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Kumbh ends after Modi's appeal

After PM's urge, opinion grows in favour of holding rest of Shahi Snans symbolically

PNS ■ HARIDWAR/NEW DELHI

After Prime Minister Narendra Modi's appeal to keep the remaining part of Kumbh Mela symbolic considering the surging Covid-19 cases, the Juna Akhada Acharya Mahamandaleswar Swami Avdheshanand Giri on Saturday announced the formal conclusion of the Maha Kumbh for the Akhada.

Panch Dash Nam Juna Akhada is the largest of the 13 Akhadas.

Swami Avdheshanand Giri said the remaining Shahi Snan of the Kumbh should be observed symbolically on April 27 and later tweeted that protecting the lives of Indians is "our first priority".

"Considering the rising threat of Covid-19, we have formally immersed the various deities invoked for the Kumbh Mela," he said.

Earlier in a tweet in Hindi, the PM said, "I prayed that two 'Shahi Snan' have taken place and Kumbh (participation) should now be kept symbolic. This will boost the fight against this crisis."

Later, Modi thanks all the sants for cooperation with the administration and expressed his gratitude for their gesture.

Thousands of Kumbh visitors have tasted Covid-19 positives and dozens of seers have



Har Ki Pauri Ghat wears a deserted look during Kumbh Mela 2021 following a surge in Covid-19 cases in Haridwar on Saturday

PTI

succumbed to the virus during the last two weeks inviting both domestic and international outrage for allowing such massive gathering at the time when the second wave of Covid-19 was spreading like wildfire across the country.

Earlier, addressing the media here, Giri said the PM had telephoned him to enquire about the Kumbh Mela and the health of the seers. The PM had also requested that since the main Shahi Snans have concluded, the remaining Kumbh should be observed symbolically. The Juna Akhada head said he would request devotees from across the nation to visit Haridwar only in small numbers, adding that the remaining Shahi Snan will be observed

only symbolically.

The remaining Snans are to be observed mainly by the Bairagi Akhadas. Earlier, the Niranjani Akhada had asked its Sadhus to leave for their respective destinations on April 17 considering the Covid surge. The Anand Akhada had also supported this view.

A majority of the 48.51 lakh people who took part in the last two royal baths (Shahi Snan) held on the occasion of Somwati Amavasya on April 12 and Mesh Sankranti on April 14 were seen openly violating Covid norms like face masks and social distancing.

The Kumbh has already been shortened this year to just one month from April 1 to 30 due to the pandemic.

Covid test, quarantine to welcome returning devotees back home

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

The ordeal of Covid-19 test and quarantine awaits thousands of devotees who are returning home after attending the Maha Kumbh at Haridwar. As India grapples with a devastating second wave of the coronavirus and States imposing lockdown, several States and UTs, including Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Delhi and Gujarat, have made Covid-19 test mandatory for Kumbh returnees. Some States are also keeping the returnees in mandatory quarantine.

Thousands of Kumbh visitors and hundreds of "sadhus" who attended Kumbh Mela in Haridwar have tested positive for the coronavirus disease. On Saturday alone, 175 "sadhus" who attended Kumbh Mela have been found infected from coronavirus.

Gujarat on Saturday declared that all devotees returning to the State from Kumbh Mela will have to undergo a mandatory RT-PCR test before they are allowed to enter their respective cities and villages.

Gujarat Chief Minister



Vijay Rupani said those found infected will be isolated for 14 days.

Maharashtra Minister Anil Parab has announced those coming into the State from Kumbh Mela will be quarantined. Nasik district administration is also taking necessary steps for quarantining those coming from Kumbh.

Earlier, Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) mayor Kishori Pednekar claimed on Saturday that the devotees returning from the Kumbh Mela will distribute coronavirus like "Prasad" and said they should be quarantined "at their own cost" on their arrival.

The Madhya Pradesh Government has issued order to put those returning from Kumbh in quarantine or self-isolation.

10 lakh new cases in just 7 days in India

Record over 2.6L cases in a day; Delhi, Maha too see highest rise

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India added nearly 10 lakh cases in just seven days ending April 17 as the country recorded over 2.6 lakh new Covid-19 infections and a record 1,493 deaths during the last 24 hours on Saturday.

