charan Sahu flagged off the goods train loaded with conditioned fly ash to ACC Cement, Ropar (Punjab) recently. The conditioned fly ash was sent through tarpaulin covered BOXN wagons of Indian Railways. Rihand is a dedicated project for 100 per cent ash utility and environmental protection and in this context the project is always striving to find and establish new areas and disciplines to increase ash utility

progressively. The project had created a history on August 10 last when it became the first thermal power plant of the state which sent conditioned fly ash to a cement plant. With the introduction of ash transportation through Railways it has been possible to send extracted ash from thermal power plants to remotely-located cement plants easily and cheaply. Rihand is

also exploring the possibility of sending ash to Dalmia cement by sending the ash through Railways to Guwahati. The programme was also attended by GM (ADM) KN Reddy, GM (Maintenance) S Srikrishna, GM (Operations) Aresh Kumar Chattopadhyay, GM (fuel management) M Ramesh, GM (MTP) KC Tripathi, GM (technical services) AK Papanaja, Mukul Rai, Vijay Kumar Atri, Dilip Caborta, KC Singharaya, Hareram Singh, Mohit Agrawal, Sanjeev Kasumra, Anil Kumar Singh, Amit Himan, Raghavendra Narayan, Ashish Kumar, Hemant Masih and Ramji Dwivedi.

India overtakes US in Covid-19 recoveries

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India has overtaken the US to register the highest number of Covid-19 recoveries in the world.

It has reported the highest number of recoveries with 42,08,431 infected patients recuperating from the viral disease. About 60 per cent of the new recoveries were reported from five States — Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Uttar Pradesh. Incidentally, these are the States that have reported high caseload also.

Recovery-wise, Maharashtra accounted for over 22,000 (23 per cent), followed by Andhra Pradesh with more than 11,000 (12.3 per cent) of the new recoveries.

“The country has reported the highest number of recoveries with 42,08,431 COVID-19 patients having recovered from the disease so far, pushing the national recovery rate to nearly 80 per cent, while the case fatality rate has further dropped to 1.61 per cent,” the Union Health Ministry said on Saturday.

“India now accounts for close to 19 per cent of the total global recoveries. This has strongly pushed the national recovery rate to 79.28 per cent,” it underlined.

The Centre-led focussed, calibrated, responsive and effective measures of early identification through high and aggressive testing, a prompt surveillance and tracking, coupled with standardised high-quality clinical care, have together resulted in this glob-



al achievement, the ministry said.

A record 95,880 patients recuperated from COVID-19 in a span of 24 hours, with 90 per cent of the new recoveries reported from 16 States and Union territories, the ministry's data said.

According to the ministry, 90 per cent of the recoveries were reported from 15 States and Union territories.

The five states with the maximum caseload — Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Uttar Pradesh — have also accounted for a majority of the recoveries, the ministry highlighted.

“India has maintained a sustained path of reporting a very high number of recoveries. This is the result of focussed strategies leading to coordinated effective actions in the states and Union territories,” it said.

India's COVID-19 tally mounted to 53,08,014 on Saturday with 93,337 cases

Homemade masks helpful in checking Covid spread

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Homemade masks help in fighting the spread of viruses like Covid-19 when combined with frequent hand-washing and physical distancing, researchers have said after testing the breathability and droplet-blocking ability of 11 common household fabrics, using a medical mask as a benchmark. The study has been published in the journal Extreme Mechanics Letters.

reported in a day, while the death toll due to the disease climbed to 85,619 with 1,247 more people succumbing to it in a span of 24 hours, the ministry said.

RS passes Epidemic Diseases Amendment Bill to protect health workers

Earlier, the House passed Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (Second Amendment) Bill

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Rajya Sabha on Saturday passed two legislations, The Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (Second Amendment) Bill 2020 and The Epidemic Diseases (Amendment) Bill, 2020.

The Epidemic Diseases (Amendment) Bill provides for up to five years in jail for those attacking doctors and healthcare workers fighting the COVID-19 outbreak or during any situation akin to the current pandemic.

Speaking on the Bill in the Rajya Sabha, Union Health Minister Dr Harsh Vardhan said that the bill was required to prevent offences against healthcare professionals.

“Many healthcare workers including doctors, paramedics were insulted in some form or the other, due to stigma attached to COVID-19. Centre government acted on this situation found that there was a need for a law, a prohibitory mechanism against such incidents,” Dr Harsh Vardhan said.

However, Trinamool Congress (TMC) MP Derek O'Brien termed the Bill an attempt to encroach states' constitutionally assigned functioning.

Speaking while the discussions on the bill were underway, the TMC MP said that

Bengal already had laws to deal with prevention of violence against doctors and healthcare workers.

“You thought of healthcare workers now? Bengal has Medicare Service Prevention of Violence and Damage to Property Act 2009. What happens to it? Bill is an attempt to encroach states' constitutionally assigned functioning,” O'Brien said.

The Upper House had earlier passed the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016 (Second Amendment) Bill.

Moving the IBC Bill in Rajya Sabha Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said, “IBC is such a critical part of business now. On the NPAs of scheduled commercial banks, I just want to highlight how IBC is actually serving the purpose. The priority is to keep companies to be a going concern rather than liquidate them.”

The Bill mandates that a default on repayments from March 25, the day when a nationwide lockdown began to curb the spread of coronavirus, would not be considered for initiating insolvency proceedings for at least six months.

The upper house which saw minimal disruptions during the last two days passed four Bills together with the controversial Farmers bill and Homeopathy bill in Friday.

NEP tailored to meet 21st century edu needs: Kovind

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

President Ram Nath Kovind on Saturday said the new National Education Policy (NEP) aims to reorient the education system towards meeting the needs of the 21st century by achieving the twin objectives of inclusion and excellence and will also restore India's glory as a learning centre.

Speaking at the inaugural address of Visitors' Conference on 'Implementation of NEP in Higher Education', Kovind said the policy sets the vision of developing an equitable and vibrant knowledge society by providing quality education to all.

Vice Chancellors of all

Central Universities and Directors of IITs, NITs, SPAs etc were present on the occasion besides the Union Education Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal Nishank and top Ministry officials.

He drew inspiration from Bhagvad Gita and the Krishna-Arjun dialogue while reiterating the concept of free communication and discussion between the teacher and the student. “Effective implementation of the NEP 2020 is likely to restore India's glory as a great centre of learning as during the times of Takshashila and Nalanda,” Kovind added.

The President said according to the All India Survey of

Higher Education for 2018-19, GER for females is slightly higher than that for males. However, the share of female students is extremely low in Institutions of National Importance and particularly low in technical education. Emphasising that NEP has focus on equity and inclusion, he said that such gender disparity in higher education should be corrected.

Union Education minister Ramesh Pokhriyal Nishank said the NEP has given access to foreign universities to open campuses in India and vice-versa which will be instrumental in the process of making India a soft power, the Minister added.

India should talk to Pakistan to defuse border row: Farooq

Former JK CM also demands restoration of 4G services in UT

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Former Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister and National Conference president Farooq Abdullah on Saturday sought talks with Pakistan, saying if India can talk to China to defuse their border row, it can also speak to its other neighbour to deal with the situation at the Union Territory's borders. He also



demanding a restoration of 4G internet services in the UT.

“Border skirmishes have been rising and people are dying... A way has to be found to deal with this. Except for talks... As you are talking to China to attempt that it withdraws (from Ladakh border), we should also talk to our (other) neighbour to find a way to get out of this situation,” he said in Lok Sabha during the Zero Hour amid shouting from treasury bench-

es. Abullah was speaking in the Parliament for the first time after his release from the detention following the change in the Union Territory status and bifurcation of the erstwhile state in the wake of abrogation of article 370, last year. He was released in March this year.

The MP expressed his happiness at the findings of an Army inquiry into the killings of three men in Shopian in an encounter.

“I am happy that the Army has admitted that three Shopian men were killed mistakenly. I hope the government gives a hefty compensation,” he said.

Flipkart, Amazon, Snapdeal to remove 160 fake Khadi products from platforms

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

E-commerce portals like Amazon, Flipkart, Snapdeal and others have been forced to remove over 160 web links selling products in the brand name of “Khadi” after the Khadi and Village

Industries Commission's (KVIC) served legal notices on over 1000 firms for misusing its brand name to sell their products.

After KVIC served legal notice, Khadi Global has also discontinued using its website www.khadi-globalstore.com and also removed its social media pages on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram. It has sought 10-day time to remove all such contents and product using the brand name “Khadi”. KVIC action has also resulted in shutting down of a number of stores across the country that were selling fake Khadi products.

These e-commerce portals were selling products like Khadi masks, herbals soaps, shampoos, cosmetics, herbal mehandi, jackets, kurta and many such products through different sellers using the brand name “Khadi”. This created a false impression among online buyers that these commodities were genuine “Khadi” products. A majority of the products that have been removed were being sold by one Ayush E-Traders. This firm has confirmed to KVIC that it has removed 140

links for various products that were being sold as “Vagad's Khadi Products”.

There has been a steep rise in violation of Khadi trademark as the popularity of Khadi grew manifold in recent years after the Hon'ble Prime Minister's appeal to buy Khadi products. Exploiting this opportunity, a number of online sellers began selling random products in the name of Khadi.

Also hundreds of stores mushroomed in different cities that were selling fake Khadi products. In recent months, particularly during the Covid-19 lockdown, there was a huge proliferation of such fraudulent online sellers. However, to enable online customers to buy genuine Khadi products, KVIC has launched its e-portal selling a range of 300 products online at www.kviconline.gov.in/khadi-mask.

KVIC Chairman Shri Vinai Kumar Saxena said the KVIC has given violators the option of either stop selling products in the name of Khadi or legal action will be initiated for recovery of heavy damages. “Legal notices have been issued to various firms essentially to safeguard the interest of Khadi artisans.

This trademark violation has a direct bearing on the livelihood of our artisans who are making genuine handcrafted products,” Saxena said.

ECI to set up national database to track status of ex-gratia payments



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Taking note of the delay in giving compensation, the Election commission (EC) is planning to set up a database to track the status of ex-gratia payments to those who got injured or lost their lives while polling or poll-related duty. In a letter to chief electoral officers of all states and union territories, the EC has asked to track all such claims. At present, the poll watchdog pays ₹10 lakh to the next of kin of those who died in poll duties through cheques.

“A stern view has been taken of the institutional failure and lack of sensitivity, bordering on apathy, on part of the administrative machinery, which failed to respect the memory of the departed,” EC said in the letter. The letter asked CEOs to create a digital database to track the settlement of such legacy claims and all

future claims. A national level database will also be created by the commission.

EC is also working out the modalities of how payments will be expedited to reduce any kind of inconvenience to the families.

Last month, Pramila Devi, the wife of late Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) jawan Ramesh Kumar, 31, wrote to chief election commissioner (CEC) Sunil Arora, highlighting the delay in such payments. Kumar died in a grenade attack during the 2002 Jammu and Kashmir elections. In her letter dated August 10, Devi said she had not received the payment; she was entitled to ₹5 lakh as per the allotment 18 years ago. Following her letter, the Commission acted immediately to get the sum remitted to her without any further delay and later also transferred ₹15 lakhs to her account.

Manage oxygen availability effectively, States told



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Following reports of shortage of oxygen in some States threatening the management of patients suffering from Covid-19, the Centre has asked the States to focus on analysing district level and health facility level status and effectively plan and manage logistical issues related with oxygen availability.

The suggestion came in the wake of an increasing number of cases across the country which is likely to push up the demand for oxygen as well.

At a high-level meeting held here under the chairmanship of the Cabinet Secretary, Rajiv Gauba, special instructions were issued for oxygen availability to the 12

States/UT including Maharashtra, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Odisha, Chandigarh, Telangana, Kerala, Delhi, Punjab and West Bengal where about 80 per cent of the Covid caseload in the country is concentrated.

The Cabinet Secretary while complementing the States for significantly ramping up testing, expressed concern that the case fatality rates of several States are still higher than that of the national average.

He urged the States to analyse mortalities district and hospital wise for identification of critical areas of intervention.

A day ago, Union home secretary Ajay Bhalla had

Oxford Covid-19 vaccine: Serum Institute to start final phase of trial from Monday

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Pune-based Serum Institute of India (SII) is likely to start from Monday the final stage of the clinical trial of University of Oxford and AstraZeneca Plc's experimental vaccine. The late-stage trial will take place at the Sassoon General Hospital in Pune.

In the third phase of the clinical trial, around 150-200 volunteers will administer a dose of Covishield. “Some volunteers have already come forward for the trial,” a senior official from the company said. The Sassoon General Hospital in Pune has started enrolling volunteers from Saturday. “Those who are willing to volunteer for the vaccination should contact the hospital,” he said.

The phase II trial of Covishield was conducted at Bharti Vidyapeeth Medical College and King Edward Memorial (KEM) Hospital in Pune.

SII has inked a pact with

British-Swedish company AstraZeneca to manufacture COVID-19 vaccine candidate, developed by the University of Oxford.

The vaccine maker earlier shortlisted 17 sites in India for the Phase II clinical trial of Covid-19 vaccine. At least 1,600 candidates aged between 18 to 55, participated in the Phase II clinical trial.

On September 10, the drug maker had paused the clinical trials of the Oxford COVID-19 vaccine candidate in India in the wake of AstraZeneca suspending the clinical trials in other countries. On September 15 the DCGI granted permission to SII to resume trial, while revoking its earlier order of suspending any new recruitment for phase II and III trial.



MNCs responsible for 20% carbon dioxide emission

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

Amid ongoing blame-game between the developed and developing nations on who should pay for increasing carbon footprints, a study has pointed out that a fifth of carbon dioxide emissions come from multinational companies' global supply chains which in effect outsourced to poorer parts of the world.

The study, which is published in Nature Climate Change, mapped the emissions generated by multinationals' assets and suppliers abroad and found that the flow of investment is typically from developed countries to developing ones. “Hence emissions are assigned to countries where the investment comes from, rather than countries where the emissions are generated,” said

the study.

Mapping the global flow of investment, researchers from UCL and Tianjin University found steady increases in investment from developed to developing countries. For instance, between 2011 and 2016 emissions generated through investment from the US to India increased by nearly half (from 48.3 million tons to 70.7 million tons), while in the same years emissions generated through investment from China to south-east Asia increased tenfold (from 0.7 million tons to 8.2 million tons).

In contrast, the study found that carbon emissions from multinationals' foreign investment fell from a peak of 22 per cent of all emissions in 2011 to 18.7 per cent in 2016. Researchers said this was a



result of a trend of “de-globalisation”, with the volume of foreign direct investment shrinking, as well as new technologies and processes making industries more carbon efficient.

The findings by UCL and Tianjin University holds immense importance amid the ongoing blamegame between the developed and developing nations on the increasing climate change threat owing to the green house gas emission.

The research shows the impact that multinationals can have by encouraging greater energy efficiency among suppliers or by choosing suppliers that are more carbon efficient.

Professor Dabo Guan (UCL Bartlett School of Construction & Project Management) said: “Multinational companies have enormous influence stretching far beyond national borders. If the world's leading companies exercised leadership on climate change - for instance, by requiring energy efficiency in their supply chains - they could have a transformative effect on global

efforts to reduce emissions.

“However, companies' climate change policies often have little effect when it comes to big investment decisions such as where to build supply chains.

“Assigning emissions to the investor country means multinationals are more accountable for the emissions they generate as a result of these decisions.”

Lead author Dr Zengkai Zhang, of Tianjin University, said: “Multinationals are increasingly transferring investment from developed to developing countries.

This has the effect of reducing developed countries' emissions while placing a greater emissions burden on poorer countries. At the same time it is likely to create higher emissions overall, as investment is moved to more 'carbon intense' regions.”

Govt plans environment-friendly scrapping of vehicles, RS told

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Centre on Saturday said a Cabinet note has been formulated for the vehicle scrapping policy.

In reply to a question, Minister of State for Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH) VK Singh informed the Rajya Sabha that the Government has formulated a Cabinet note on creation of an ecosystem for voluntary and environment friendly phasing out of unfit and old polluting vehicles.

The proposed policy, once approved, will be applicable on all vehicles, the government had said earlier.

A MoRTH official said

that cabinet note on Vehicle Scrapping Policy- is preparing to implement the vehicle scrap policy for the old four wheelers (car) and two wheelers (scooter bike) from next month.

The policy was sent for a fresh round of consultation with stakeholders on the direction of the PMO.

Road Transport and Highways Minister Nitin Gadakri had earlier this year said once the policy is approved, India could emerge as a hub for automobile manufacturing as key raw material available from scrapping steel, aluminium and plastic are bound to be recycled, bringing down automobile prices by “20-30%”.

On July 26, 2019, the Government had proposed amendments to motor vehicle rules to allow scrapping of vehicles older than 15 years in a bid to spur adoption of electrical vehicles.

In a draft notification, the government proposed renewal of fitness certificates for vehicles older than 15 years every six months instead of the current time-frame of one year.

When come into force, the automobile sector will gain momentum as demand for new vehicles increases. As per a report in the MoRTH, customers will get new vehicles up to 30 percent cheaper while older vehicles will reduce air pollution by 25 percent.

END OF GLORIOUS ERA FOR LEGENDARY INS VIRAAT

World’s longest serving warship sets sail for the last time, to be dismantled, sold as scrap

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Three and a half years after it was decommissioned, the much-celebrated Indian Navy’s aircraft carrier and the longest serving warship of the world “INS Viraat” on Saturday embarked on its swan song journey to Alang Port in Gujarat, the country’s biggest graveyard for all such condemned ships.

Accompanied by two other towing vessels, “INS Viraat” set sail for her final voyage. She will reach Alang Port in little over three days after which the con-

demned ship will come under the hammer, thus marking the end of a glorious era of a legendary ship. “INS Viraat was bought by Shri Ram Green Ship Recycling Industries Ltd., Gujarat, for Rs.38.50 crore in an auction conducted by MSTC Ltd.