The addition of nearly 25,000 new cases over the previous day count amounts to a rise of nearly 10 per cent, which shows that the growth of Covid-19 has more than doubled during the last two weeks.

Maharashtra, Delhi, Karnataka, Kerala, Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh are registering newer peaks and the situation remaining equally grim in the rest of the country. The country had 1.52 lakh daily cases on April 10 when the death count stood at 838. A relative comparison shows that the death rate is steadily climbing up vis-a-vis new infections.

Amid the alarming rise in new infections and deaths, the country is battling a paucity of hospital beds, oxygen supply, ventilators, and life-



Health workers and family members carry the body of a patient who died of Covid-19 for cremation amid surge in coronavirus cases in Jammu on Saturday

PTI

safe antiviral drug Remdesivir. A majority of the State have also complained of a shortage of vaccines and shut down several vaccination centres.

Several States have belatedly imposed lockdown restriction to tackle the surge, but it is too early to see if these are going to work effectively at this stage on the ground.

Delhi and Maharashtra recorded their biggest single-day rise in coronavirus cases since the beginning of the pandemic in January 2020. The national Capital registered over 24,375 new cases, taking its tally to 8,27,998, while Maharashtra's count rose to 3,7,70,707 with 67,123 new infections. The death count in Delhi rose to 11,960 with 167 new fatalities on Saturday.

Covid-19 IN INDIA

TOTAL CASES:**1,47,82,461 (+2,60,533)****DEATHS: 1,77,168 (+1,493)****RECOVERED:****1,28,03,791 (+1,36,853)****ACTIVE: 17,95,278****MAHARASHTRA: 37,70,707****KERALA: 12,21,168****KARNATAKA: 11,41,998****TAMIL NADU: 9,80,728****DELHI: 8,27,998 (+24,375)**

Maha threatens to seize Remdesivir exporting stocks

CM complains of shortage of liquid oxygen, anti-viral drug

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

After a bitter stand-off over the alleged discrimination in the distribution of vaccines, the Maharashtra Government on Saturday flagged the shortage of liquid medical oxygen and Remdesivir in the State and even threatened to seize the stocks of Remdesivir from the exporting firms and supply them to the needy people.

On a day when Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray charged that he could not speak to Prime Minister Narendra Modi over the immediate requirement of liquid medical oxygen and Remdesivir vials as the latter

was pre-occupied with West Bengal Assembly elections, senior Minister Nawab Malik accused the Modi Government of meting out "step motherly" treatment to the State over the supply of Remdesivir vials.

Not to be outdone, Minister of Railways, Commerce & Industry Piyush Goyal launched a virulent attack on Uddhav whom he accused of indulging in "petty politics" and said "he (the Chief Minister) needs to stop his daily dose of shameless politics and take responsibility."

Earlier in the day, Uddhav said, "Yesterday evening, I dialled him (Modi) but I could not speak to him as he was busy in West Bengal elections."

Uddhav said he wanted to discuss the issue of shortage of liquid medical oxygen and Remdesivir injection vials, both life-savers in case of critical Covid-19 cases.

Remdesivir price drastically cut on Govt intervention

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In the wake of increasing demand for anti-viral drug Remdesivir from across the States, the Centre on Saturday urged the injection makers to slash its price considerably. The Union Health Ministry in its "Clinical Management Protocols for Covid-19" has recommended the use of Remdesivir in patients in the moderate stages of the illness.

According to a statement from the Government, the Union Ministry of Chemicals & Fertilisers, Department of Pharmaceuticals, NPPA - Advisor (Costs) N Chandrababu Naidu ordered all pharma companies to comply with the revised norms with immediate and retrospective effect.

Pharmaceutical companies have reduced the price from 25 per cent to up to 68 per cent.

According to the details shared by the NPPA, Cadila



Healthcare has reduced the price of its REMDAC injection to ₹899 from ₹2,800 earlier. Similarly, Syngene International has cut the price of its brand RemWin to ₹2,450 from ₹3,950 earlier.

Hyderabad-based Dr Reddy's Laboratories has cut the price of REDYX, which used to cost ₹5,400 earlier to ₹2,700 now. Similarly, Cipla has reduced price of its CIPREMI brand to ₹3,000 from ₹4,000 earlier. Jubilant Generics has cut the price of its remdesivir brand to ₹3,400 from ₹4,700 earlier.

Delhi gasping for oxygen: CM

City logs 24,375 cases in 24 hrs; Kejriwal seeks Centre's help

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Terming the situation serious in the national Capital, Arvind Kejriwal on Saturday said, "In the last 24 hours, there have been around 24,000 cases. A day before, there was around 19,000 cases. So, the tally spiked only in a matter of 24 hours."

The Delhi Chief Minister said he has spoken to Union Health Minister about the extreme shortage of oxygen beds in Delhi, and added that in November last year, the Central Government allotted the Delhi Government 4,100 beds at a peak of 8,500 cases, however, this time, they have only provided 1,800 beds, even after this wave being three times more fatal than the previous ones.

"Delhi is facing a shortage of oxygen, Remdesivir, and Tocilizumab, which must be made available by the Central Government for adequate treatment of corona patients," Kejriwal said.

Meanwhile, the weekend



A dog trots along a deserted street during a weekend lockdown in New Delhi on Saturday

Ranjana Dimri | Pioneer

curfew aimed at breaking the chain of spiralling coronavirus infections got mixed reactions with many stepping out of their houses for going to offices or market places for daily chores in day time, however by evening there was some semblance of lockdown. Roads,

markets and buses across Delhi were largely empty from Saturday morning, as the weekend curfew began in the city. Apart from essential service providers working in pharmacies, grocery shops, hospitals, some restaurants, police stations, and banks, a

majority of the National Capital's residents appeared to have stayed at home. Police pickets could be seen around city with police personnel and officials deployed, checking people having valid movement passes and issuing challan to those not following guidelines.

Pipili by-poll now to be held on May 13

Counting of votes on May 16

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The State Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) on Saturday announced a fresh date for the by-election to the Pipili Assembly constituency in Puri district.

As per CEO Sushil Kumar Lohani's office, the by-poll would be held on May 13 while the votes would be counted on May 16. April 26 is the last date for filing of nominations while April 27 is the date

of scrutiny of nominations. The last date for withdrawal of candidatures is April 29.

The by-election, which had earlier been scheduled for April 17, was countermanded following the death of Congress candidate Ajit Mangaraj due to Covid-19 on April 14.

The Pipili by-poll has been necessitated by the death of sitting BJD MLA Pradeep Maharathy in October 2020. While the BJD fielded Maharathy's son Rudra Pratap as its candidate, the BJP nominated Ashrit Pattanayak. Both the candidates are to be retained, said sources in the parties concerned.

BBSR daily Covid cases soar to 451

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The Covid-19 positive cases are galloping in the State capital city Bhubaneswar. On Saturday, as many as 451 new positive cases were registered, the highest single-day spike in 2021. With the new positives, the city's total tally rose to 35,341. Out of the new cases, 360 were local contacts and 91 were quarantine cases.

The local contacts included 29 from Nayapalli, 21 Baramunda, 17 each from Patia and Laxmisagar, 13 from Badagada, 12 each from Old Town and Bomikhal, 11 each from Tankapani Road and Pokhaript, 10 from Unit-8, eight from Samantrapur, seven each from Shailashree Vihar, BJB Nagar, Jharpada and Palaspalli and six from Sundarpada.

Currently, the active cases in the city stood at 2,315 and the recovered cases were 32,755 in city.

State reports 4 more Corona deaths

ALSO A HIGH OF 3,144 NEW +VES**MAX 523 CASES IN SUNDARGARH****1,303 MORE RECOVER**

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Four more persons succumbed to the Covid-19 virus on Saturday, with which the total death toll to 1,942 in the State.