INS Viraat had been decommissioned on March 6, 2017 by the Indian Navy in a sombre yet grand ceremony at Mumbai’s Naval Dockyard in the presence of more than 1300 personnel who have served on board the iconic warship.



Majestic Indian Navy’s aircraft carrier “INS Viraat” on Saturday embarked on its swansong voyage to Alang Port in Gujarat, the country’s biggest graveyard for all such condemned ships

At the time of its de-commissioning, a Special Postal Cover was released by the Chief Guest Admiral Sunil Lanba,

PVSM, AVSM, ADC, Chief of the Naval Staff, to commemorate “30 years of Glorious Service to The Nation” by INS Viraat

The aircraft carrier was commissioned into the Indian Navy on May 12, 1987. The ship held the Guinness Books of record for being the longest serving warship of the world. The ship which was the centerpiece of the Navy, housed the fighters Sea Harriers of INAS 300 popularly called “White Tigers”, Anti Submarine aircraft Sea king Mk 42B, Sea King Mk 42 C known as “Harpoons” and the

SAR helicopter Chetak as an integral flight. The ingenious Air Light Helicopter Dhruv’ and the Russian twin rotor Kamov-31 also operated onboard the ship. The Sea Harriers fleet was decommissioned at Goa on May 11, 2016. Under the Indian Flag, the ship has clocked more than 22,622 flying hours by various aircraft in the past three decades and has spent nearly 2252 days at sea sailing and 5,88,287 NM (10,94,215 KM).

In essence, INS Viraat spent seven years at sea, covering the entire globe 27 times. Since her

inception she had a total of 80,715 hours of boiler running. She played a major role in the Operation Jupiter in 1989 in Sri Lankan Peace Keeping operation, after which she was affiliated with Garhwal Rifles and Scouts of the Indian Army in 1990.

Her major participation was seen during Op Parakram in 2001-2002 where India and Pakistan were engaged in a standoff post terrorist attack on the Parliament. The ship was instrumental in honing the art of flying operations from a car-

rier deck in the Navy, which also resulted in seamless induction of INS Vikramaditya and its integration with the fleet. The ship participated in various international joint exercises like Exercise Malabar (USA), exercise Varuna (French), Naseem-Al-Bahar (Oman Navy). She was also an integral element of all the annual theater level exercise (TROPEX). The last operational deployment of Viraat was for participation in International Fleet Review (IFR 2016) off Vishakhapatnam in February 2016.

High-level meet to review corona situation in J&K

PNS ■ JAMMU

Amid spike in the Covid-19 cases especially across Jammu region, the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare on Saturday rushed a high level central team headed by Director National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC), Dr SK Singh to Jammu to take stock of the ground situation and suggest measures to contain the spread of the virus and improve health care facilities.

In the last one week, Jammu region has recorded 80 Covid-19 deaths and over 5000 residents have tested positive for coronavirus. The total number of active positive cases in Jammu and Kashmir Saturday stood at 21281. Out of these, Jammu has so far recorded 12318 active positive cases while Kashmir valley has reported 8963 active cases. The death toll has reached 987 in J&K.

For almost two weeks the health care infrastructure was struggling to cope with the huge rush of patients leading to chaotic situation in the dedicated Covid hospitals

and isolated wards across other health centres.

According to the official sources, soon after their arrival here in Jammu a team of doctors headed by Dr Vijay Hadda, Associate Professor, Department of Pulmonary Critical care, AIIMS, New Delhi visited Government Medical college hospital, Jammu and interacted with the senior faculty along with Principal of the college Dr Nisab Chand Digma. He was accompanied by a senior epidemiologist.

The team members took comprehensive feedback on reasons behind sudden spike in cases of coronavirus, total number of deaths, treatment facilities, challenges and shortage of trained manpower and infrastructure facilities.

The team members also visited few other places where patients were admitted in Jammu. Another team headed by Dr. S.K Singh, Director NCDC New Delhi along with Dr Tanzin Joint Director NCDC New Delhi visited Udhampur and took feedback from the ground zero.

PMO-led task force to tackle air pollution management in NCR

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Ahead of the crop burning season, a high-level task force led by the Prime Minister’s Office (PMO) on Saturday held a review meeting in advance before the onset of harvesting and winter season to ensure proper precautionary and preventive measures to combat the causes of air pollution

are taken well in time for the management of air pollution in the National Capital Region (NCR). During the meeting, it was observed that stubble burning were high in Punjab, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh last year. A meeting was chaired by PK Mishra, Principal Secretary to Prime Minister, involving all stakeholders, reviewed the main sources of air pollution, measures taken and the progress made by the State

Governments and various Ministries was carried out. It was noted that the incidence of stubble burning has reduced by more than 50% in last two years and the number of Good AQI days have gone up.

To control stubble burning, it was stressed that adequate number of teams should be deployed at ground level and they should ensure that no stubble burning takes place especially in the State of Punjab, Haryana and UP. These States need to put extra efforts and appropriate incentives especially in the relevant districts.

“Delhi government was requested to ensure measures to control local sources of pollution. Principal Secretary mentioned that special emphasis should be laid on deployment of teams for control of open burning of waste, IT-enabled

monitoring of mechanical road sweepers, improvement in utilization of construction and demolition waste and site specific implementation of action plan for identified hot spots. It was decided that Haryana and Uttar Pradesh would prepare and implement similar site specific action plans in their area falling under NCR,” PMO statement said.

At the meeting, Mishra emphasized that the envisaged measures should be implemented well before the onset of severe conditions, and focus should also be laid on compliance of emission norms by industry in satellite industrial area. According to satellite data, there were 61,332 instances of stubble-burning in Punjab, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh between October and November, 2019.

NCB arrests man from Palghar, seizes 670 gm Cocaine in Delhi

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

In a crucial arrest and consequent seizure of drugs that may help break celebrity-drug nexus in Mumbai and the national capital, the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) arrested a man linked to a network of DJs and drug party organisers from neighbouring Palghar district, and seized 670 grams of Cocaine sourced from Ethiopia, at a location in New Delhi.

Close on the heels of the arrest of six more alleged drug peddlers and seized 1.433 kg. of Charas and Ganja in connection with the ongoing Sushant Singh Rajput death-related drug case, the NCB arrested a man Vasai, who is linked to a network of DJs and party organizers and supply of cocaine to them.

The NCB seized 670 grams of Cocaine from New Delhi, sourced from Ethiopia. As part of ‘Controlled delivery operation launched by it, the NCB arrested the man linked to a network of DJs and drug party organizers.

Identifying the arrested man as S. Ghangle, the NCB officials said that he would be produced before a Delhi court.

“The seizure took place in Delhi and the arrest of the accused person was carried out from Mumbai. The contraband was sourced from Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.



An army convoy carrying military material on its way to Ladakh amid border tension with China, on Manali-Leh highway on Saturday

Covid hits Telangana Health Minister’s office, 7 test positive

Hyderabad: The Covid-19 scare has reached the office of Telangana Health Minister Eatala Rajander as seven staff have tested positive for the virus.

Two drivers, three gunmen and two personal assistants of the minister have been found infected by coronavirus, sources in the minister’s office said on Saturday. Rajender also underwent Covid test but it turned out to be negative.

As a precautionary measure, the minister did not attend office and operated from his residence. Some other employees in the office also stayed away.

Health and municipal personnel took up sanitisation of the minister’s office at BRK Bhavan, which is serving as the temporary state secretariat.

This is the first time that staff members in the Health Minister’s office have tested positive for Covid-19. Earlier, employees in various departments in the BRK Bhavan were found infected. During the recent state legislature session, members cutting across party lines had praised the Health Minister for his hard work and best efforts to tackle the pandemic.

Raj: 45-yr-old woman raped in Alwar; 5 held

PTI ■ JAIPUR

A 45-year old woman was allegedly raped in front of her nephew who was also forced to sexually assault her in Rajasthan’s Alwar district, police said on Saturday. The accused also shot a video of the incident and circulated it following which an FIR was registered, they said.

Of the six people named in the FIR, the police have caught five including two minors and efforts are on to nab the sixth accused, deputy Superintendent of Police Kushal Singh said.

Those arrested have been identified as Aasam alias Ghunta (35) - the main accused, Sahud (19) and Waris (25). Two minors have been apprehended while the search for the sixth accused -- Imran is on, police

said. SP Bhiwadi Ram Moorthy inspected the spot of the alleged crime on Saturday and interrogated the accused.

The incident occurred in a hilly area close to the border under Tijara Police Station in Bhiwadi on September 14 when the woman along with her 25-year-old nephew was returning home after giving some money to her relative in a nearby village

The accused caught hold of them near the hills and while one of them, identified as Aasam, raped the woman, others molested her. The accused also tied the hands of her nephew and later forced him to sexually assault the woman.

“They also shot a video clip of the incident and threatened to circulate it if they informed anyone about the incident,” the deputy SP said.

J&K LG announces ₹1,350 cr package to boost biz in State

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ JAMMU

Fulfilling his commitment made with the business community, Lt Governor Manoj Kumar Sinha on Saturday announced a mega relief and revival package of ₹1,350 crore to help the J&K business sector to tide over their problems.

Addressing a press conference in the Raj Bhawan auditorium in Srinagar Lt Governor announced a package of measures, both financial and non-financial, aimed at helping business and entrepreneurs.

In his opening remarks Lt Governor also stated that the first part of overall economic package came from Government of India in terms of Atma Nirbhar Bharat Abhiyan.

Elaborating on the details, he said that so far ₹1,400 crore has already been provided through JK Bank and other banks under this Abhiyan. He added that it has many components which seek to help business entities in multiple ways such as provision of liquidity and other financial supports. He said that many welfare measures such as free

rations and support to the most needy were also being provided.

The Lt Governor said that the main component of today’s package is 5 % interest subvention to all borrowers irrespective of their sizes, which would cost about ₹950 crore. The interest subvention will be available for six months in the current financial year and it will be a huge relief in the current scenario.

Lt Governor went on to say that government has also decided to provide 50 % waiver of fixed charges for one year with respect to elec-

tricity and water which would cost ₹105 crore. He said that they have also decided to assist bus drivers/conductors, auto/taxi drivers etc who may have lost their livelihood by providing for an appropriate mechanism.

Further 50% or ₹5.00 lakh subsidy whichever is lower shall provided to the transporters for replacement of old buses and the insurance premium shall be borne by the Government subject to maximum of ₹5,000 per vehicle for Buses/Mini Buses, ₹3,000 for taxes/sumos and ₹2,000 for three wheelers.

For Tourism Sector, subsidy for installation of Biodigesters in the houseboats has been announced.

Assistance shall also be extended out of ‘JK Relief Fund’ to some 19914 Shikara/House Boat owners/ Tourist Guides /Pithuwalas/Dandiwalas/Sled ge Walas/Pony/Camel Riders and cash assistance of ₹1,000 to all of them given from last 3 months shall be extended for further 06 months ending 31st December, 2020.

There are more than 3100 artists who have lost their livelihood during the pan-

demia. The artists associated with the cultural academy shall be paid Rs 1000 per month out of ‘JK Relief Fund’ for a period of 09 months w.e.f 1st April, 2020.

For agriculture sector, district level bankers committee shall be constituted to ensure loan coverage for agriculture and allied non-farm activities under Mudra loans. Meetings will be organised every month to overcome difficulties faced by the borrowers. Moreover J&K Bank shall frame customised ‘Help Tourism’ scheme for financial assistance to persons

associated with the Tourism Sector with attractive pricing and repayment features. All stake holders shall be taken on board for any modifications.

As far as tax concessions are concerned, the filing of the GST reimbursement claims has also been extended till 31st December, 2020.

Handholding to remove difficulties in filing returns and mechanism to avoid delays in reimbursement claims shall be instituted.

The accumulated interest shall be converted into funded interest term loan.

Veteran communist leader Roza Deshpande dies

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Veteran communist leader and former Lok Sabha member Roza Deshpande died of old age and prolonged chronic illness at her residence here on Saturday afternoon.

She was 91 and is survived by a son, daughter and grandchildren. She was the daughter of one of founders of the Communist Party of India Shripad Amrit Dange.

Roza, who was born a month after her father Dange was arrested in the Meerut conspiracy case and sentenced to life imprisonment, entered political movements through the All India

Students’ Federation (AISF) and Trade Unions. She also took part in the Samyukta Maharashtra movement (for the creation of the state of Maharashtra) and the Goa liberation struggle as an AISF member.

In 1964, she organised a massive demonstration of women from walks of life and submitted a charter of demands to the government. It was the first demonstration of its kind in the history of Bombay’s labour movement, which forced the private firms to withdraw an objectionable clause of forcing women workers to resign after marriage.

Having organised the workers in drug, chemicals and pharma-

ceutical industry into one trade union, Roza went onto form an All India Pharmaceutical Employees’ Union and got it affiliated to the Chemical and Oil International of the World Federation of Trade Unions at Praha.

In 1974, Roza was elected to Lok Sabha from Bombay South-Central Constituency as a candidate of the Community Party of India. As an MP, she worked on the various committees associated with labour problems and women issues.

She was subsequently elected to the National Council of Communist Party of India.

During the Emergency, her father

Dange and Roza stood firmly by late Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, for which she and her group was expelled from the CPI. Dange was also subsequently expelled from the CPI. This led to the formation of All India Communist Party of India, of which she was the general secretary. She was associated with the All India Communist Party of India from 1980 to 1987. Ahead of the 1980 Lok Sabha polls, late Mrs Gandhi wanted her to explain her stand on certain issues to Mr Brezhnev, the then President of the erstwhile USSR. She specially sent Roza carrying her letter and had delivered it to Mr Brezhnev personally.

Three LeT terrorists arrested in Rajouri: DGP

PNS ■ JAMMU

A joint team of security forces have arrested three Lashkar-e- Tayyeba (LeT) terrorists from the forest area of Gurdan in Rajouri. These three terrorists were spotted in the area by the security personnel during a cordon and search operations.

Director General of Police, Dillbagh Singh while sharing details of the operation told reporters on Saturday, “Rajouri Police along with Army’s 38 RR had launched a cordon and search operation in the general area of Gurdan where three suspected persons carrying a bag each were spotted”.

Dilbagh Singh said, “The trio attempted to flee after throwing a grenade on the search party but the grenade did not explode and the brave personnel of police and army managed to nab all of them along with huge

cache of arms/ammunition which were dropped by drone from Pakistan”.

He said the arrested terrorists have been identified and all hail from South Kashmir. The DGP said that drones are being used by the Pakistani agencies and its sponsored terror outfits to supply arms/ammunition and drugs inside our territory.

The DGP said that few days back Poonch police along with army arrested two terrorist operatives and seized arms & ammunition from them.

He also said that Rajouri Police with the assistance of Poonch police busted a narco-terrorism module by recovering 11Kg of heroin during the past few days.”

This is a huge catch of which runs into crores of rupees and the sale proceeds of this were to be used by Hizbul Mujahideen outfit to finance terrorist activities in J&K,”DGP added.

4,644 new cases in Kerala

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

local transmission.

Giving a scare to the entire population of the State, 4,644 new patients were diagnosed with Covid-19 in Kerala on Saturday.

Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan said in his media briefing that 18 persons succumbed to the pandemic during the last 24 hours and this took the death tally in the state till date to 519.

Except in Wayanadu (95) and Idukki (47), the remaining 12 districts diagnosed more than 200 patients each. Thiruvananthapuram had the highest number of new cases on Saturday (824).

3,781 persons contracted the pandemic through social contacts while 498 persons could not find out the source from where they were infected. The State also detected on Saturday 86 health workers who got infected through social contact/

There are 37,488 active cases admitted to hospitals in Kerala. The State administration found itself in an awkward position as it was reported widely that the an exclusive Covid hospital built by the Tata Group in Kasaragod district was yet to commence its operations as the Government of Kerala failed to appoint even a single doctor in this 550-bed hospital built by the business conglomerate at a cost of Rs 60 crore. Though the keys of the hospital were handed over to the State administration on September 9, the Covid-19 hospital remains closed.

Kasaragod district diagnosed 191 new patients with Covid-19 . Though there is a medical college in the district head quarters, it also remains without adequate staff, said a senior doctor in the general hospital.

US-TAIWAN MEET

China sends more warplanes on day 2

AP ■ TAIPEI

China sent more warplanes toward Taiwan for the second day on Saturday as the island's leader, senior Government officials and a high-level US envoy paid tribute to the man who led Taiwan's transition to democracy, former President Lee Teng-hui.

Keith Krach, the US under-secretary for state, kept a low profile at the service.

His presence at the event and on the island has drawn a strong rebuke from China, which sent 18 warplanes across the midline of the Taiwan Strait Friday in an unusually large display of force.

On Saturday, Beijing dispatched 19 more warplanes, two of which were bombers, according to Taiwan's Defense Ministry. The island's air force scrambled their own and deployed an air defense missile system to monitor China's activities, according to a statement.

The service was held at the

Aletheia University in Taipei on a balmy Saturday morning, with President Tsai Ing-wen honouring Lee for bringing a peaceful political transition to the island democracy.

Lee had built a separate Taiwanese political identity, distinct from mainland China, which claims Taiwan as part of its own territory to be reunited by force if necessary.

Lee's carving out of a non-Chinese identity and insistence that the island be treated as an equal country brought him into direct conflict with Beijing. He died on July 30 at age 97.

"We have a responsibility to continue his endeavours, allowing the will of the people to reshape Taiwan, further defining Taiwan's identity and deepening and bolstering democracy and freedom," Tsai said.

Former Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and the Dalai Lama also paid tribute from afar.

"We Buddhists believe in

life after life, so most probably he will be reborn in Taiwan," the Dalai Lama said in a video message.

"His rebirth will carry his spirit continuously." The guests included another former Japanese prime minister, Yoshiro Mori. They wore masks and sat spaced out in pews.

Lee, an agricultural economist and politician, devoted his career toward building democracy on the island through direct elections and other changes.

He was the first government official to speak out and formally apologise for the so-called 228 incident, named after February 28, 1947, when soldiers under the Kuomintang, or the sole ruling Nationalist Party, shot and killed thousands of civilians in an anti-government uprising.

The bloodshed marked the beginning of a decades-long period known as the White Terror in which the island was ruled by martial law.

TikTok files lawsuit against Trump admin to fight US ban

Washington: TikTok asked a federal judge in Washington to block the Trump administration from enacting a ban on the fast-growing social-media network.

TikTok and its parent company, ByteDance Ltd., filed a complaint late Friday night challenging the Trump administration's recent moves to prevent the app from operating in the U.S. The lawsuit marks the second time TikTok has challenged President Donald Trump's actions in court, bringing a high-stakes geopolitical fight over technology and trade into the U.S. legal system.

Trump exceeded his authority, the company said, and did so for political reasons rather than to stop an "unusual and extraordinary threat" to the U.S., as the law requires. TikTok also said the ban violates its First Amendment free-speech rights.

The White House didn't immediately respond to a request for comment.

Trump's actions would "destroy an online community where millions of Americans have come together to express themselves," according to the complaint. The company

claimed that the U.S. government has "ignored evidence" showing TikTok's commitment to the privacy and security of its American users.

On August 6, Trump issued an executive order saying he would ban transactions with the app within 45 days, arguing that the social network's Chinese ownership made it a national security threat. TikTok sued to block that order in federal court in California in August. But on Friday, the Commerce Dept, moving to implement Trump's order, said TikTok would be banned in the U.S. starting on Nov. 12 unless it could complete a takeover deal that assuages the government's concerns.

Trump's order followed an investigation by the Committee on Foreign Investment in the U.S., which reviews proposed acquisitions of domestic businesses by overseas investors for national security concerns. And it set off a flurry of attempted deal-making, pushing ByteDance to seek a sale of TikTok's American operations to a U.S. company. TikTok is currently in talks with Oracle Corp. about a possible deal. **AFP**

Iran vows 'hit' on all involved in US killing of top general

Tehran: The chief of Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard threatened on Saturday to go after everyone who had a role in a top general's January killing during a US drone strike in Iraq.

The guard's website quoted Gen. Hossein Salami as saying, "Mr. Trump! Our revenge for martyrdom of our great general is obvious, serious and real."

US President Donald Trump warned this week that Washington would harshly respond to any Iranian attempts to take revenge for the death of Gen. Qassem Soleimani, tweeting that "if they hit us in any way, any form, written instructions already done we're going to hit them 1000 times harder."

The president's warning came in response to a report that Iran was plotting to assassinate the US ambassador to South Africa in retaliation for Soleimani's killing at Baghdad's airport at the beginning of the year.

"We took out the world's number one terrorist and the mass murderer of American troops and many, many troops and many people all over the world," Trump said. "Qasem Soleimani is dead. He's dead. Bad guy. Bad guy. Very bad guy."

Salami rejected the report of an Iranian plot to assassinate Ambassador Lana Marks, but made clear that Iran intends to avenge the general's death.

"Do you think we hit a female ambassador in return to our martyred brother?" the

general said. "We will hit those who had direct and indirect roles. You should know that everybody who had role in the event will be hit, and this is a serious message. We do prove everything in practice."

In January, Iran launched a ballistic missile attack targeting US soldiers in Iraq in response to the fatal drone strike.

Trump has stepped up economic pressure on Iran with sanctions since he pulled the United States out of Iran's nuclear deal with world powers in 2018.

Tehran has continued to expand its stockpile of enriched uranium and pressured other nations to offset the harm of US sanctions, while insisting it does not want to develop a nuclear weapon. **AP**

Thai protesters hold ambitious rally for democratic reforms

Bangkok: Protesters gathered on Saturday in Bangkok for the most ambitious rally so far in a pro-democracy campaign that has shaken up the government and Thailand's conservative establishment.

Organisers predicted that as many as 50,000 will march over two days in an area of the capital historically associated with political protests, after an estimated 10,000 people turned out for the last major rally on Aug. 16. But the early turnout was modest Saturday as a steady light rain fell.

Demonstrators wore face masks, but ignored a Thursday night plea from Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-ocha to cancel the event, which he said risked spreading the coronavirus and derailing recovery of Thailand's battered economy.

The core demands declared by the protesters in July were the dissolution of parliament with fresh elections, a new constitution and an end to intimidation of political activists. **AP**

Moroccans protest Arab nations normalising relations with Israel

Rabat: Despite a government ban on large gatherings to prevent the spread of the coronavirus, scores of demonstrators protested outside the Moroccan Parliament to denounce Arab countries agreeing to normalise ties with Israel.

Israel on Tuesday signed historic diplomatic pacts with the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain in a U.S.-brokered deal. Morocco was reported to be among other Arab countries considering a similar move, though the prime minister rejected the idea last month.

Protesters in Morocco's capital of Rabat Friday waved Palestinian flags, decrying the deals as "treason" and chanting "Palestine is not for sale." The Palestinians view the pacts as a stab in the back from their fellow Arabs in the Gulf and a betrayal of their cause for a Palestinian state. Israel and

Bahrain's agreements have been condemned by many across the Arab world.

The protesters in Rabat also burned a mock Israeli flag. Dozens of police officers watched the scene from a distance.

Organisers interrupted the chanting occasionally to urge participants to wear masks and to respect social distancing rules. "The normalisation deals are an attack on the Palestinian people and their cause," human rights activist Abdelhamid Amine told The Associated Press.

"We are calling on the Moroccan government not to follow suit and we urge it not to surrender to the Zionist and imperialist pressure like other Arab countries," said Amine, former president of the Moroccan Association of Human Rights and one of the rally organisers. **AP**

Pak's Sharif mulling political comeback after year-long gap

Islamabad: Pakistan's deposed premier Nawaz Sharif is set to make a comeback in active politics following a year-long absence after PPP chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari invited him to virtually attend the Opposition-led multiparty conference aimed at launching a protest movement against the Imran Khan-led government on Sunday.

Sharif, 70, the Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N) supremo, has been living in London since November last year after the Lahore High Court granted him permission

to go abroad for four weeks for treatment.

The three-time premier, his daughter Maryam and son-in-law Muhammad Safdar were convicted in the Avenfield properties case on July 6, 2018.

Sharif, who was deposed in 2017, was also sentenced to seven years in the Al-Azizia Steel Mills case in December 2018. But, he was bailed out in both cases and also allowed to go to London for medical treatment.

He was given eight weeks to return but failed to come back due to health complications, according to his lawyer. **PTI**



Pro-democracy protesters wave a flag and hold up lights during a protest at Sanam Luang in Bangkok on Saturday

AP

China slams Pompeo for 'spreading rumors' during S America trip

AFP ■ PARAMARIBO, SURINAME/GEORGETOWN, GUYANA

China's embassies to Suriname and Guyana on Friday accused US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo of "spreading rumors" and "smearing" Beijing, after Washington's top diplomat criticized Chinese companies during a four-stop South America tour.

In a joint appearance with newly elected Surinamese President Chan Santokhi on Thursday, Pompeo said Chinese companies often do not compete on a "fair and equitable basis."

"We've watched the Chinese Communist Party invest in countries, and it all seems great at the front end and then it all comes falling down when the political costs connected to that becomes clear," Pompeo said.

George Floyd protesters 'bunch of thugs' who didn't even spare Mahatma Gandhi, says Trump

Washington: US President Donald Trump has said that the protesters, who went violent in the aftermath of the death of African-American George Floyd, did not even spare the statue of Mahatma Gandhi in Washington DC, describing the demonstrators as a "bunch of thugs".

George Floyd died in Minneapolis on May 25 after white police officer Derek Chauvin handcuffed and pinned him to the ground, and knelt on his neck for more than eight minutes while the 46-year-old from Houston gasped for breath.

The footage, which went viral, showed Floyd pleading with the officer, saying he can't breathe. His death sparked nationwide violent protests with some protesters resorting to vandalism, looting and rioting across the country, leaving behind a trail of destruction.

"You know, they started ripping down Abraham Lincoln. When they hit

Lincoln, I said wait a minute. This is the man and you can do - then they hit George Washington, Thomas Jefferson. They had everybody," Trump said at a well-attended election rally in Minnesota, a State that he lost by a little over 44,000 votes in 2016, on Friday.

He also mentioned about the statue of Mahatma Gandhi in Washington DC that was vandalised by unknown protesters at the peak of the nationwide protests.

"They even had (Mahatma) Gandhi. All Gandhi wanted was one thing, peace. Right? We have peace. Rip down his statue. We don't like him. I don't think they have any idea what they're doing," President Trump said.

"I think they're just a bunch of thugs, okay, you want to know the truth. I think they're a bunch of thugs," he added.

The US President told his cheering audience that he had signed an executive order that would put such vandals in jail for 10 years. **AFP**

Democrats face quandary on vaccine support as poll nears

New York (AP): President Donald Trump is escalating his promise for a coronavirus vaccine before Election Day.

But across America, Democrats, independents and even some Republicans do not trust his administration to produce a safe and effective vaccine on such an aggressive timeline.

Such hesitancy threatens to exacerbate the public health risk for millions of Americans whenever a vaccine is released.

With the November 3 election fast approaching, Democratic officials face a delicate political challenge.

Should they attack Trump's vaccine claims too aggressively, Democrats risk further undermining public confidence in a possible lifesaving medicine while looking as though they are rooting against a potential cure.

But if they don't push back, it makes it easier for Trump to use the real or imagined prospect of a vaccine to boost his reelection campaign.

Washington Gov. Jay Inslee demonstrated the Democrats' balancing act on Friday when asked whether he would be willing to take a vaccine released by the administration before the election.

If all the protocols had been followed and the evidence is in, of course, I'd follow science. It doesn't matter when it happens, Inslee told The Associated Press. "But I would have to look at the science, not Donald Trump. There isn't one single thing I would ever trust from Donald Trump to be true."

The focus on a speedy vaccine could be overshadowed by a sudden fight over the future of the Supreme Court in the wake of Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg's death

on Friday.

But Inslee's comments are in line with a growing consensus of Democrats in leadership positions, including the party's presidential nominee, Joe Biden.

They have repeatedly cast doubt on Trump's promises but pledged to follow the guidance of scientists and health care experts such as Dr. Anthony Fauci, the government's top infectious disease specialist.

Trump restates his promise of an imminent vaccine almost daily.

Trump on Friday promised that 100 million doses of a still-unknown vaccine would be produced by the end of the year and there would be enough vaccines for all Americans by April.

Three vaccines are already in the final stage, Trump said at a briefing.

Joe Biden's anti-vaccine theo-

ries are putting a lot of lives at stake, and they're only doing it for political reasons," the president said from a White House podium.

"It's part of their war to discredit the vaccine now that they know we essentially have it. We'll be announcing it fairly soon."

The first case of COVID-19 was reported in the United States just eight months ago. Health experts, including the administration's own Centers for Disease Control and Prevention chief, believe a vaccine will require at least 12 months to 18 months to create because of the extensive testing required to ensure it's safe and effective.

The politics of the coronavirus vaccine are complicated.

Trump has suffered politically from the pandemic, which has devastated the global economy and killed nearly 200,000 Americans,

bring a vote before the election.

Typically it takes several months to vet and hold hearings on a Supreme Court nominee, and time is short ahead of the election. Key senators may be reluctant to cast votes so close to the election. With a slim GOP majority, 53 seats in the 100-member chamber, Trump's choice could afford to lose only a few.

McConnell did not specify the timing, but trying for confirmation in a post-election lame-duck session if Trump had lost to Biden or Republicans had lost the Senate would carry further political complications.

Democrats immediately denounced McConnell's move as hypocritical, pointing out that he refused to call hearings for Merrick Garland, Obama's pick, 237 days before the 2016 election. The 2020 election is 46 days away.

Senate Democratic leader Charles Schumer, in a tweet, echoed word for word what McConnell said in 2016 about the Garland nomination: The American people should have a voice in the selection of their next Supreme Court Justice.

US Top Court Justice Ginsburg dies at 87

Washington: US Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, the history-making jurist, feminist icon and a champion of women's rights and social justice, has died of cancer at the age of 87.

Ginsburg became only the second woman ever to serve as a justice on the nation's highest court. A lifelong advocate of gender equality, she acquired the reputation of a cautious or moderate judge and will be remembered as a legal colossus.

"Our nation has lost a justice of historic stature. We at the Supreme Court have lost a cherished colleague. Today we mourn but with confidence that future generations will remember Ruth Bader Ginsburg as we knew her — a tried and resolute champion of justice," Supreme Court Chief Justice John Roberts said in a statement. Ginsburg's death on Friday could open up another battlefield between President Donald Trump and his Democratic rival and former vice president Joe Biden. **AFP**

US sends additional military assets to Syria

Washington: The US military said that it has deployed additional assets, including radar systems and armoured vehicles, to northeastern Syria, weeks after a collision incident between the American and Russian army vehicles in the region.

"The US has deployed Sentinel radar, increased the frequency of US fighter patrols over US forces, and deployed Bradley Fighting Vehicles to augment US forces in the Eastern Syria Security Area (ESSA)," US Central Command Spokesman Bill Urban said in a statement on Friday.

"These actions are a clear demonstration of US resolve to defend Coalition forces in the ESSA, and to ensure that they are able to continue their Defeat-ISIS mission without interference," Xinhua news agency quoted Urban as saying.

US media reported that the latest deployment included six Bradley vehicles and fewer than 100 troops.

The deployment was believed as a response to the collision between the vehicles that occurred in northern Syria in late August.

The US and Russia blamed each other for the incident, which left seven American soldiers injured.

Kenneth Ekman, deputy commander of Combined Joint Task Force Operation Inherent Resolve, said in July that US troops in Syria interact with Russians almost daily.

About 500 US troops are deployed in the northeastern part of Syria to fight against the Islamic State terror group and secure the oil fields operated by Kurdish forces. **IANIS**

Jailed Iranian rights lawyer hospitalised

Tehran (AP): A leading Iranian human rights lawyer has been hospitalized a month after launching a hunger strike seeking better prison conditions and the release of political prisoners amid the pandemic, her husband said Saturday.

Reza Khandan said that healthcare professionals decided to hospitalize his wife, Nasrin Sotoudeh, because of heart and respiratory problems as well as low blood pressure.

Khandan said Sotoudeh was transferred to a hospital in north Tehran from the notorious Evin Prison earlier on Saturday.

Sotoudeh began her hunger strike in mid-August from her prison cell. She was arrested in 2018 on charges of collusion and propaganda against Iran's rulers and eventually was sentenced to 38 years in prison and 148 lashes. Under the law she must serve at least 12 years.

During her prison term, Sotoudeh occasionally visited clinics as she suffered chronic gastrointestinal and foot problems.

HOME THEATRE

Laugh the American way



OUR CARTOON PRESIDENT
Disney+Hotstar
Season 3, Episodes 10
Animation
Rated: 6/10

Trump roasts Trump with his own signature brand of stupidity, outrage and elan. Season 3 takes off with the Impeachment sham that Trump survived with flying colours. As he puts it: “I can do anything and get away with it as I have been chosen by the people of America.”

The self-deprecating humour, the audacity of impunity that Trump wears brings in a lot of laughter into this very American series much like *The Simpsons*. It will appeal to the people who are in the knowledge of America’s domestic politics, policy blunders and the demeanour that the President sports.

Trump is undoubtedly a globally recognised political

clown so situations around him are insanely funny and the scriptwriter has done well to catch all the nuances to present Trump roasting himself, more specifically roasting the citizens of America for voting him in.

Ticklish subjects like foreign affairs, economy and the upcoming Presidential elections are issues some of the episodes touch upon and that includes the Clintons coming into the picture from their living room television viewing and keeping their hyper candidate in the race who is on a personal high of anxiety, aspiration, scepticism of her prospects and yet compelling optimism in dreaming to be the possible first-ever native American woman President!

Entirely up to you whether you are in a mood to connect to this sort of very American comedy. One thing is there though, Season 3 shows no fatigue whatsoever in pressing the funny bone button.

Sleep over this one

HOLLY SLEPT OVER
Amazon Prime
***ing: Josh Lawson, Nathalie Emmanuel, Britt Lower, Erin Hayes, Ron Livingston**
Rated: 3/10

Some movies are made out of nothing, conveying nothing and thinking nothing about the amount of waste they produce. *Holly Slept Over* tops in that segment. A thoughtless, disastrous comedy-drama propelling sexual adventurism to save a sagging marriage where sex has become boring and a tool to somehow have babies, it is a romp in the bed by a committed couple and the wife’s lesbian girlfriend who stops over for a night after 12 years of a breakup.

Other than the protagonists being extremely pretty, the house where the action takes place being sexy, the neighbours having their own between the sheets issues with yucky outcomes, there is nothing in the movie that will keep you interested, or let me say not get you irritated.

Holly (girlfriend) breezes into the couple’s home with not even a blink, sleeps straight seven hours, gets up all decked up and her friend’s husband proposing a threesome! They agree and do it without wasting any time or sparing a thought to even their



viewers. And then it is all over, Holly leaves, the couple rocks and the neighbours too learn to live, well, between the sheets once in a while.

Who, how, what, why? Don’t look for answers in this one which much too casually degrades the entire institution of marriage, fidelity and the works.

Can be totally ignored even on a very idle week day or week-end.

Watch it for Holland & Pattinson

THE DEVIL ALL THE TIME
Netflix
***ing: Tom Holland, Robert Pattinson, Bill Skarsgård, Jason Clarke, Eliza Scanlen**
Rated: 6/10

Almost all of us find it difficult to see a character that we have followed over years and identify with, see playing another role — definitely not the fault of the actor. But the truth is that the characters that they have played leave such an impact that it becomes impossible to break the mould in which we are used to seeing them. This probably makes the task of the director and the actor tough but the end result is worth it and *The Devil All The Time* is a prime example how actors step out of the mould that viewers put them in and show that at the end of the day, it is job and a role that they stepped into even if it was for a few years.