The four deceased were reported from Balangir, Jharsuguda, Kalahandi and Sambalpur districts. And on the day, the State recorded as many as 3,144 positive cases in 30 districts and the State pool, with which the total tally

surged to 3,64,594. While 1,823 cases were from quarantine, 1321 were local contact cases.

Sundargarh district reported the day's highest 523 cases followed by Khordha with 497, Nuapada 395, Bargarh 156, Sambalpur 149, Cuttack 140, Puri 129, Keonjhar 128, Jharsuguda 119, Nabarangpur 96, Balangir 92, Jajpur 76, Mayurbhanj 68, Gajapati 67, Kalahandi 53 and Bhadrak 51.

Besides, 110 cases were reported from the State pool. Currently, the active cases in the State stood at 19,077 and the cumulative samples tested were 95,65,427.

However, 1,303 patients recovered on the day, taking the total recoveries to 34,4,825 in the State.

Naveen Patnaik bats for vaccine in open market

Also writes to PM for adequate supply to State

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik has urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi to make Covid-19 vaccines available in the open market for the citizens willing to buy them.

The move would help the State Governments streamline their focus on the vulnerable sections of the society, Patnaik wrote to the Prime Minister on Friday. He also stressed that the Covid-19 vaccines which have received green signals globally from credible agencies should be accorded approval in India. Noting that India has a huge vaccine manufacturing potential, Patnaik said the Centre and the States should

support production units. "As this is an extraordinary situation, our Governments should run the extra mile," he said. Patnaik pointed out that a few metropolitan cities, which register the maximum numbers of cases, should be given priority and age criteria in these places should be made flexible. Any lockdown in these "economic nerve centres" would have an impact on the rest of the country, he stated.

"I am sure that with our continued cooperation, India will be able to fight this situation and save people's lives," he underlined. Patnaik further said Odisha has the capacity to administer over three lakh vaccines every day. But "Intermittent supply is creating a challenge in meeting the demand. In this backdrop, I



had requested for 25 lakh vaccine doses to help us administer three lakh shots every day.

Even at full capacity, it will take us 160 days to fully vaccinate the eligible population of our State (above 45 years)," he explained. He expressed hope that the Centre would "scale up" the vaccination drive in the days to come. So far, Odisha has vaccinated 47 lakh people, including healthcare workers, frontline workers and persons aged above 45 years, he added.

HOMETHEATRE

Gripping tale of terror from young eyes

UTOYA: JULY 22
Norwegian with English subtitles
& PriveHD
***Ing: Andrea Berntzen, Aleksander Holmen, Solveig Køløen Birkeland**
Rated: 6/10

There will always be a debate on whether it is appropriate to put out mounts of terror attacks and the impact it has on the victims. Some argue it is glorifying the terrorist in some way. Others want documentation. Over and above this debate, *Utoya* is a Norwegian mount which leaves no stone unturned to look at the terror killing on an otherwise peaceful island of Utoya in Norway executed by a home grown extreme Right group. It was Norway's 26/11 with many left dead quite without premise. "It is the safest island on Earth, mom" one of the main protagonists says in the opening sequence of this film. The environs she is walking through are green, serene and enchanting which, by the way, is a complete contrast to what the film otherwise centres on with dogged starkness throwing up the real impact of a terror attack and its aftermath on any population in any part of the world.

Here, the movie pans out through the eyes of youngsters and the terrorist is given a grand go-by, being allowed to visit the screen only in pithy scenes with almost an abstract presence to give the audience some shape of the orchestrator. An English version of this film is all set to premiere on Netflix and that promises to take over in starkness, blood and gore from *Utoya*. For now, however, *Utoya* is a powerful story told candidly



even though the director could be faulted for what many may perceive as a story exploiting grim reality to make some noise on the small screen. Nevertheless, a gripping tale which should get a go by because of subtitles.



A BLACK CAPTAIN AMERICA?