The psychological thriller based on the novel of the same name by Donald Ray Pollock is directed and co-written by Antonio Campos and produced by Jake Gyllenhaal and Randall Poster. The story is simple enough. But there are many characters

and while it does, at times, become difficult to follow the thread of each character’s journey, they tend to collide with each other from time to time. The way it all comes together is interesting.

What is even more brilliant about this movie is the performance that Tom Holland and Robert Pattinson have given. Holland as a young man trying to protect his family from all the evil gives a stellar performance. However, it is Pattinson who stands out here even though he doesn’t have as meaty a role as Holland. He may have a total screen presence of 30-35 minutes but the way he manages to break away from Edward Cullen is stunning. As the preacher in this one and a high-pitched Southern drawl, he is a surprise.

A report says that the actor had crafted the accent in his room for days and didn’t let anyone hear it — not even Campos. It is riveting to watch him deliver the dialogues in this accent, so different from the extremely polished Cullen.

While the movie itself doesn’t have much to say apart from the good versus evil, God versus the devil, what makes this 138-minute film worth a watch are Holland and Pattinson’s acting.

— Shalini Sakseena

Smashes patriarchy



DOLLY KITTY AUR WO CHAMAKTE SITARE
Netflix
***ing: Konkana Sen Sharma, Bhumi Pednekar, Amol Parashar, Aamir Bashir, Kubra Sait, Vikrant Massey, Neelima Azmi**
Rated: 5.5/10

Off late, Bollywood has started making movies that are beyond glam women and having them be an arm candy for the hero and do a song and dance. Not that there is anything wrong with such films, the only problem is that few realise that what they see on the screen is a make-belief world and there is more to life, especially for women — they have aspirations, ambitions and needs.

Dolly Kitty Aur Woh Chamakte Sitare by director Alankrita Shrivastava and produced by Ekta Kapoor and Shobha Kapoor under their banner Balaji Telefilms is one such film. Shrivastava is known to make films that explore gender roles and the judgement on how women in our society should behave

without questioning the moral values of the men. The film tries to bring out complexities of relationships, questions what is right and wrong as the story progresses.

The good part is that it doesn’t pass any judgement on the choices the women make. In fact, it goes on as far as saying that it was the choice that they made because there is more to them than needs to be explored. The two-hour running time may appear to be a bit longer than what we are used to, but the story keeps the viewer engrossed.

Konkana Sen as Radha *aka* Dolly gives a great performance as she explores her relationship — with her husband, with her younger son, with her sister, with her a delivery boy and her mother. Bhumi Pednekar as Kaajal *aka* Kitty too gives a brilliant performance. Amol Parashar, Vikrant Massey and Aamir Bashir do justice to their performances.

— Shalini Sakseena

Plan Your Day

Catch your favourite musicians live in an all-star virtual fundraiser event ‘Together, Louder, Stronger’ on September 26, 2020 at 6:30 pm, helping and supporting the performance industry workers and folk artists during the ongoing pandemic crisis.

Hosted by Anahad Foundation and produced by Believe Entertainment, the digital event will be live on Facebook and YouTube and will see a stellar line-up of 20 mainstream, independent and talented artists like Shaan, Mame Khan, Jonita Gandhi, Benny Dayal, Mamta Sharma, Bhuvan Bam, Nithyasree Mahadevan and many more supporting the cause and raising funds during this critical time.

Tune in to this exclusive digital event and provide your support to the entertainment industry — Together, Louder, Stronger!

Log on to <https://www.facebook.com/anahad.ngo/>.

TELLY TALE

MEET THE NEW KOMOLIKA

Nowadays actor Paritosh Tripathi is making the audience love him more by playing various Bollywood actors in the



show *Filmistaan* on Star Sharat. Everyone is already loving the comic tuning between Sunil Grover and Paritosh Tripathi. People are appreciating their work. Paritosh has not stopped here, the actor cum writer is all ready to play the most loved vamp in the *saas-bahu* series, none other than Komolika, this will be a site to watch. He is gathering much popularity in the orange shimmer *saree* draped in Bengali style with perfectly curled hair and make up that is making him look more like the character.

On this new look Paritosh comments: “Initially when my show maker Preeti Simoes, came to me with this idea of playing a popular female antagonist character, I was not very sure about it. But she convinced me, and I was ready to do it. Till date I have played many characters in the show, most of them have been male. I was not very sure that my audience would accept me in this new *avataar*? Will I do justice to the Komolika character. I did my best, and when the pictures were out on social media. I was blown after receiving so much love and comments like: cute, beautiful and charming which I am still receiving. I am loving it.”

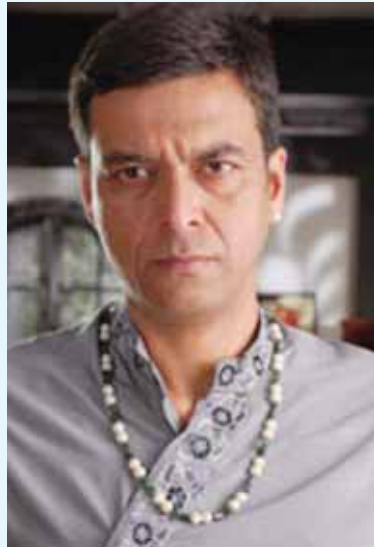
We will watch Paritosh doing this fascinating act soon in the show.

SATYAJIT SHARMA’S NEW OUTING

Impressing the television viewers with his power-packed roles, renowned actor Satyajit Sharma is all set to venture into the digital space with ALTBalaji and ZEE5 Club’s upcoming web series *Bicchoo Ka Khel*. The stellar actor will be seen essaying the role of Anil Chaubey, an overconfident lawyer who brags about being the best criminal and civil lawyer in the state. Alongside him, the crime drama will see other talented actors like Divyenndu Sharma, Anshul Chauhan, Mukul Chadda, Gagan Anand, Zeishan Quadri, amongst others.

The popular TV actor is a known face amongst the masses, having starred in a host of daily Hindi soaps. *With Bicchoo Ka Khel*, he will be playing the role of a lawyer with top connections to the mafia and the cops who help him to create his empire.

Speaking about the series, Satyajit Sharma quipped: “It feels great to be a part of a crime thriller like *Bicchoo Ka Khel*. I play the character of Anil Chaubey, an overconfident lawyer who’s been a jugaadu since childhood. It has been extremely interesting to act in the series with a talented cast and a great crew, an amazing storyline. I hope the audiences enjoy and



shower their love for my character and the series.”

Bicchoo Ka Khel is a crime thriller that revolves around the story of Akhil, a budding writer whose life is nothing less than a roller-coaster ride with twists and turns to keep you at the edge of your seat.

SAMBHAVNA ALL SET TO PLAY MAHUA

Bollywood sensation, performer, and vlogger, Sambhavna Seth has made her mark in the entertainment industry. The actor will be making her comeback to television and is all set to make heads turn as she enters &TV’s *Gudiya Humari Sabhi*



Pe Bhari. Portraying the role of Radhe’s (Ravi Mahashabde) first wife Mahua, Sambhavna is all set to wreak comical havoc in the lives of the close-knit Gupta family.

Adding an extra dose of entertainment and humour to the chaos, Mahua comes with her son that leads to creating an unsettlement in the family to the extent that Sarla (Samta Sagar) goes to stay in the Haveli. The most fun part, however, is that Radhe has no memory of ever getting married to anyone besides Sarla, forget having a child. What unfolds is a comical situation that develops between these three characters.

Expressing her excitement, Mahua *aka* Sambhavna Seth says: “I am excited to back on television to portray the role of Mahua in a light-hearted show on &TV, *Gudiya Humari Sabhi Pe Bhari*. This is the first time I will be exploring a light-hearted genre. As Mahua now enters the show, the audience will now be privy to a higher notch of comical chaos and entertainment. I am sure the audience will enjoy this new role of mine and continue to shower me with their love and support. I am eagerly looking forward to work with everyone in the show.”

DISNEY BRINGS IMAGINE THAT

Disney Channel is all set to treat its young viewers and families with an all new DIY show *Imagine That*. Helmed by every child’s favourite art mentor and friend Rob, the show brings imagination alive through DIY with upcycling as the key theme. One of the pioneering faces of DIY art, Rob promises to take the Imagine That experience to a whole new level for young fans and their families.

The show will focus on a child’s natural creative palette through experiential initiatives, all centred around repurposing. The show will see Rob engage with children as their mentor and friend who encourages their imaginative minds through fun and innovative DIY. It aims at inspiring the young ones to create top quality art out of materials that are usually discarded at home. Be it robots from bottle caps, monsters from egg shells, gorillas from kitchen cutlery, fish out of cables and other home e-waste; *Imagine That* will focus on upcycling everyday items and much more.

“A child’s mind is filled with curiosity and imagination and with *Imagine That*, we are encouraging kids to push the boundaries of their creativity. The show, will take DIY a step further by making innovative and fun artsy products out of simple and easily available day-to-day things. I believe that imagination and creativity together can make a change the world we live in and this show will help kids and their families have lots of fun with DIY while understanding the process of repurposing,” said Rob.

Disney Channel has been consistently bringing fun and wholesome entertainment for kids and families. Post a successful summer with new series such as *Bapu*, *Guddu* and *Gadget Guru Ganesha*, the channel now extends a new treat filled with imagination and creativity with *Imagine That*.

‘I love playing Kalyani’

SHEETAL MAULIK, who plays Kalyani in *Pyar Ki Luka Chhupi*, speaks with SHALINI SAKSENA about how she ended up playing a negative character, her first break and challenges in shooting under the new normal

■ You play a negative character in *Pyar Ki Luka Chhupi* for the first time. How is it going?

I am thoroughly enjoying it and the same can be seen on screen. It depends on how far you are willing to take the role and how you play it out. You know your limitations and playing such a character is tougher since you are not playing just one role. Earlier, I have been part of comedy shows and done lead roles that have been positive. Doing a show where you are playing a negative role, it gives you an opportunity to explore yourself and do something that you would not do in real life. You are portraying something that is opposite to what you are, be negative and yet be funny.

■ Were there apprehensions in taking up the role?

I have always wanted to explore my acting abilities. When I got an opportunity to be part of this show, I had no reason to turn it down. There were two things playing. First, I have been waiting to work with the makers of *Pyar Ki Luka Chhupi*. Second, since I had already done lead roles and comedy, I wanted to take up this project. The only challenge was to train myself for the accent. Kalyani is a totally Kanpuriya woman.

■ You also had to perfect a new language. What was the preparation?

When I gave the auditions, I knew that I didn’t have the accent correct. The only reason why I got the role was because they felt that I could act. But after that the team really helped me. The script comes in the language that I am supposed to speak. The only thing that I had to perfect the accent correctly for the dialogues. For this, I heard a number of jokes from the region. An assistant, Prem, who is from the area, would tell me how to speak certain words. This helped.

■ How did you get interested in acting?

I am a trained Bharatanatyam dancer. I have been dancing since I was three. I still practice it and Kuchipudi. There was a contest but I couldn’t participate. The organisers asked me to open the contest. I performed. Sachin Pilgaonkar, who was there, told me to take up acting. I told him, I couldn’t act. He said not to worry and took me for a role in an episodic show of his. Once the make-up is on, it has been on. I have done Hindi and Marathi theatre. I have worked with the likes of Bhavana Balsavar and Shubha Khote. My journey has been that of a learner. I have not taken any acting lessons. I am able to emote and understand the character because I have done theatre.

■ How did you get your first break with Akkad Bakkad Bambe Bo?

Actually, I did *Hello Dolly* before this. I had played a kleptomaniac for production house Sagar Films Pvt Ltd. When they came up with *Akkad Bakkad Bambe Bo*, they knew I could act and



that is how I came on board for this project as a lead. It was a different role. I played a student.

■ You have now been in the industry for over a decade. How has the journey been thus far?

It has been good. One has to go with the flow. Yes, there have been changes. But if we don’t move forward, we won’t be able to move past the negatives. The good is that we are paid better. Then, there were actors, today we have stars. It is important to understand that change is a reality. To accept it is necessary. When I was young, I played roles according to my age. Now I am doing roles that fit my age.

■ What is the toughest thing about being an actor?

Everything that comes your way is

tough. Even with Kalyani’s role, I still get butterflies when I am on camera. There is always the fear that I may not be able to remain the skin of the character. The good is that it makes me more determined to do my work better.

■ How tough is it to shoot under the new normal?

When we first started, I was afraid. I have a four-year-old daughter. My father lives with me. The fear was very high. I was not sure whether I should get back to work or not. But the makers have been thorough with precautions and I am doing the same.

■ What next?

I am concentrating on this show. I work 25 days a month. The rest of the days I want to spend with my family and catch up spending time with my daughter.



SHALINI SAKSENA speaks with experts who say that the rising numbers need to be tackled on a war-footing as a 2019 report by the World Health Organisation revealed that 7.5 per cent of Indian population suffers from some form of mental disorder, which constitutes one-sixth of all health-related disorders and accounts for nearly 15% of the global mental, neurological and substance abuse burden

Triggers

■ **Stressful events:** Personal events like divorce, loss of job, death of a friend or close relative may cause depression.

■ **Family history:** Genes have a role to play, so if you have a parent or a sibling with the condition, chances are you will also develop it.

■ **Giving birth:** The hormonal and physical changes in a woman's body during pregnancy and after birth, coupled with the added responsibility of a new life, may cause postnatal depression, also known as baby blues'

■ **Substance abuse:** Sustained high consumption of alcohol and psychedellic can affects brain.

■ **Illness:** Chronic or life-threatening illness like cancer, can cause depression. Other triggers can be poor hormonal balance (hypothyroidism) or head injury.

■ **Gender:** Women are more commonly prone to depression than men, mainly due to socio-cultural surroundings.

A 15-year-old student has allegedly died by suicide because she could not cope with online classes. The Class X student, Subiksha, from Sivaganga district, Tamil Nadu allegedly ended her life on September 15, 2020 since she couldn't understand the lessons taught through the online sessions. Subiksha was depressed as she was not able to follow the lessons and feared that she would not be able to score high marks in her exams if she was to study via online classes.

On August 14, 2020, a decomposing body of a 40-year-old doctor working at AIIMS was recovered from his residence in South Delhi. Mohit Singhla was found hanging in a room on the second floor, which was locked from inside. The doctor worked with Department of Paediatrics at AIIMS. A suicide note was recovered that said: 'It was his life, his choice and he didn't want to live till 60-70 years. The letter also said he couldn't hide his mental state anymore.'

On August 10 2020, a 22-year-old medical student, Vikas, had allegedly committed suicide at AIIMS. He was a second-year MBBS student from Bengaluru, and had been seeking treatment at the institute for depression.


On July 11, 2020 Dr Anurag Kumar (25), a junior resident with the psychiatry department, allegedly committed suicide at AIIMS.

Depression is a term we often throw around without realising the depth of the disease. "It is a mental health condition that affects people of all ages in the form of one or recurrent major depressive episodes that can be mild, moderate, or severe. There is no single cause of depression; it is a disorder of the brain that occurs due to a combination of genetic and environmental factors working together. It is a frequent mood disorder that is severely disabling and has a significant impact on everyday life of an individual as well as society at large, including a substantial economic burden on society," Dr Prakriti Poddar, director Poddar Wellness Ltd explains.

According to The Lancet, mental disorders are among the leading causes of non-fatal disease burden in India and 197.3 million people had mental disorders in India in 2017, which includes 45.7 million people with depressive disorders and 44.9 million people with anxiety disorders. It goes onto state that mental disorders comprised 2.5 per cent of the total disability-adjusted life-years in 1990 that increased to 4.7 per cent in 2017. Among non-communicable diseases mental health is the largest contributor to economic loss in India.

PREVENTION

- Take good care of yourself. Get enough sleep, eat nutritious food, and exercise regularly.
- Reach out to family and friends if you are feeling lonely or sad and spend time with them.
- Fight stress with exercise, meditation, and yoga.
- Know yourself better. Find your strengths and pay attention to what makes your symptoms worse. This can help your doctor or therapist.
- Stick with your treatment plan. If you are on medicine, take it as prescribed.
- Do not skip sessions and tell your doctor what is and is not working for you



"It is time we shun this one at a time approach towards depression and other mental health conditions and take up the cudgels to support them. Depression is a risk factor for suicidal thinking and good mental health care can reduce the risk, there are several ways to ensure the affected person can access these. Suicide prevention programmes and hotlines can provide support and can withhold the tendency for some time. However, the focus and its prevention draws attention away from the fact that in worst case situations depression and resultant suicidal thinking/suicide attempts/suicide can be compelling," Dr Poddar says.

The COVID-19 pandemic has added to the stress and disrupted not only just businesses but also our consumption patterns and the way we live. The pandemic induced forced work from home and online education has become the new normal. Screen time has gone up exponentially and a lack of physical activity has significantly impacted mental and physical health. Established routines are completely unsettled. Within a week of the lockdown, reported cases of mental health went up 20 per cent.

A Tata Salt Lite survey has indicated that for Delhiites, work related issues and technology related issues were the top reasons

forgetting angry and stressed. Every three out of five (61%) respondents admitted that they would feel extremely angry, make errors or even argue with their boss if they were assigned work on their holidays or if they were asked to work longer on Fridays for some urgent work.

According to Dr Raj Kumar Shrivastava, senior consultant and head, Department of Mental Health and Behavioral Science, Max Super Speciality Hospital, Patparganj, depression is the most common form of psychiatric problem. "It has always been there. Today, people have started talking about it more. People are more open and reporting is on the rise. The role of social media and the celebrities also talking about their mental health, people have become courageous. The pandemic has not helped matters. Fear of infection, losing jobs and negativity around the Coronavirus has added to the burden. There is a change in the lifestyle of people as well. The uncertainty has made people anxious. Glorifying suicide of a celebrity by the media is to be blamed. One has to understand that the person who commits suicide, that person is not mentally strong. Even the smallest things in one's life can be a trigger leading to mental illness," Shrivastava says.

The good is that stigma around mental illness is getting diluted, people are willing to talk about their problems. "However, in smaller towns the problem still continues. In the metros the situation is much better. What is more important is to look for signs. There is a term, intent to suicide in psychiatry. It may be a casual phrase which can be a phase that a person is going through. But if the phrase becomes repetitive, that is a red flag," Dr Shrivastava tells you.

Pallavi Joshi, clinical psychologist at Sri Balaji Action Medical Institute, tells you that people are more aware today and open to talking about mental illnesses. "But there is a need to go through psychometric tests and then diagnose. There are a series of tests that the person is put through. Clinically diagnosed depression is a serious problem. The present generation, if denied certain comforts feels they are depressed; this is not true. The coping mechanism is low for Gen Z now for a few reasons. Lack of physical exercise is one reason. It makes some changes in the brain. Second, the older generation was asked to do certain things like help the mother in the kitchen or offer water to the guest. Kids had household chores to do. They felt needed and had a role to play. Today, they don't have this and are unable to tackle the pressure. Contributing to the life of others has its benefits, it prevents mood swings, getting bored and falling into depression," Joshi explains.

Natasha Sharma, counselor, psychotherapist and clinical hypnotherapist opines that the younger generation has lost the art of communication because they have been living in the virtual world of social media and reality is so different.

"Therefore, the lockdown has been so devastating. Humans are social animals. We are meant to be in community. We shrivel up when there is no touch. Isolation is the severest of punishment in jails, there is solitary confinement. This is psychologically the worst thing that one can do, to a human being. Then there is an illusion of being connected due to social media. We don't pick up our phones anymore. There was a time when one had to wait one's turn to speak over the one phone in the house. Today, even with each one having a phone, we send messages. There is no face-to-face conversation. There is no touch which is a form of communication; there are verbal and non-verbal modes of communication when you are in the same room or in a relationship. What we are seeing is the dark side of technology," Natasha says.

For a person to commit suicide, research suggests that 90 per cent people who com-

mit suicide have undiagnosed mental disorder. That is not to say that because you have mental disorder, one will commit suicide. There is impulsive suicide as well which doesn't follow any steps. But suicide does involve a lot of steps and intervention therefore is required which has lot of steps. Skipping a step can result in a loss of life. Essentially, there is no one cause but a bunch of precipitating factors that come together at a particular time or stage.

Pulkit Sharma, Puducherry-based clinical psychologist, says what has changed between then and now is that on an external level. Back then there was a good support system. "People were well-connected. If something bad would happen, society would rally around the person. Face-to-face communication helped and the relationships were deep and meaningful and not superficial like today. Earlier, life was less complicated. Today, the work culture is such that the mind never gets a break. We are doing a lot and have no space to just be yourself. Social media, the virtual world, has added to the problem. One might have 500 friends online, but none whom they can really connect with emotionally," Sharma tells you.

Though people today may be doing well financially, there is a feeling of lack of accomplishment. "Beyond money, life is empty today. People are working like machines especially for those in the corporate sector. The sources on which one's self-esteem was based earlier, were deeper and were about value, ethics and work performance. Today, it is superficial; it is all about material things — it is about how much you earn, how you look and what you own. This superficial life can ditch you fast and can lead to depression. 'I have lost my charm' and 'I don't look like I used to' are common and become triggers," Sharma explains.

Since there is no or little Government help in order to reach out to people with mental illness, Natasha tells you that it is the people around, the society that needs to step in and lend a hand.

"There are rumblings that there may be something happening at the Government level. We, as a nation, are under-equipped. We have not Centre of State level policy for suicide prevention. We have no national helpline for suicide prevention, whatever is happening it is due to certain people. There are not enough mental health professionals per capita; there are not enough mental health clinics or hospitals given the population. So, the Government should take up steps. While some head way has been made, a lot more needs to be done," Natasha says.

GATEKEEPERS ARE OUR EYES, EARS AND HANDS ON THE GROUND

Shalini Saksena ■ NEW DELHI

Last December, when Kushal Punjabi committed suicide his friends were shocked. He had been out at a friend's party on December 25, 2019 and none of his friends picked up the signs that Punjabi was depressed and when they said goodbye that would be the last time, they would see him alive. That got his good friend Harmeet Singh of Meet Brothers thinking.

"When I said goodbye to him at the end of the party I never realised that I would not see him alive again. The next day when I got the news, I was shocked; I couldn't believe it. When I went to his house and saw his mother

and sister in tears and inconsolable, I knew that I had to do something about it — how to help others. Charity, like they say begins at home and hence The WeCare Initiative was launched on World Suicide Prevention Awareness Day on September 10, 2020," the singer-music director tells you.

The aim of the initiative is to train common people as gatekeepers who can then spot the signs of depression in others and offer help by asking them pertinent questions without alarming the person but ensuring that he opens up and gets the help that he needs. The focus is to also reduce the stigma around emotional and mental health issues, spread awareness about suicide

prevention and change the way people look at mental and emotional health. By training as many people as possible within the industry as gatekeepers, there will have eyes and ears everywhere to identify the signs of suicide and know what to do and how to help. "The idea is to train ordinary people who can identify signs of depression among others, create awareness about the issue and where necessary help the person suffering from mental illness get the necessary help he requires. The training is imparted by experts. It is a two-hour session which people can join after registering at www.wecareinitiative.co.in and paying a fee of ₹1,000. The initiative has been



launched with the help of a few friends and well-trained professionals. The rising rate of suicides in the country, especially in the entertainment industry, has brought the conversation around mental health into the open and that's the first step," Singh explains.

Natasha Sharma, executive director of the initiative tells you the one of the goals on their initiative is about suicide prevention and how to tackle the mental disorders. "The more we talk about it, the more it will help people. One of the reasons for the rise in suicides can be attributed to the lockdown due to the pandemic. Today, the world is a very pressured place. There is a lot of financial pressure and the younger

generation is a lot more sensitive than what people were of the 70s-80s. Anxiety is on the rise. They see everyone struggling; they are worried about their future," Sharma says.

She tells you that before any initiative starts, it is important to define a target audience.

"For us it is the entertainment industry and not just Bollywood. There is this institute in the US, the QPR Institute by Dr Paul Quinnett, founder-CEO. He has 20 years of research-based programmes and one of them is gatekeepers training programme. There is an NGO in Bengaluru, Suicide Prevention India Foundation. We have collaborated with them endorsed by

QPR Institute and we conduct gatekeeper training which teaches people who to identify signs and what to do about it. It is a sensitising training where people are taught to look for certain signs that this person is going through or attempting or planning suicide and understand what he is going through. As a gatekeeper you will know and save a life. It may be 20 years down the line but the gatekeeper will know. We realise that we can't be accessible to everyone. What we can do is train as many gatekeepers as possible to be our eyes, ears and hands on the ground. If we can train enough gatekeepers, we can prevent the next Kushal Punjabi from happening," Sharma says.

SUPER COMEBACK

MI lose after a solid start in IPL opener to Dhoni's CSK

PTI ■ ABU DHABI

Mahendra Singh Dhoni hasn't lost an ounce of his leadership acumen even after a 437-day hiatus as his battle-hardened Chennai Super Kings outfit beat Mumbai Indians in the 13th Indian Premier League opener on Saturday.

Ambati Rayudu (71 off 48 balls) blazed his way and Faf du Plessis (55 not out off 44 balls) more than made up for Suresh Raina's absence at No. 3, helping CSK chase down a tricky 163-run target in 19.2 overs over and with five wickets to spare.

It wasn't a jam-packed Wankhede rooting for the Mumbai Indians nor was it the passionate Chepauk stands with its Yellow Army in full fervour. It was a near empty Sheikh Zayed Stadium in the Arabian desert where Bryan Adams' Summer of 69 or Rocky's theme music Eye of a Tiger blared from the sound systems along with artificial crowd cheers.

In this eerie set-up, Captain Cool's brain kept ticking as his new recruits -- leg-spinner Piyush Chawla (1/21 in 4 overs) and left-arm seamer Sam Curran (1/28 in 4 overs) -- made fantastic first impressions while the new ball pair of Lungi Ngidi (3/38 in 4 overs) and Deepak Chahar (2/32 in 4 overs) came back brilliantly at the death overs.

The skipper also sent match-fit Sam Curran at No. 6 and his 18 off 6 balls ended any anti-climax that Rohit Sharma's men would have anticipated.

Giving less than 80 runs in the back-10 was the turning point and



Chennai Super Kings players Lungi Ngidi, skipper MS Dhoni celebrate with other teammates after SA pacer takes wicket

then the manner in which Rayudu and Du Plessis chased it after a scratchy start as MI maintained their record of not winning an IPL opening game since 2013. Trent Boult, with an in-dipper and James Pattinson, with a slightly dodgy decision going his way, removed Shane Watson and



Murali Vijay respectively, making it 6 for 2 before Rayudu, in the company of du Plessis, launched a furious counter attack. One of the major aspects was how clueless Jasprit Bumrah (1/43 in 4 overs) looked during the day and it cost his team dearly.

Stadium near empty but not quite enveloped in eerie silence

Abu Dhabi: The IPL is back but the atmosphere isn't.

The 20,000-seater Sheikh Zayed Stadium was nearly empty, apart from the 22 men in the middle, officials, staff, security and a smattering of others, as the IPL unlike any other began here on Saturday.

But, contrary to the expectations, it was not too quiet and not too placid, either. The pre-recorded cheers by the franchises ensured the stadium was not enveloped in eerie silence.

Organised amid the Covid-19 pandemic after several twists and turns, delays and discussions, the start of the 13th Indian Premier League was still definitely out of the ordinary, slightly odd and even a bit weird.

Inaudible under normal circumstances because of the roaring cheers and chants raining down from the stands packed to the rafters with pas-



sionate fans, the thud of Rohit Sharma and Quinton de Kock's bats hitting the ball could be heard across the world, breaking through the TV sets of millions of viewers.

In this case, the pre-recorded cheers could quite swallow up the sounds of the bat hitting the ball, like it would happen in the pre-COVID world.

In the VIP box, top officials of the BCCI, including president Sourav Ganguly and secretary Jay Shah, as well as the office-bearers of the Emirates Cricket Board, were spaced several seats apart to maintain social distancing.

The celebration was far from being over the top after Chennai Super Kings

made it 48 for two with the dismissal of De Kock in the sixth over of the innings. And it was the same after they sent back the dangerous Rohit, who started the proceedings with a cracking drive through the offside in the very first ball of the tournament off Deepak Chahar, who recovered in time for the game after contracting the dreaded virus.

Rohit did not look like he was coming off a long break from the sport. Though the Mumbai Indians captain and every other player have been training for days, it is the first match they were playing in months, something they have never experienced in the last many years.

Truly in sync with the extraordinary times, CSK's talismanic skipper Mahendra Singh Dhoni, in a lighter vein, asked at the toss if he could "have a slip" in place owing to the social distancing guidelines.

There is 'competition' for middle-order slots: Ponting



PTI ■ DUBAI

Delhi Capitals coach Ricky Ponting believes that Rahane's inclusion adds "more depth" to the side but there will be a healthy competition for middle-order slots during this IPL season.

The Capitals, which finished third last year, will start their campaign against Kings XI Punjab on Sunday and both Ponting and skipper Shreyas Iyer agreed that Ashwin and Rahane have been great additions to the young side with their experience they brought in.

While the coach didn't give away much but there is a possibility that India's Test vice-captain may have to wait for his chance in the playing XI considering the explosive top five (Shikhar Dhawan, Prithvi Shaw, Shreyas Iyer, Rishabh Pant, Shimron Hetmyer) that DC possesses. There is in-form Alex Carey also in the mix.

"We really have a balanced side. There is a lot of competition for middle-order slots, Rahane gives us more depth to our batting," the Australian legend said on Saturday during his team's pre-season virtual media conference sitting alongside Shikhar. "Shikhar had as good a last season as anybody. Prithvi has been training very well. Shreyas has

had his best 12 months for the Indian team. We have Pant, Hetmyer and Alex Carey (both left-handers), which gives us a good mix of left-right combination. We have our bases covered," Ponting said, giving a subtle hint about Rahane's immediate future.

Iyer, on his part, said that Ashwin and Rahane have mixed well within the group and never gave a sense that they are senior players.

"They give that extra sense of confidence. You don't feel that they are seniors and are willing to help every individual," said Iyer, who believes that Ashwin will be beneficial for the team, given his idea of the KXIP core team (Chris Gayle, KL Rahul and Mayank Agarwal) and the slowish nature of the Dubai track.

Ponting also felt that wicketkeeper batsman Rishabh Pant has been shaping up well since last week and he is expecting another good season from the burly southpaw.

"Pant, during the last week, has really turned the corner well and I would expect him to perform as well as he did last year.

"In DC, we as a coaching group don't put added pressure on the players. We like to take as much as possible pressure off them. We never expect any such thing from them which they don't expect from themselves," the coach said.



Staying in isolation for first six days was very difficult: Dhoni

PTI ■ ABU DHABI

Staying in self isolation for the first six days after spending five months with family was the hardest phase, according to Mahendra Singh Dhoni, who spoke for the first time in months ahead of the IPL opener against Mumbai Indians.

In the run-up to 13th IPL, Chennai Super Kings were rocked by 13 Covid-19 cases, including two players, and pullouts by the senior duo of Suresh Raina and Harbhajan Singh due to personal reasons.

As per the protocols, teams had to quarantine for six days in Dubai and 14-days in Abu Dhabi. However, CSK had to stretch their self-isolation period to September 1 due to positive cases in the camp including players Deepak Chahar and Ruturaj Gaikwad.

"First six days in quarantine is very difficult. You are with your family and suddenly you have to stay in a



separate room... Felt each individual used that time well and nobody was disappointed or frustrated," the former India skipper said after winning the toss.

"After the first 14 days it was nice to get out. The practice facilities were very good."

Back in action after a long gap, Dhoni, who had retired from international cricket a little over a month ago, said he worked on his fitness during the coronavirus-induced lockdown in India.

His bulging biceps were there for everyone to see.

"Have the liberty during lockdown to spend time on yourself to keep fit. Have to applaud every member of the squad for utilising the time well."

Chennai had lost the finals to Mumbai Indians in the last edition.

Asked if revenge is on his mind, Dhoni said:

"Being a gentleman's game you don't think about revenge (against MI). You think about the mistakes you made."

Four-time champions Mumbai Indians skipper Rohit Sharma said adapting to the conditions in UAE will be the key.

"We have been here for few weeks, so understand conditions better. Before coming here, we had a camp in Mumbai. Also had quality practice out here in Abu Dhabi. Key here will be to understand conditions," he said.

"Pitches for the practice matches will be similar to what we'll get here. So ready to go."

The last time the IPL was held in UAE, Mumbai Indians had returned home empty handed. Asked if it plays on the mind in any way, Rohit said: "We just have two members from that squad, so it is a new set up now. The way we've been playing cricket for the last couple of years, it has been good. All in all we've had good preparation. Now all about execution."



Smith, Archer, Buttler clear Covid-19 tests

Dubai: Captain Steve Smith along with star players Jofra Archer and Jos Buttler have cleared the mandatory Covid-19 test on arrival and are available to play Rajasthan Royal's IPL opener against Chennai Super Kings at the Sharjah Cricket ground on September 22.

The trio were part of the 21-strong contingent of Australia and England players, who arrived in the UAE from UK by a special chartered flight on September 17.

"Smith, Buttler and Archer underwent Covid-19 tests on Friday and results are negative. So they are available for selection with quarantine duration being reduced to 36 hours," an IPL source said.

Former Australia skipper Smith has had concussion problems and missed all three ODIs against England and his participation in the opening game is subject to clearance from both franchise and Cricket Australia's medical team.

If Smith misses the first game, Buttler could lead the side as he is one of the senior-most players in the team.

As of now, the franchise is hopeful that Smith will clear the mandatory concussion tests and be available from the first game itself. PTI

KL looking to play good brand of cricket

PTI ■ DUBAI

Kings XI Punjab skipper KL Rahul on Saturday said the side is motivated to making this IPL season a memorable one by playing a good brand of cricket.

"The team has been fantastic, we've been getting along great and are looking forward to playing a good brand of cricket and making this season a memorable one," Rahul said.

"We're confident, we're motivated and we are really excited to be a part of this edition of the Indian Premier League," he added.

Rahul, who has been handed the Kings XI Punjab captaincy after two stellar seasons with the bat at the top of the order, said it will be a challenging experience playing in the UAE without the fans but the team is ready for it.

"It is going to be a different experience this year, but we as a team are up to the challenge and are playing for all the fans who continue to support us," Rahul said.

KXIP, who have never won the IPL, are aiming to go all the



way this time with a strong squad at their disposal with the likes of Rahul, Mayank Agarwal, Mohammad Shami and overseas recruits Chris Gayle, Glenn Maxwell, Sheldon Cottrell, Jimmy Neesham, the in-form Nicholas Pooran and Mubeen Zadran.

"The team looks great and we have a top-notch line up this

season. The boys have been working really hard and we have a nice balance of youth and experience in our squad," head Coach Anil Kumble said.

"We are all looking forward to having a good season this year. I truly believe that Kings XI Punjab have the necessary squad to go all the way in this IPL," he added.



Shubman will bat at top order: McCullum

PTI ■ ABU DHABI

Kolkata Knight Riders head coach Brendon McCullum on Saturday made it clear that Shubman Gill will open for them throughout the IPL to give the team some solidity at the top in tricky UAE conditions.

The rising top-order batsman was tried out at different positions last season without the desired result and it was considered to be one of the reasons why KKR missed out on a play-off berth.

"They're (wickets) gonna be quite fresh, I think they could be quite helpful for seam bowling. If the wickets are going to be a little bit tricky early on against fast bowling, I think you want your players who have the best techniques and the best batsmanship and craft," said McCullum.

"... He's (Shubman) certainly one of those guys... I see him bat-

ting at the top of the order throughout the campaign," added the newly-appointed KKR coach in a media interaction.

Impressed with the way, the 21-year-old Shubman carries himself, the Kiwi great said he wants to give the Indian youngster his own space and groom the other junior members in the team.