FALCON AND THE WINTER SOLDIER
Episode 5
Disney+Hotstar
***Ing: Sebastian Stan, Anthony Mackie, Wyatt Russell, Erin Kellyman, Danny Ramirez, Emily VanCamp**
Rated: 6/10

Those who have been following the miniseries would know how episode 4 ended — the Shield — all bloodied. The fallout is felt by the Falcon and Winter Soldier. The Shield, for now is back with Sam just how Steve Rogers had wanted. So are we looking at yet another Captain America? A Black Captain America? Like Isaiah Bradley played by Carl Lumbly says — no self-respecting Black will take up the job. With John Walker stripped of all his duties and the title of Captain America, there is a new person who

makes an entry — Contessa Valentina Allegra de Fontaine. Who is she and what is the agenda? Well, maybe we will get to see more of Walker in episode 6. Meanwhile, Flag Smashers have upped their ante and are preparing for the final count down. Will they succeed? Will the Falcon and Winter Soldier be able to prevent Karli from going full guns ahead? Given that death hangs over Falcon's head, things will come full circle next time. The only thing missing here is the awe-inspiring action. In almost all the episodes, till now, they have been far between. The series has Falcon, Winter Soldier and the now redundant Captain America and yet the action is way below on the makers list. That boggles the mind and wonders if it has all been saved for episode 6 for the wow factor. Definitely something that Avengers fans will be looking forward to. — Shalini Saxena

Plan Your Day

Cold Brew Day is on April 20. SUNDAY PIONEER brings you recipes that will surely give you chills without costing too heavy on your pocket

COLDBREW POPSICLES WITH FRESH MINT

- Ingredients:**
- half and half
 - 1 1/2 cups coffee beans
 - 2-4 tablespoons brown sugar
 - Mint leaves
- Directions:**
- Grind the coffee beans. Place the grounds in a large pitcher or carafe. Add three cups of cold water and stir to combine. Cover and let steep for 12-24 hours.
 - Strain the coffee and add 2-4 tablespoons brown sugar. Stir to combine.
 - Place a few torn mint leaves into each popsicle mold and top with a few tablespoons of half and half. Freeze for 15-20 minutes, until slightly firm.
 - Insert popsicle sticks into each mold and freeze for another 20 minutes until set.
 - Remove the pops from the freezer and top with sweetened



coffee. Freeze until firm, 30-40 minutes. Enjoy!
Half and half: It's that simple. Half whole milk, half heavy cream. The texture is thicker and more luscious than milk, but less decadent and rich than cream.

CARAMEL SURPRISE COLD BREW



- Ingredients:**
- 1-2 cups Coldbrew
 - Handful of ice
 - 1-2 tablespoons coconut milk
 - 1-2 teaspoons caramel syrup
 - Pinch of sweetener of choice (if desired)
- Directions:**
- You can prepare coldbrew at home using French press or in a mason jar using muslin cloth, important is perfect coffee blend for your coldbrew. Keep prepared cold brew coffee in a pitcher or carafe in the refrigerator.
 - Pour one cup (eight-ounces) of coffee into a mug, cup or glass jar filled with ice. Stir in coconut milk and caramel syrup. Add sweetener, if desired. Serve immediately.
- Courtesy: Girish Chandra, Beverage Training Manager, Lavazza India

TELLY TALE

IT'S TIME FOR MAHASANGAM



COLORS' Mahasangam episodes have always raised the bar of entertainment with its complete package of drama and musical performances. One such blast of entertainment is the upcoming *Mahasangam* episode where the cast of *Choti Saradaarni* and *Udaariyaan* will share a screen during Baisakhi celebrations. Tejo (played by Priyanka Chaudhary) and Jasmine (played by Isha Malviya) will invite Jass even after knowing that there is stress going on in Virk family due to Fateh's decision of going to Canada. The celebration will be sparked with singer B Praak's presence as he will sing some of his hit song *Teri Mitti* from *Kesari* and also his recently launched soulful track, *Baarish Ki Jaaye*. In the special episode, Fateh (played by Ankit Gupta) will have his share of dramatic moments as he will get to know that the woman he saved and admitted to the hospital is awake and turns out to be Meher! (played by Nirmitt Kaur Ahluwalia). In a dramatic turn of events, Fateh will also come face to face with Sarabjit (played by Avinesh Rekhi). Will he be able to bring together Meher and Sarab?