"I think he's got a bit of a presence about him, even at this young age, very respectful as well. I know DK (captain Dinesh Karthik) really respects him as a person as a cricket brain as well. And I think he's going to be another wonderful resource for DK both on and off the field," McCullum said.

"I want to see the most out of him is just to grow on his own time, his own space but also take those around him, who are still reasonably inexperienced and

grow at the same rate that he's growing in his own career.

"If we can do that, then the experience we can get into these guys at a young age, and pressure moments is going to be a very, very good thing for KKR this season. He's got a very big role."

KKR started off well winning four of their first five matches, but they lost six matches on the trot in the business end to miss the qualifiers by a whisker.

The team looked really dependent on Andre Russell, but this time reigning World Cup winning captain Eoin Morgan will lend solidity in the middle-order.

Hailing the Englishman as the best middle-over batsman in limited overs cricket, McCullum said: "He's probably the best middle-order batsman in the shorter version, over the last couple of years. So we're very lucky to

have him. His relationship with DK throughout this campaign will give us a good opportunity."

The England limited-overs skipper, who had a stint with KKR from 2011-2013, was bought at the auction for \$5.25 crore.

The 34-year-old Morgan will be joining the side after leading England to their maiden World Cup glory in 2019.

"He was a guy who we were desperate to get batting (at the auction) in the middle order around Russell and Karthik... He provides us with a really, really strong middle-order."

KKR chief mentor David Hussey had earlier said Russell is best suited at No 3 but McCullum was of the opinion that the star Jamaican is an ideal finisher in the T20 format and the team will have a "horses-for-courses" approach.

"I think his game is definite-

ly suited to probably the last 10 overs of a T20 game. But there may be times where the matchups are right we can get in Andre a little bit earlier, up the order."

"That will be a horses for courses type approach but the good thing is we've got lots of resources to be able to choose from."

Clearly indicating that Russell, Morgan, Sunil Narine and Pat Cummins will be the four overseas players that he will mainly depend on during the tournament, McCullum said the team can really shock the oppositions if the wickets aid seamers in the initial few matches.

"Cummins has the ability to take early wickets and if we can do that, we know we've got some quality spinners. When you couple them all together, I'm really content with the unit that we've got, particularly on these wickets

because they might have a little bit more in them than what most people are anticipating," he said.

"If the wickets play as we expect, then I think we could shock a few really with the pace and speeds with which our bowlers can operate," he said.

With the overseas combination already set for KKR, Tom Banton may have to wait for his chances.

"He probably won't start for us in this campaign because we will go with a slightly different balance but what he gives you so many different options. He has already made a bit of a splash in International cricket," he said.

"He's a guy who even against various bowling attacks of the world, can still shock them, and dominate them. And when he gets his opportunity, I'm sure he will entertain the fans all around the world."

AFP ■ MANCHESTER/LEEDS

Wilfried Zaha returned to haunt Manchester United with a deadly double as Crystal Palace landed a dramatic 3-1 win to leave Ole Gunnar Solskjaer reeling.

Just as they did in the early weeks of last season, Palace took all three points from their trip to Old Trafford, as a brittle United team were picked apart.

Andros Townsend hit a seventh-minute opener but the match was still in the balance with around 20 minutes to play when Palace were awarded a penalty, after Jordan Ayew's flick struck the hand of Victor Lindelof.

Goalkeeper David de Gea looked to have made himself a hero when he saved the softly struck penalty from Ayew, only for a re-take to be ordered, and this time former United winger Zaha stepped up to smash the ball high into the net.

United new boy Donny van de Beek pulled one back, but Zaha added a third Palace goal in the 85th minute, holding off weak link Lindelof and drilling beyond De Gea from the edge of the penalty area.

HAT-TRICK FOR DCL

Dominic Calvert-Lewin hit a hat-trick and James Rodriguez bagged his first Premier League goal as Everton crushed 10-man West Bromwich Albion 5-2 to extend their perfect start to the season.

Carlo Ancelotti's side fell behind to Grady Diangana's early goal at Goodison Park.

But Calvert-Lewin equalised and James put them ahead before West Brom imploded.

Kieran Gibbs was dismissed for pushing James in the face in first half stoppage-time.

Then Albion boss Slaven Bilic was sent to the stands after storming onto the pitch for a furious rant at referee Mike Dean.

Matheus Pereira equalised for Albion after the interval, but Michael Keane restored Everton's lead and Calvert-Lewin sealed the points with his second and third goals.

At 23, Calvert-Lewin is the youngest Englishman to score a Premier League hat-trick for Everton.

After a summer spending spree, Ancelotti is under pressure to deliver a big improvement on

UNITED STUNNED

Crystal Palace beat Solskjaer's shambolic Red Devils 3-1 at Old Trafford



"kill" his team.

Now watching from the stands after his dismissal, Bilic saw Pereira equalise with a superb free-kick in the 47th minute.

But Keane poked Everton back in front after Richarlison's header was pushed out by Sam Johnstone in the 54th minute.

Calvert-Lewin struck again in the 62nd minute, the striker sliding in to meet Richarlison's cross with a close-range finish.

And Calvert-Lewin's red-hot start to the season continued four minutes later when he completed his hat-trick as the ball bounced off his back into the net.

LEEDS ON RIGHT SIDE

This time, Leeds was on the right end of a 4-3 thriller in the Premier League.

A week after losing at champion Liverpool by the same score line on the opening day of the season, Leeds was involved in another wild contest in its first home game back in the division and came out on top against fellow promoted team Fulham.

Helder Costa scored in each half for Leeds, the second goal proving to be the winner at an empty Elland Road for Marcelo Bielsa's attack-minded side.

Fulham, which had two goals from striker Aleksandar Mitrovic, has now lost back-to-back games



to open the season, having already been beaten 3-0 by Arsenal.

Between them, Leeds and Fulham have conceded 14 goals in four games so far. West Bromwich Albion, the other side promoted from the second-tier Championship for this season, has conceded eight.

Costa gave Leeds a fifth-minute lead by slamming a shot in off the bar from an acute angle after Fulham midfielder Harrison Reed inadvertently flicked on a corner by the hosts.

Penalties have been a feature of the first two rounds of the league and there were two in six minutes here.

In the 35th, Mitrovic converted a spot kick after Robin Koch tripped Joe Bryan, despite trying to pull out of his attempted tackle. Koch also gave away a penalty at Anfield last weekend.

Mateusz Klich replied with one of his own for Leeds in the 41st after Bryan pushed Patrick Bamford in the back.

Bamford then scored for the second straight match by stroking home a finish following a pass from Klich, before providing the cross that Costa swept in in the 57th for 4-1.

Fulham fought back through goals by Bobby Reid in the 62nd — four minutes after coming on as a substitute — and Mitrovic in the 67th but Leeds held on.



Bayern love to score 8

AFP ■ MUNICH



Leroy Sane said all-conquering Bayern Munich crave even more silverware after the Germany winger scored on his debut in Friday's historic 8-0 thrashing of Schalke in the opening game of the new Bundesliga season.

"We're still hungry, even though we won the treble last season," said Sane after creating two goals for Serge Gnabry, who claimed a hat-trick in the goalfest at the Allianz Arena.

"Winning our first game at home 8-0 is obviously super. It felt really, really good finally to be able to play with the lads," said Sane, who spent most of last season sidelined at former club Manchester City after tearing knee ligaments at the very start of last season.

"It's been a very good day with lots of goals." Just 26 days after winning the Champions League final, Bayern picked up where they left off last season with their 22nd-straight win.

Gnabry opened the scoring with just four minutes gone with a great piece of finishing which gave Schalke goalkeeper Ralf Faehrmann no chance.

Burly central midfielder Goretzka grabbed the second against his former club when he hit the bottom corner from the edge of the box on 19 minutes. Lewandowski, the Bundesliga's top scorer last season with 34 goals, opened his account for 2020/21 with half an hour gone.

He netted a penalty after being brought down in the area by Schalke defender Ozan Kabak, who has been linked to a move to Liverpool.

It was 3-0 at half-time, but Gnabry grabbed his second two minutes after the break when he fired into an empty net after a sprint by Sane pulled Faehrmann out of position.

The pair combined again when Sane chested the ball down after getting in behind the defence and rolled the ball off to the waiting Gnabry to claim his hat-trick just before the hour mark.

Mueller added the sixth on 69 minutes after Lewandowski had again cut Schalke's defence to shreds.

The records were sent tumbling as Sane marked his debut with the seventh on 71 minutes when he sprinted onto Joshua Kimmich's superb pass and fired home with Lewandowski unmarked outside him.

Musiala, who only turned 17 in February, became the club's youngest scorer in the Bundesliga when he darted in from the left wing to add the eighth on 81 minutes.



German club Eintracht Frankfurt supporters cheer for their team after they returned to the Bundesliga for the first time since coronavirus restrictions began in March

AP

SINGLES

AGUERO OUT FOR UP TO 2 MONTHS

MANCHESTER: Man City striker Sergio Aguero could be out for up to two months as he recovers his fitness after surgery on his left knee injury, manager Pep Guardiola said. The Argentina international published a video on Twitter, showing himself running with a ball in an individual training session, but Guardiola said an imminent return to the team was unlikely. "He is doing the (work), in maybe one month or two months he will be ready," Guardiola said. "He has to come back on the pitch and regain the physical condition. Sergio was out for a long time and Sergio is not a guy who regains the physical condition quick."

LYON'S WINLESS RUN CONTINUES

LYON: Lyon's winless run in the French league stretched to three games after being held by visiting Nimes to 0-0. Nimes goalkeeper Baptiste Reynet made a fine save in the 90th minute to deny Lyon substitute Tino Kadewere a late winner from Memphis Depay's corner. Earlier, Moussa Dembélé thought he'd scored for the home side, but the goal was ruled out after a VAR check as the ball had gone out of play.

TRAORE LEAVES LYON FOR ASTON VILLA

BIRMINGHAM: Aston Villa has signed Burkina Faso forward Bertrand Traore from French top-flight club Lyon subject to international clearance, the Premier League club announced on Saturday. Lyon said the fee was 18.4 million euros (around 17 million pounds/\$21.9 million), with an additional 2.2 million euros (2 million pounds/\$2.6 million) in bonuses and the club receiving 15% of a profitable future sale. "We're delighted that Bertrand has chosen to come to Villa," manager Dean Smith said.

BFI OFFICE-BEARERS GET EXTENSION

NEW DELHI: The Covid-19 pandemic on Saturday forced a postponement of the upcoming Boxing Federation of India (BFI) elections, resulting in a three-month tenure extension for president Ajay Singh and his executive committee. During its Special General Meeting (SGM), the BFI also unanimously amended its constitution to "comply with" the requirements of the National Sports Code 2011. The original four-year tenure of the BFI EC was supposed to get over on September 25 but the pandemic has made it difficult to conduct the election, making the extension necessary, the national federation said.

BCCI, EMIRATES BOARD SIGN MOU

DUBAI: The BCCI and Emirates Cricket Board on Saturday signed a Memorandum of Understanding and hosting agreement to boost cricketing ties between the two countries, which could make UAE a second option for India's home series if the surge in Covid-19 cases continues. While there was no official confirmation, but the agreement could mean that the IPL 2021, which is supposed to be held in next six months, could be again hosted in the UAE if the situation doesn't improve in India.

ROHIT NEW FACE OF JKLC SIXER CEMENT

NEW DELHI: Well established cement brand JKLC Sixer Cement associate with ace cricketer, Rohit Sharma as its brand ambassador. JKLC Sixer is the youngest cement brand of parent company JK Lakshmi Cement Ltd which is a part of diversified industrial conglomerate, JK Organisation. One of the modern era greats, Rohit Sharma will be part of advertisements and other brand communications of JKLC Sixer in his role.

Agencies

Liverpool seal swoop for Wolves forward Jota

AP ■ LIVERPOOL

Liverpool sealed the signing of Portugal forward Diogo Jota from Wolves for a reported £41 million (\$54 million) on Saturday.

Jota has signed a "long-term" contract with the Premier League champions, which is believed to be a five-year agreement.

The 23-year-old joins Liverpool just 24 hours after they signed Bayern Munich midfielder Thiago Alcantara for an initial £20 million.

Jota will provide attacking depth for Liverpool boss Jurgen Klopp, competing with Mohamed Salah and Sadio Mane for playing time in the wide positions in the team's three-man forward line.

"It's just a really exciting moment for me and my family," Jota told Liverpool's website.

"All of my path since I was a kid and now, to join a club like Liverpool — the world champions — is just unbelievable. I just want to get started."

Jota claimed the move to Anfield was too good an opportunity to turn down.

"When you look at the Premier League, you always see Liverpool as one of the biggest teams in the country, so it's impossible to say no," he said.

"So we just want to come (to the club), to give our best and hopefully I can become a good option for Liverpool in the future."



Earlier on Saturday, Wolves boss Nuno Espirito Santo had confirmed Jota would be moving to Merseyside.

"Diogo is amazing and everybody knows the relationship we built. What Diogo did for us is absolutely fantastic," he said.

"I think Diogo is going to the right place and we wish him all the best, knowing that it will never be forgotten, especially by our fans, all the memorable moments that Diogo provided."

Former Atletico Madrid forward Jota joined Wolves on loan in their 2017-18 Championship-winning campaign before making a permanent switch in 2018.

While Jota's departure is a blow for Wolves, they can look forward to the arrival of 18-year-old Dutch defender Ki-Jana Hoeser from Liverpool as part of the Jota deal.



Gareth Bale poses with Tottenham shirt after he completed his move back to the club



Sergio Reguilón poses with Tottenham shirt after he joins PL club on Saturday

Spurs/Twitter

Chennai: Indian Grandmaster P

Harikrishna pulled off a stunning win over world champion Magnus Carlsen of Norway but suffered four losses later in the day to slip to overall sixth place in the St Louis Rapid and Blitz online chess tournament.

Harikrishna defeated world

Harikrishna stuns Carlsen

number one Carlsen in round

three of Blitz 1 in 63 moves with white pieces. He also beat lower-rated American Jeffrey Xiong but save for the two wins, he had a forgettable day as he suffered four

defeats, apart from three draws.

His losses were against Americans Leinier Dominguez and Wesley, Alexander Grischuk of Russia and Iranian prodigy Alireza Firouzja.

Harikrishna shares the sixth place with Armenian GM Levon Aronian with 3.5 points after the nine rounds of Blitz 1.

Carlsen, who had dropped to second place behind So at the end of the Rapid event, leapt to the top spot in the standings with 18.5 points.

PTI

Djokovic loses his cool again



a ball in a fit of anger.

Djokovic also acknowledged then "that I have outbursts and this is kind of the personality and the player that I have always been."

The 97th-ranked Koepfer, who screamed at himself in frustration throughout the match, was also warned for misbehavior early in the third set.

Aiming for his fifth title in

Bopanna-Shapovalov out

Rome: India's Rohan Bopanna and Denis Shapovalov of Canada bowed out of the men's doubles event of the Italian Open after losing to the French duo of Jeremy Chardy and Fabrice Martin in quarterfinals.

The unseeded Indo-Canadian

pair fought hard before going down 6-4, 5-7, 7-10 to the French combination in the tie-breaker.

Bopanna and Shapovalov had stunned top seeds Juan Sebastian Cabal and Robert Farah of Colombia in the second round of the ATP Masters 1000 event. PTI

Halep, who lost two straight finals in Rome to Elena Svitolina in 2017 and 2018, will need to beat two-time Grand Slam winner Garbiñe Muguruza.

SAI approves Srikanth's request for coach & physio to travel for Denmark Open

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Sports Authority of India (SAI) on Saturday approved former world No 1 Kidambi Srikanth's request to allow his coach and physiotherapist to accompany him for the Denmark Open badminton tournament scheduled to be held in Odense from October 13 to 18.

The 27-year-old is part of the Target Olympic Podium Scheme (TOPS) and thus will receive support by SAI. He has also sought permission to reach the tournament early.

"The proposal to participate in the competition came from Srikanth, who has also requested that he be allowed to reach the venue early and that

his coach and physio be allowed to accompany him for the tournament," a SAI release stated.

"However, their names are still to be decided," it added.

SAI will also bear the cost for Srikanth's Covid-19 testing that is required to be done before he takes part in the competition.

The Denmark Open will mark the resumption of international badminton after it came to a halt in March because of the dreaded virus.

Besides Srikanth, former world No 1 Saina Nehwal and Lakshya Sen will be participating in the event. The trio were part of the six-member team selected for the event by Badminton Association of India.



‘Thrilled to do a negative role’

■How did you come on board for the series — Flesh?

The casting director of the series approached me; he is a friend of mine. The character I play here is very different from what I have done in the past.

He thought of me and wanted to see if I fit the role. I was thrilled that somebody approached me for a negative role. Then the series is directed by Danish Aslam and there was nothing that made me turn it down.

■You play a negative role. Was it something that you were looking for?

I was not specifically looking for a negative role. I wanted to do something different from the roles that were offered to me. In the past, I have played comic roles. People associate me with those type of easy-going characters. I wanted to show I could do other roles. I also wanted to experiment.

■You have done films and TV shows — Bollywood and Gujarati, what made you say yes to a web series?

I said yes purely on the basis of the content and the role that was offered to me. I had been offered other web series before as well, but they were similar to what I had

I started acting when I was very young. But it was more of a picnic back then. During my college days I started doing theatre. That is when I got to know what acting was all about. After graduation, I pursued it as a profession.

■What has been the most significant change in the industry?

I would say it is the influence of social media. I am a private person so it becomes difficult because people approach you for a particular character after they see the kind of following one has on social media. Not everybody does it, but there are many

done in the past. There was no role that excited me. But the role in Flesh excited me.

■What is Scam 1992 about and your role in it?

The series is directed by Hansal Mehta; it is based on the scam by Harshad Mehta back in 1992. The series is all set to release on SonyLiv. I may have a small part here, but the role excited me because it is based on the real-life character. The role was really challenging since it is based on real person.

■How did you get into acting?

I started acting when I was very young. But it was not much of work back then; it was more of a picnic. During my college days I started doing theatre. That is when I got to know what acting was all about. After graduation, I pursued it as a profession.

■What has been the most significant change in the industry?

I would say it is the influence of social media. I am a private person so it becomes difficult because people approach you for a particular character after they see the kind of following one has on social media. Not everybody does it, but there are many

One is not selected on one's talent and if you fit the bill.

■Does that mean you still have to be recognised by the industry?

I think so. I am only half way there. I still have a long way to go.

■Is there a role that you loved being part of?

There were a couple of roles that I did for YRF Television. In 2010 I played Huzaifa Ali in *Rishta.com*. Another role that is dear to me is a role that I did for *Fatmagul*, a Turkish series.

■You have done comedy and now a negative character. Which would you choose?

Comedy comes naturally to me. It is my first love. When I was younger, I did *Filmi Chakkar*. I have learnt from the greats like Satish Shah, Ratna Pathak Shah and Rajesh Bedi. As a kid I used to observe them; I owe my comic timing to them.

■What next?

There were a few things that had been planned but the pandemic has pushed those projects. But *Scam 1992* is set to release. There is another film, I have just finished dubbing for it and is in the post-production stage.

Talktime

KAVIN DAVE

He is known for his comic timing and has done films like *My Name Is Khan*, *Shirin Farhad Ki Toh Nikal Padi* and *Kick*. The actor speaks with Shalini Saxena about why he played a negative character in a web series, *Flesh* and his upcoming projects



TIME TO KISS THE GROUND

The award-winning documentary, *Kiss The Ground*, by Josh and Rebecca Tickell talks about the agriculture revolution and climate change

Who would have thought that ploughing our fields meant denuding the soil, triggering desertification and leading to unprecedented water crisis, famine, starvation and global crises of unimaginable proportions? Who would have thought that years of fertilisers and pesticides being used in fields worldwide came from the residues of what an evil German scientist evolved in a lab to gas the unsuspecting Jews in millions? Who would have thought that an arrived nation like the US would actually transport this poison and insert it into its soil to botox unscrupulous farm production and, in turn, bring in cancer, heart, kidney and other fatal diseases in the form of global epidemics?

Not many of us would think deeply about this agriculture revolution, Monsanto and other prime suspects that are slowly killing the planet and its human population, not to mention the millions and millions of soil organisms that take in CO2 and turn it into natural manure for the plants to grow organically. We still are not thinking about it even if brilliant documentaries like this one makes the

THE INTERESTING ONE HOUR, 24-MINUTE DOCUMENTARY, IS THE STRONGEST EVER DEFENCE OF ORGANIC WAY OF LIFE. SOME PARTS OF THE DOCUMENTARY ARE SO WELL PUT OUT IN THE SEGMENT OF STORY-TELLING THAT IT ALMOST COMES OUT AS A THRILLER



issue clear and obvious.

Call it the curse of meddling with God and his creation, but the way humanity has evolved leaves a lot to be questioned as we tussle with the inconclusive talks on climate change at the highest international level.

Kudos to the husband-wife duo Josh and Rebecca Tickell, full time environment activists and filmmakers, to have put up such a well-researched, convincing and alarming state of affairs about the killing of our soil. The documentary is a stunning mount on the soil-conscious farming practices that need to be implemented if climate change has to be curbed.

The interesting one hour, 24-minute documentary, is the strongest ever defence of organic way of life. Some parts of the documentary are so well put out in the segment of story-telling that it almost comes out as a thriller.

Such is the story of the soil that is put to you that you don't mind the preachiness that accompanies it.

A worthwhile watch not just for enjoyment but to face the soil crisis with some viable alternatives.

‘Owning a production house is diversification, not transition’

RAVI DUBEY, who has completed 15 years in the industry, speaks with SHALINI SAKSENA about his production house, his recent poem and album, among other things

■ You started off as an actor, how did it lead to a production house?

I would not call having a production house a transition from acting; it is a diversification. I am very much still an actor and I still love acting. One thing just led to another. Sargun (wife) and I have been lucky that we have been able to forge good relations and people trust us. It is an organic diversification.

■ Are there any particular kind of projects your production house would like to promote?

There are Punjabi films that we are doing. A third has just been put on the floor. There is content we are working for Hindi TV. There is content for the web. Everything from music videos to cinema to TV, we are all there.

■ Is that how your poem and album happened?

No, I wouldn't say that. When we produce content, there are many factors that come into play. But for poetry, it was something that I had been wanting to pen down. One by one, people came and got associated with it and became a project. A friend created a video and another gave the music. We produced the video and I have written the poetry, but would not call it a commercial production, it was more of a creative bent.

■ How has the journey been?

I have been lucky. God is kind. The industry has embraced me, honour, taught me so much, been kind to me and showered me with love. I am grateful that I am here more than anywhere else. This is where I love to be, this is what I enjoy. I am fortunate to be part of this industry.

■ What is the best part of owning a production house?

You can tell stories you believe in; you push forward ideas and stories that you want and closet to your heart. It is an opportunity where one doesn't have to necessarily rely on others to tell a story. One doesn't have to convince people that a project is good because you think it is. Having your own resources makes it possible. We are lucky we could start this and put forward ideas we believe in.

■ Does that mean that the kind of content in the industry is not something that works for you?

This is not true. There is great work happening. In my 15 years in the industry that I have been an actor, there is fantastic work happening. It is only in the last one year that we decided to diversify for commercial and creative reasons. I am personally proud of the work that I have done like *Jamai Raja* and *Saas Bina Sasural*. Opening a production house doesn't mean I am undermining what is happening in industry but celebrating it.

■ You also debuted in the digital space with *Jamai 2.0*. What made you say yes to the project?

It was an organic move. The show — *Jamai Raja* has given so much; people loved it and wanted to see a metamorphosed version of it. I liked the story and the comfort level of working with Nia (Sharma). Doing it was like being at home. I enjoyed the process and that people loved it.

■ From modeling to acting to hosting a show. Where are you most comfortable?

I am most comfortable performing. I love and enjoy acting. I love hosting as well. Playing a character really grinds my gear. Just putting myself in front of the camera, the imagination is at full throttle, your creative potential and juices are flowing. But it doesn't mean I don't like hosting or dancing. I just love the art of performing.

■ What are some of the upcoming projects?

Besides the Punjabi films, music videos, web series and content for TV, there are some acting projects as well but I can't speak about them at present.

WEEKLYNATTER

SUNNY KAUSHAL MAKES DEBUT WITH TAARON KA SHEHER

In 2019, Bhushan Kumar and Vicky Kaushal teamed up for the chartbuster *Pachtaoge* that stands tall with around 450 million views on YouTube. Just a year later, the T-Series head honcho has signed Sunny Kaushal for his next music video. The single, titled *Taaron Ka Sheher* will have Sunny, who debuts in the world of music videos, opposite the vivacious and talented Neha Kakkar.

When you speak of music artists, Neha Kakkar has many blockbuster tracks to her credit and is one of the trending artist on YouTube, streaming sites and social media. But with *Taaron Ka Sheher*, the audience will witness a different side of Neha, on the other hand Sunny will don a never-seen-before rugged look, with long hair. The duo romantically paired opposite each other will definitely surprise the audiences with their chemistry.

It's the first time lyricist Jaani has given the



music and composed this intense romantic track sung by Neha Kakkar and Jubin Nautiyal.

A visibly excited Sunny shares: "When Bhushan sir called me for the song I was really excited to be associated with T-Series but after listening to it I got on board immediately, without a second thought. Neha and Jubin have sung the song so well that you can't help but feel it completely. And I've always been a fan of Jaani so I am really kicked about being a part of the song."

Songstress Neha who reunites with Jaani yet another time is all smiles: "It's an amazing composition by Jaani, one would hear after a long time. Bhushan sir's vision on this track is something to look forward to. I am super excited to feature with Sunny and give the audience this intense romantic track in mine and Jubin's vocals. Arvind Khera, our director, has done a great job with the video."

A DINNER TO REMEMBER

Ever feel like the weeknight struggle is real? Sometimes it's hard to find the time to put a balanced meal on the table that the whole family will love, and it can be just as hard to think of something to prepare that you didn't already eat last week! We're with you.

It doesn't take a long list of ingredients to make a great weeknight dinner. With simple and versatile ingredients, you already have at home combined with the goodness of California walnuts you can prepare comforting and wholesome meals that are sure to win your family's heart. Walnuts make a fantastic addition to the recipes. They're crunchy, filling and go with just about everything.

So, whip-up these delicious meals in thirty minutes or less so

you have more time to do the things you love with the people you love.

California walnuts Coimbatore Tomato Bhat



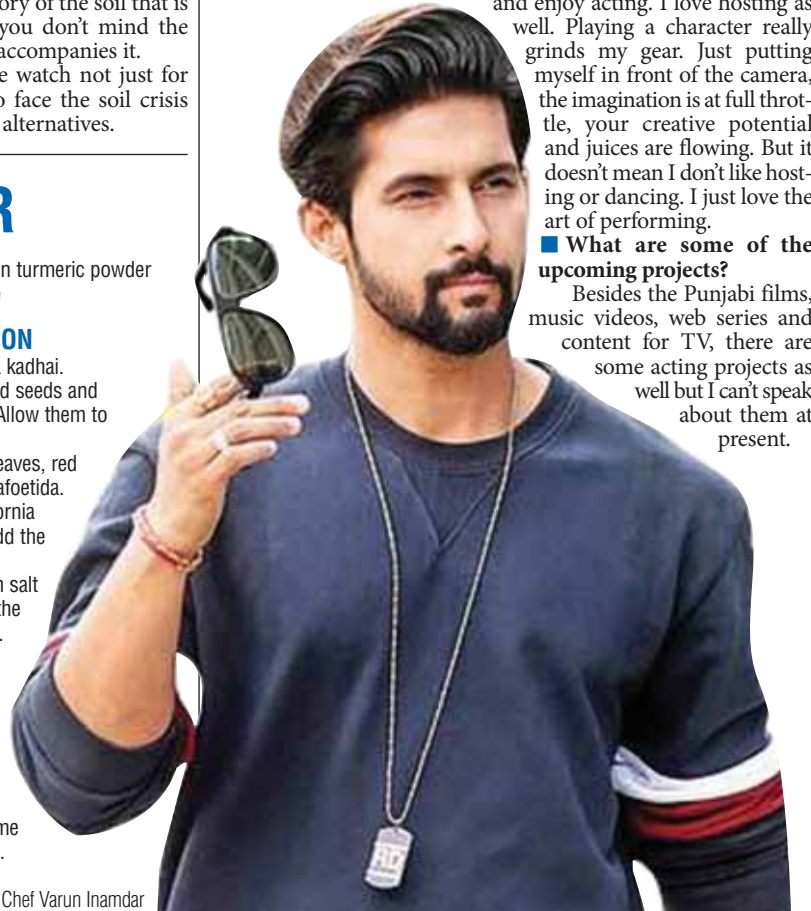
INGREDIENTS

- 3 cups basmati rice, cooked
- 3 tablespoons oil
- 1 teaspoon mustard seeds
- 1 teaspoon cumin seeds
- 1 spring curry leaves
- 2-3 dried red chilies
- 1/4 teaspoon asafoetida
- 1/2 teaspoon pepper powder
- 1 cup fresh tomato puree
- 1 tablespoon Kashmiri red chilli powder
- 1/2 teaspoon garam masala powder
- 1/2 cup California walnuts, chopped roughly
- 1/2 teaspoon turmeric powder
- Salt to taste

PREPARATION

- Heat oil in a kadhai.
- Add mustard seeds and cumin seeds. Allow them to crackle.
- Add curry leaves, red chillies and asafoetida.
- Stir in California walnuts and add the tomato puree.
- Season with salt and add in all the powder spices.
- Once the tomato puree thickens and reduces to 1/3rd its original size, add the rice.
- On high flame stir fry the rice.
- Serve hot!

— By Chef Varun Inamdar





A man extraordinaire
An Extraordinary Life stands out because of the main protagonist, Manohar Parrikar

2



4

Living in a giving mode
Once you start living in a giving mode, you will care for each other's concerns and sensibilities

If I look at the message I'm portraying, I think it definitely is be who you are, but be your best you
— Kim Kardashian



The Ed-Tech industry in India has been going through three major push backs including resistance from schools, the lack of trust in online education and the reach of internet and communication devices such as computers, tablets and mobile phones. Covid-19 served as a catalyst in resolving these concerns. The outbreak encouraged schools and other educational institutions to embrace technological solutions, writes PRAVEEN PARAMESWAR

EDUCATION TECHNOLOGY

CARVING A NEW PATH TO SUCCESS



Covid-19 has taken the country off-guard and is seen impacting the Indian economy. As per the Moody's report published in June 2020, India's GDP is expected to shrink by 3.1%. Going one step further, the Dun and Bradstreet Report released in August 2020 predicted that the GDP would contract by 4.5% this fiscal year. Amidst these daunting numbers, one industry that is still reflecting a ray of hope while showing unprecedented growth in India is the Education Technology, that is, the Ed-Tech sector. RS Components, analysing the Crunchbase data, observes that other than the USA, India is the second country that hosts the most number of Ed-Tech companies in the world.

In 2020, Ed-Tech stands as the most funded business sector in India. Only between January and July \$998 Mn has been invested across 31 deals. Furthermore, the ed-tech sector, according to the Omidyar, Redseer report, 2020, is expected to touch a size of \$3.5 Bn by 2022.

To understand the inner working of this sector and map its growth, let us delve deeper and analyse the current scenario along with the latest trends, impact, opportunities, possible pitfalls and the way ahead for the Ed-Tech industry.

INDIAN ED-TECH INDUSTRY: GROWTH AND INVESTMENT

The umbrella term of 'Ed-Tech' largely consists of five segments, which include Online Teaching and Test Preparation; Assessment, Guidance and Mentoring; Skill Development and Certification; Professional Development Programmes, Infrastructural and Administrative Solutions. Amongst these segments, Online Teaching and Test Preparation leads the market with a 64% share and further anticipating size of \$515 Mn by 2021. The sector is lately experiencing a boom as it alchemises with artificial intelligence and neuroscience

The growth of Ed-Tech in India started around 2004-05 when ventures such as Everonn, NIIT and Educomp made their mark through digital course content, smart classrooms and skill development programs. The industry has been reaching new heights with 3000 companies, including Byju's, Unacademy etc. along with various investors like Tiger Global, General Atlantic, Steadview Capital, GGV Capital, Foundation Holding, Aarin Capital, Simplilearn and Blume Ventures venturing into this landscape.

IMPACT OF COVID-19

The Ed-Tech industry in India has been going through three major push backs including resistance from schools, the lack of trust on online education and the reach of internet and communication devices such as computers, tablets and mobile phones. Covid-19 served as a catalyst in resolving these concerns. The outbreak encouraged schools and other educational institutions to embrace

technological solutions. In addition to this, it also influenced offline institutions to collaborate with companies such as Embibe and Simplilearn.

Not just this, parents are also trying to adapt to the new normal and subscribing to educational help platforms such as Byjus or Toppr or Global Shiksha, Khan Academy and others. People are going an extra mile to adapt to the Ed-Tech culture and connecting internet, mobile phones, TV, computers and tablets more to learning.

THE BENEFIT COMMON PEOPLE ENJOY FROM THE GROWTH OF ED-TECH

The growth of technology in the education sector is, in fact, impacting lives of millions majorly in five different ways:

- Many of the top-notch teachers, courses and institutions were only accessible for people who live in the city. But technology dilutes the geographical borders. Today, a person sitting 200 kilometres away from a city like Bangalore or Mumbai or Thiruvananthapuram or Lucknow would get easy access to high-class lectures and tutorials.
- Platforms such as Unacademy and Upgrad are helping people to learn/get certified/professionally qualified even along with the job they do. This helps more people to up-skill them without moving out of jobs.
- Technology in the coming years shall make education accessible for more people who are not able to afford fees at schools or colleges. This would also help the government to provide education to children and adults without much capital investment in high rise buildings and infrastructure, leading to the real democratisation of education in India.
- Assessments, guidance and mentoring are some of the areas that have to consider multiple data points at the same point. Most of the time these aspects go wrong in education as it is humanly impossible to consider multiple variables together. High profile technology is, in fact, solving this problem to a large extent. This would make assessments, guidance and mentoring people easier and more accurate, thus the right people would reach the right places in life.
- Another major impact of Ed-Tech in the life of common people is that education becomes more effective through visual aids, augmented reality, virtual reality and videos with meaningful graphics. This will help children and adults to comprehend the conceptual level of knowledge rather than mugging up as used to happen during the early days.

CURRENT TRENDS IN THE ED-TECH INDUSTRY

The current trends in the Ed-Tech industry in Indian can be presented through the following four points:

- The growth of Ed-Tech in India is not a linear or organised graph. It becomes extremely dynamic in nature. Thus only companies who are really agile, open to change and vibrant can sustain in the market.
- Early entrants to the market who could



WE SHOULD AIM AT MAKING INDIA THE HUB OF EDUCATION TECHNOLOGY, WITH THE MOST NUMBER OF COMPANIES, MAXIMUM INVESTMENT AND HIGH MARKET SIZE. THIS NOT ONLY ENHANCES BUSINESS IN THE COUNTRY BUT ALSO TAKES INDIA TO THE NEXT TRAJECTORY OF GROWTH. THIS WOULD BE THE RIGHT TIME TO DEVELOP 'MAKE IN INDIA' AS THE MOST POWERFUL BRAND IN THE GLOBAL ED-TECH SPACE



raise considerable capital, such as Byjus, increased the quality of content, visual treatment and sophistication of technology to a very high level. This demands any new entrant to match the high standards of their products, in order to satisfy the customers.

- Ed-Tech being a very large and broad industry with too many areas to address, a collaboration between non-competing players is becoming a new norm. Assessment companies joining hands with content providers or infrastructure agencies partnering with skill development companies are a few endeavours taking place all across the globe. Organisations have understood the power of co-creation of success.
- The New Education Policy (NEP-2020) sets the tone perfectly for the intervention of technology in education. This would enable the Ed-Tech industry to make India globally competitive.