Singer B Praak, who was a part of the dramatic *Mahasangam* episode said: "I am excited to shoot here in Punjab with the cast of two most relevant show. *Choti Saradaarni* is my family's favorite and *Udaariyaan*'s concept strongly resonates with each one of us. The episode is going to be full of drama, entertainment and of course our beautiful new music track, *Baarish Ki Jaaye*. I had a lot of fun shooting with the cast of the show- They are fun, energetic, and extremely talented."

HERO TASTES DEFEAT

Sony SAB's *Hero* — *Gayab Mode On* will take a shocking turn with Dansh (Manish Wadhwa) defeating Hero (Abhishek Nigam) and stands triumphant. The upcoming episodes will send shock-waves to the viewers, with Hero assumed to be dead. At the beginning of the War of Worlds, our beloved Hero is vanquished by Dansh. The intense battle between the two is set to take

the viewers on a roller coaster ride and keep them on the edge of their seats. With Rocky (Keshav Sadhna) uniting with Dansh to defeat Hero, the forces of the aliens get more robust, and it becomes difficult for Hero to fight them single-handedly. Dansh threatening to destroy the planet and cause harm to human beings leads to the battle of the War of Worlds. Dansh launches his attack with the help of Rocky and with each passing moment, it gets tricky for Hero to fight Dansh and protect his ring simultaneously. The battle gets fiercer, leading to the heartbreaking moment of Dansh beating Hero and conquering the magical ring. Hero's identity as Veer is exposed to Dansh and Zara simultaneously. Dansh is celebrating after winning over Hero and gaining the magical ring. But little does he know what's in store and what will this end of Hero lead to?



Is Veer Nanda aka Hero dead? What will happen next?

Manish Wadhwa, essaying the role of Dansh, said: "Dansh is very strong and an intense character. He never gives up and attacks back with force. The experience of shooting for this fight sequence has been amazing and it's fun to work with Abhishek. He is very hardworking and we both share great timing. Dansh is happy and very delighted with getting hold of the ring, unaware of what will happen next. So, stay tuned to witness exciting twists and turns on the show and join us on this thrilling journey!"

Abhishek Nigam, essaying the role of Hero, said: "This is the most intense fight sequence we have shot on the show so far and I was so much into the character that I could feel the same energy. Hero was putting in all the efforts to save the world and protect his ring, but he chooses his loss so that he can save the world. It was a learning experience while shooting for this sequence with Manish Sir. This sequence has come out really well and it will take the viewers on a thrilling never seen before ride. So, stay tuned and don't miss the fun!"

KUMKUM BHAGYA TURNS SEVEN

Zee TV's popular fiction show, *Kumkum Bhagya* has been an audience favourite ever since it was launched in 2014. Its intriguing

plot and the authentic portrayal of relatable characters like Abhi (Shabbir Ahluwalia), Pragya (Sriti Jha), Rhea (Pooja Banerjee), Ranbir (Krishna Kaul) and Prachi (Mugdha Chapekar) have kept the audience entertained throughout these past seven years and has helped the show gain countless fans across the globe. Produced by Television's czarina Ekta Kapoor, *Kumkum Bhagya* has witnessed roaring success on the viewership charts every year and has won more than 50 awards till date. But it looks like there is no stopping the show even as the show completed seven years on April 15.

The family drama that explores and brings a range of emotions as well as the deepest intricacies of human relationships has kept the viewers hooked all this while through several interesting twists and turns in its storyline! In fact, the show has also managed to successfully reinstate the belief that opposites do attract by showcasing how despite having contrasting personalities, its lead protagonists are inseparable.

As Kumkum Bhagya completes seven glorious years, Shabir Ahluwalia who plays the role of Abhi got nostalgic and said: "It is not just a show, but a feeling for me. I've been associated with it for seven years now, but it doesn't feel like it's been so long. I must say that all these years have been a breeze and the entire unit including the technicians and actors are like a family for me. Generally, you hear people saying this when the show is coming to an end, but our case is different. When you're around the same people for seven years, you know them even better, as you have seen them at their best and their worst. I have to add that the writers and the creative team are fantastic, and they've held all of us together. I've been associated with the producers, Balaji Telefilms for nearly two decades and they are like a family to me. As we complete seven years, I would like to say Thank You Ekta for believing in me, Shobha aunty for being there always and Jeetu uncle, you're a rockstar and always guide us for the best. I also want to thank Zee TV for giving us such a great platform to showcase *Kumkum Bhagya*. Last but the most important, *Kumkum Bhagya* is what it is today because of all our fans, so thank you so much to all."