FUTURE AVENUES FOR START-UPS

The significant areas where new startups can work on and create new horizons of growth will include the following:

- **Vernacular Languages:** 80% of India speaks vernacular languages. The New Education Policy, 2020 (NEP), also emphasises on education through regional languages. In every vertical, ranging right from online tutoring to skills development to assessments, vernacular content is yet to be well addressed. To understand its nature, it is important to note that even a unicorn such as Byjus has not started venturing into the vernacular market yet. Addressing the education requirements through all 22 officials in India would be a great space for start-ups to play.
- **Technological reforms of the 21st century:** Even though many companies claim that they use the technologies of the 4th industrial revolution such as artificial intelligence, augmented reality, big data analytics etc., very few companies use them productively, that too on a very small scale. Majority of the brands attempting to amalgamate artificial intelligence in their modules/ approach are yet to tap into its true potential. On the other hand, some companies use augmented and virtual realities mostly to enhance marketability than to manifest its real power. This is where the start-ups can work on and develop cutting edge technology solutions that can power any or all of the 5 segments in the ed-tech industry.
- **Research to blend Technology and Behavior Science:** This is an area where research-based startups can pitch their ideas. Currently, a gap that the

Ed-Tech industry is coming across includes not having alchemists who can blend technology and behavioural sciences seamlessly. Insightful research is one factor that could help in bridging this gap. Multifunctional teams consisting of technologists, psychologists, sociologists and neurobiologists can identify hundreds of areas that require in-depth attention in the ed-tech domain.

- **Assessments, Guidance and Mentoring:** Right people reaching the wrong places causes huge loss. In addition to this, financial loss, lack of happiness, fulfilment, purpose are some vital elements that people largely lack. This can be resolved through addressing assessment, guidance and mentoring techniques in the most appropriate manner. Startups who tap this nerve of the market can become the game changers of the sector while rightly using the modern-day technology and immersive solutions to one's benefit.
- **Skill Development:** National Skill Development Council (NSDC), various Sector Skill Councils (SSCs) and different State Skill Development Missions (SSDMs) are on a mission to bridge India's skill gap. The speed of change in technology is expected to make more than 48% of jobs obsolete in the next ten years, as observed by the Oxford Martin School study. This makes it inevitable to train every student with the best skillset, thus requiring more players to step forward and up-skill a large proportion of our workforce.

POSSIBLE PITFALLS FOR STARTUPS

- Considering that the Ed-Tech industry is hardly 14 to 15 years old in India, its infancy stage does not enable the newcomers to learn from a plethora of successful cases. Thus, there are a lot of chances that lack of understanding of the market or misjudgment might make startups err. Some of the possible mistakes are listed below.
- Online tutoring and test preparation through video content would be a business with fewer obstacles here and there. Thus many people may just take a deep dive, considering the growth of ed-tech experiences. It is a fact that the market still has space for newcomers. But the incumbents have raised the bar of quality very high. Therefore any person who gets into the market with a couple of lakhs investment on a camera, microphone, a bunch of amateur teachers and a website created out of a template in Envato would not be growing further. If the newcomers overcome the current quality players in the market, it will get easier for the sector to grow.
- Many of the start-ups see a captive market inside schools and with gov-

ernments. Even though the cost of acquiring customers would be lesser, compared with the direct to customer strategy, time to close a deal would be very long in the B2B or B2G segment. Time and money would be lost if the newcomers wait to close large businesses with governments or large school chains. Thus it is ideal to start with direct access to students and keep B2B or B2G as a parallel track.- Education is a vertical where human behaviour and mindset carries a lot of significance. Only if technology solutions can consider the behavioural aspects as well, companies can sustain the market. Many players only develop a team consisting of technical experts or some content developers, but miss out on collaborating with behaviour experts. This could serve as one of the common mistakes and should be avoided.
- The pandemic might be serving as a catalyst but it is imperative for us to remember that this scenario would last forever. Education will not travel backwards from the current affinity that it's built with technology. It's essential for one to have a plan when thinking about the road ahead for their venture.

THE WAY FORWARD

In India, the education sector is considered as one of the most stable, robust fields with low-income elasticity. According to the Economic Survey (2018), the income elasticity towards the healthcare sector was 1.95, whereas it was 0.93 for products in the education sector.

This scenario, along with the wide acceptance of ed-tech during Covid-19 would certainly lure more investments in this industry. In this case, the intervention of policymakers, influencers, launchpads and mentoring bodies should be focusing on channelling this growth to the right direction by ensuring entry of companies to the appropriate areas, channelling investment to the organisations attending the right requirement and helping ventures with proper hand-holding. We should aim at making India the hub of Education Technology, with the most number of companies, maximum investment and high market size. This not only enhances business in the country but also takes India to the next trajectory of growth. This would be the right time to develop 'Make in India' as the most powerful brand in the global ed-tech space.

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It's just before the Mumbai monsoon when the Don and her gang chance upon a mysterious package on the beach. It pops open, and a little puppy wriggles out. The Don's annoyed, her gang is upset. A new puppy spells trouble. For the dogs on the beach, life can be tough. And the new arrival has broken their rhythm. But soon they discover Shingmo the Seventh is actually a sliver of sunshine on the beach. The pack weaves a circle of friendship and love that shelters them all through sun and storm. These unforgettable dogs and their world come to life with Sagar Kolwankar's beautiful black-and-white illustrations. An adventure with a heart, *Woof!* is a must-read for anyone who's exchanged a knowing look with a dog.

India a harbinger of hope for Green World Order

There has been much talk about the wishful shifting of power from the West to the East. The rise of China, along with India and Japan, was showcased as a precursor that the 21st Century is destined to be an Asian century. But there's many a slip 'twixt cup and lip. The moot point is whether China can become a superpower like the erstwhile Colonial Britain and the present day America to control the international system. And if Beijing can't, who can be. According to Richard Haass, one of the thinkers of world politics, a superpower needs to have, besides economic and military prowess, an ability to intervene politically in any part of the world and prove its unparalleled strength. Another qualification is to use nuclear weapons and its access to any entity across the globe. China flatly fails on both the parameters to become a superpower. The second problem for the rising China theory is that there are more than two powers emerging on the landscape of international system. The middle powers like India, Germany, Japan, South Africa are inching up to shape the world system together. Chinese aggressions in many parts of Asia have exposed Beijing's desperation to become the unparalleled power in the region.

In these situation if there is a world order which could be developed beyond the conventional theory of world system, it can be a Green World Order that creates a pitch for non-fossil free energy system which can preclude catastrophic situations. This looks more promising for a sustainable world order. The world is sitting on the brink of catastrophe. Neither the US nor China is keen to safeguard the world through its roadmap for the Green World Order. We have heard of a Panchtantra story: In the

extreme exigencies of flood, a tree becomes a shelter for a tiger, a human, a serpent and a peacock. None of them harm each other; they hang on calmly. The reason for this unthinkable habitation in the peculiar condition is the existential threat for each. The disruptions in climate have pushed countries in the same situation: to shelter on the same tree. The corona pandemic is a harsh reminder of the undergoing change. The beginning of industrial revolutions in the early nineteenth century in Europe, along with the political ideology of an unchallenged charter of individualism, created a world order which was based on more consumption, better development and highly racial and geographical superiority. One after another geopolitical theorists from Henry Mackinder to TH Mahan, Heartland theory to Rim Land postulated to justify the western interventions and shaping the world system that keeps the western interests intact. This is how the two hundred years of history of the world is with us which has created a threat of existence not merely for Asians and Africans but for Europeans and Americans as well.

Now the larger question is which country has the ability to shelter like a tree in the universal flood. America is absolutely odd man out. It has been the biggest disrupter of the Green World. It did not sign the Kyoto Protocol and withdrew from the Paris Climate. China is developing huge infrastructure of green energy, especially wind and solar. China produced almost 170 GW of solar energy in 2018, but China has a dubious character. Dragon wants to keep its house clean but litters other parts of the world with fossil fuels. The Chinese system does not think magnanimously to safeguard the planet with an inclusive approach.



The Covid-19 pandemic has completely eclipsed the Chinese credentials in the international system. The way China manipulated the World Health Organization which led to an exponential spread of pandemic in the globe, its anti-green and anti-humanitarian face has been unmasked. The Climate Action Tracker gives China a very poor grade because of its continued reliance on coal. China has failed to stop the building of the new coal-based plants. China is financing coal-fired power plants outside the country, and increasing emissions elsewhere. China remains the world's largest producer of carbon emissions. It is planning to finance and build roads, railways, bridges, ports, and industrial parks abroad, beginning with China's neighbours in Central, South, and Southeast Asia and eventually reaching Western Europe and across the Pacific to Latin America. While China has imposed a cap

on coal consumption at home, its coal and energy companies are on a building spree overseas. Chinese companies are involved in at least 240 coal projects in 25 of the Belt and Road countries, including Bangladesh, Pakistan, Serbia, Kenya, Ghana, Malawi, and Zimbabwe. It has a particular eye on the coal resources of South Asia, Southeast Asia, Central and Eastern Europe, the West Asia, and the Russian Far East. Secondly, Chinese political system is not transparent. Its next move is unpredictable. Third, China is very keen to settle the historical scores after becoming the largest economy. Therefore, its intentions are based on self-interests which would generate more conflicts in the international system. So far world politics was driven by the greed for oil and gas. Churchill after the end of the First World War ventured to use imported oil in place of coal for British fleets, since then

the oil became the driving force of world politics. Geopolitics of oil embargos are common. Oil and gas have not only been used as sticks to hurt or deter foes, but also as carrots to reward allies and ensure their allegiance. The climate conferences of the UN have been consistently reminding the world to switch over from fossil fuels to renewable sources of energy. But things are not moving. American President Donald Trump, in meeting with CEOs of the companies during the pandemic, assured them of carbon-led economic development in future. The impact of fossil-fuel economy is visible. The trade war between America and China is pitching for carbon-led energy system. The climate disruption has reached the tipping point. The whole world is severely under its grip. But certain parts of the world are more prone to climatic change. Like Southeast Asia and South Asia will face more severe consequences of

climate change than other parts of the world. The only country which shines out in the crisis is India. It will have the largest world population of the world by 2024. It has tested democratic credentials and strong constitutional framework. The ancient Indian wisdom is based on "Vashudhaiv Kutumbakam" which encapsulates each country in its fold. India has displayed its commitment for the resolutions of Paris Commitment. The 8 folds jump in solar energy in the last six years proved a point. India is going to generate more than 450 GW of energy through renewable sources by 2030. Prime Minister Narendra Modi was awarded the "Champion of Earth" by the UN Secretary General in 2018. He started to lead the International Solar Alliance. India has made important progress towards meeting the United Nations Sustainable Developmental Goals, notably Goal-7 on deliv-

ering energy access. India's per capita emissions today are 1.6 tonnes of CO₂, well below the global average of 4.4 tonnes. Inequality and climate change are parts of the same coin. Therefore, climate change is also related to lifestyle. Western economist Thorstein Veblen, who coined the terms "invidious consumption" pointed out how individuals use luxury goods to show off their status. The US top ten per cent emits six times more than 50 per cent of the bottom at the household level. Adam Smith, the father of economics, explained in his path-breaking book "the Wealth of Nations": It is the industry which is going to make the country rich. But ancient Indian wisdom is contrary to the views of Adam Smith. Mahatma Gandhi once said that India cannot afford to follow the British economic policy of greed. If two-thirds of planet failed to satisfy the greed of Britain, India had four times the population of Britain, so it would need four planets like earth to fulfil the greed. Unfortunately during the early decades after Independence, India became a copy cat of western pattern of development. That is why the Modi Government is working on to reintroduce the ancient wisdom. External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar has also said that Climate Change is not merely a fuel issue but it has a larger context. Unsustainable consumption is the fundamental cause of pollution and ecological destruction. India has increased its solar-energy capacity more than twelve fold since 2014. The Indian stand is not contradictory. It says what it does. The democratic credentials are well respected. This Government has prepared a blue print of Green World Order. According to PM Modi it is secure, sure and pure.

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SATISH KUMAR

PERSPECTIVE

Killing minorities in name of blasphemy in Pak

In Pakistan, the majority community has licence to kill anyone, particularly persons from minority communities, in the name of blasphemy without waiting for court trials. The ugliest part is that the murderer is hailed as a "ghazi" or "martyr" to the nation. It's time the world wakes up to the medieval treatment of religious minorities in Pakistan. The blasphemy law was first introduced in 1860 by the colonial administration. The law stipulated ten years of imprisonment or fine or both. Later the law was amended in 1927. In 1953, when anti-Ahmadiyya riots erupted, Jamaat-e-Islami demanded amendments to the law but the Government of Pakistan did not entertain its requests. However, when anti-Ahmadiyya riots erupted again in 1974, the second Amendment was introduced in the Constitution of Pakistan and all Islamist parties came together under the banner of Tehreek-e-Tahaffuz-e-Khatam-e-Nabuwwat (movement for the protection of the finality of the Prophethood). Later in 1984, the Zia-Ul-Haq regime passed an anti-Ahmadiyya ordinance, which decreed that "Ahmadis cannot call themselves Muslims" or "pose as Muslim", and those who defied the law faced three years in prison. Cases of extortion from minorities in Pakistan are frequent but rarely reported to authorities for the fear of reprisals. Victims pay huge ransoms as protection money to mosques and madrassas to save their lives. Otherwise they have to leave their business and properties. A Hindu friend of mine narrated one such incident to me: "Due to coronavirus, our

temple is closed so I am performing my early morning prayers (bhajans) at home only. One day my neighbour knocked at my door and threatened our family. 'You Hindus should go to India and sing your bhajans there. If you want to live in Pakistan, live quietly, don't chant Krishna nonsense early morning.'" He added, "Believe me I was not chanting loudly. My neighbour always look for an opportunity to browbeat us so that under pressure we should sell our apartment to them and leave this place, while they always listen Indian music loudly all the time. Even there is a mosque-madrassa in our apartments where loudspeakers keep on blaring out." In 2009, Aasya Noreen, better known as Asia Bibi, a Pakistani Christian, was accused of blasphemy. "Why you used my cup for drinking water? You are non-Muslim, a 'kafir'." Argument over this led to Noreen's arrest in 2010. She was convicted of blasphemy by a Pakistani court and sentenced to death. Minorities Minister Shahbaz Bhatti and Punjab Governor Salman Taseer both were assassinated for advocating on behalf of Asia Bibi and opposing the blasphemy laws. Under global pressure, in 2018, the Supreme Court of Pakistan acquitted Asia Bibi on grounds that there was insufficient evidence. But she was not released from custody because of safety concerns. A Muslim cleric Maulana Yousaf Qureshi announced a bounty of 500,000 Pakistani Rupees to anyone who would kill Asia Bibi. In 2019, she finally got a safe passage and arrived in Canada, but she continues to receive threat to her life. Mishal Khan, a student of



mass communication of Abdul Wali Khan University, was killed in 2017 on the premises of the university by a mob on allegation of posting blasphemous content online. He was in the hostel of the university when he was stripped naked and severely beaten up by a group of students and then shot. He succumbed to his injuries. The mob was kicking his lifeless body and beating it with wooden planks. His body was then thrown from the second floor of the building. The mob even tried to burn his body while chanting "Allah-o-Akbar". At least 25 law enforcement officers were present

there, but no action was taken. Later investigations found that the content Mishal posted had only secular views and references to books on democracy and equality of humanity. But before this realisation came out, Pakistan had already lost a beautiful soul. Recently, on July 29, Tahir Naseem, an American, was shot dead inside a Pakistani courtroom where he had gone for a trial for alleged blasphemy. He was an Ahmadiyya but one of my sources told me that he was having mental issues. His murderer justified the killing. "A light appeared in my dream last night and

ordered me to kill this enemy of Allah so that I can be awarded with gift of heaven." The murderer was praised by a majority of people in Pakistan and even Government officials and politicians used his picture as their display picture (DP) on their social media profiles. When I reported this case and announced a campaign on social media against the blasphemy laws, forced conversions and enforced disappearances in Pakistan and organised a protest at the Consulate General of Pakistan in Houston, I received many life threats and was targeted by unknown pro-

files on the social media. Blasphemy Law (Clause , 295C) of Pakistan panel court reads: "Whoever by words, either spoken or written or by visible representation or by any imputation, innuendo or insinuation, directly or indirectly, defiles the sacred name of the Holy prophet Muhammad (PBUH) shall be punished with death or imprisonment for life and shall also be liable to fine." The law prescribes the death penalty for those who are found guilty of blasphemy. The option of life imprisonment has been defunct since a 1991 Federal Shariat Court judg-

ment. Blasphemy laws in Pakistan are derived from the Holy Quran and Hadiths, but there are differences between different Islamic schools of jurisprudence in this regard. Several Islamic scholars believe that Quranic verses are misinterpreted by dominant Muslim groups in Pakistan with the support of establishment that allows them to use blasphemy laws as a tool to achieve their narrow sectarian interests and agendas. A Quranic verse, which directly mentions blasphemy, calls on Muslims to not blaspheme deities of other religions, lest people of those religions retaliate by blaspheming against Allah. "And do not insult (wa la tasabbu) those they invoke other than Allah, lest they insult (fa-yasabbu) Allah in enmity without knowledge. Thus, we have made pleasing to every community their deeds. Then to their Lord is their return and He will inform them about what they used to do." — Qur'an, 6:108 However, a few Hadiths justify severe punishments for blasphemy. But not everyone agrees. Secular Muslims in Pakistan have always demanded abolition of the blasphemy laws but didn't succeed because of the interest groups. Whipping up religious sentiments is a powerful tool in Pakistan that has always been used by rulers to control people, and create pressure groups of religious parties to perpetuate fear. Minorities, especially wealthy Hindus, are easy prey in Pakistan.

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ZAFAR SAHITO