‘I don’t regret my choices’

KUNAL JAISINGH, who plays Veer in SET's *Kyun Utthe Dil Chhod Aaye*, tells MUSBA HASHMI the attraction of playing the role, how it has become his priority and his story of giving endless auditions

- **What is your role in Kyun Utthe Dil Chhod Aaye?**
I play Veer, a self-destructive and brooding person who is addicted to alcohol. I am paired opposite Gracy, who plays Amrit in the show. I will be donning a different look. I am extremely excited to be a part of this show and to work with such a lovely production house.
- **What made you take up the role?**
The show offers beautiful love stories, many action scenes and gives a bit of knowledge to all the viewers about how people's suffering during the partition. Earlier the show managed to depict the pain and sorrow of 1947 perfectly. Now with a leap of four years, the makers are showing the story of the 1951 era and have planned many new things for the viewers. The concept of the show is unique and the overall plot is not only interesting, but intense and heart-wrenching for me. Other than that, I wanted to be a part of the show which stands out from all the other shows I have done in the past.
- **Did you have any apprehensions?**
No, not at all. I knew I was going to be part of this story post leap. I was actually excited for it. With a lot of twists and turns ahead in the show, this will be a good start for me.
- **From Mann Kee Awaaz Pratigya to Kyun Utthe Dil... how has the journey been for you?**
It has been a great one. I have been able to grow and learn so much in every role I have played. Every character I essayed holds a special place in my heart because with each character my audience and my fans started loving me more. Not only that, I learnt something from every character I played. Those were not only roles, but life lessons. My only goal during all these years has been to make sure that the audience understands the actions and emotions of the characters I play.
- **Omka Singh Oberoi was a much loved character...**
Each show has his trials and a story to tell. *Ishqbaaaz* was focused on the story of three brothers, and India's first spin-off was *Dil Boley Oberoi*. When it comes to Omkara

I was always passionate about my career, but getting into this space has been difficult, given the fact that the City of Dreams has a lot to offer but the hard way



he was an artist who was the one balancing factor between the brothers and the family. Omkara has been a special character for me. It earned me a lot of love and support from my fans. I am grateful for all that. The character will always be valuable to me. I feel blessed and lucky and I never thought it would be so popular. The team, of course, was great. We are still like a family. We all have encouraged each other to perform at our best and that was visible in the show.

■ **How did acting happen?**
I was always passionate about my career, but getting into this space has been difficult, given the fact that the City of Dreams has a lot to offer but the hard way. I have been a part of endless auditions ever since I have come here. I have even stood in an audition line for more than 10 hours. This industry has offered me a platform to project my skills and I am truly humbled by the fact that today I am getting to do that. My experience in the industry has been a roller coaster ride with a lot of ups and downs, but I have learnt that at the end of it, it's all worth it.

■ **Do you have any regrets?**
Till date, I don't regret anything I have done in life. If I talk about my journey in the industry, it has been beautiful. None of the characters that I have played overlaps each other. We should not regret anything. After all, we do choose the opportunities that we think is right at that time. How things will unfold is not in anyone's hands. Regrets just make you sad and I don't want to feel sad for the choices that I have made. I have surely mellowed with time. I might not do the roles now which I did earlier, but when back then, I was proud of what I was doing and will always be.

■ **What is there in the pipeline?**
My pipeline is full with the current show that I am doing. It is my only priority. I am focused and would like to be loyal to it. I believe to make one's work stand out one should focus on a single thing at a time. That is the reason I prefer not to juggle projects.



Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik pays floral tributes to the statue of Biju Patnaik on the occasion of the latter's death anniversary at the Odisha Legislative Assembly premises on Saturday
Pioneer photo

Job scam 'Settle all cases against me at a time' MLA Panigrahi urges Brahmapur SDJM Court

**KRUSHNA CHANDRA PANDA ■
BRAHMAPUR**

Former Minister and three-time Gopalpur MLA Pradip Panigrahi and former IFS officer Abhaya Kant Pathak and son Akash Pathak were produced before the SDJM Court here on Thursday over their alleged involvement in a job scam, amid tight security.

Panigrahi after spending 133 days in jail in a job scam reportedly narrated before the Judge that he was being unnecessarily harassed by the police.

He prayed the court that all the cases filed against him so far be clubbed together and taken up for hearing concurrently so as to avoid delay in delivering justice. He made an appeal to the court that since



last 133 days he has been suffering mental trauma in jail and requested to release him out of the jail for peace. He also explained the difficulties which he is currently facing in the jail. If people do not need his service, he is ready to go out of State or resign from the post of MLA, Panigrahi said before the court in an emotional tone for about an hour in front of the Judge, sources said.

The three accused were accompanied by their counsel Deepak Pattnaik. However, the court kept its judgment

Covid: Plan ready to face any worsening situation

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

If the number of Covid-19 cases further increases in Odisha in coming days, the State Government has a blueprint ready to handle the situation, said Director of Health Services and Covid Vaccination in-Charge Bijay Kumar Panigrahi on Saturday.

He told reporters, "The Government is ready to tackle the eventuality. Meetings are being held every day to take stock of the situation. Steps are afoot to break the transmission chain."

"People are getting infected with the virus in other States and returning to Odisha spreading it further here. I request people not to go outside unless necessary. A time has come that we take the respon-



sibility and act accordingly. Night curfew will be enforced in urban areas of all districts in the state from today. Let's follow and break the transmission chain," he said. Regarding vac-

cination, Panigrahi said the drive has been halted in urban areas of 10 districts, where weekend shutdown has been imposed from Saturday. However, the vaccination would continue uninterruptedly in other areas of the districts.

On the vaccine shortage, Panigrahi said that out of the total 1,500 centres in the State, vaccination has been halted at 1,073 centres. The immunisation drive has completely been halted in Jharsuguda, Nuapada and Koraput districts.

He further informed, "The State currently has a stock of 3.6 lakh doses of Covishield and 2.3 lakh doses of Covaxin that will hardly last for three days. We are repeatedly asking the Centre for adequate supply of vaccines to meet the demand."

Sand mining in Mahanadi at Nuapatna under NGT lens

Tribunal asks for joint committee for inspection

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The National Green Tribunal (NGT) Eastern Zone Bench, Kolkata on Friday in a hearing through videoconference on the application of Srikantha Kumar Pakal and eight others against the Government of Odisha on alleged illegal sand mining in Mahanadi riverbed near Tangi Choudwar has ordered that an inspection be carried out by a joint committee comprising experts from both Central and State Governments' concerned departments and the committee examine the site and submit its report stating therein specifically as to whether excess

sand has been excavated beyond the licence granted and whether heavy machines have been used for excavation which is contrary to the rules.

The committee shall also enumerate any violation of the environmental clearance certificate or the consent to operate.

The petitioners have sought a direction to the respondents to assess the amount of sand extracted and seize the excavators and for suspension of the environmental clearance and the consent to operate.

Their allegation is that remote sensing satellite pictures show extensive degradation of the riverbed and extraction of sand illegally through the mechanical means which is not permissible.

The NGT has asked that an inspection be carried out by a joint committee comprising a

Mangaraj's mom also dies of Covid-19

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Less than a week after Ajit Mangaraj, Congress' Pipili by-election candidate, died of Covid-19, his mother Khetramani Mangaraj also succumbed to the virus late on Friday night.

Khetramani Mangaraj had been undergoing treatment at a private hospital here since long after she tested positive for the virus.

Sources said she was admitted to the hospital following a heart attack and later contracted Covid-19. She was hospitalised before her son tested positive for the virus.

INBRIEF

144 CLAMPED IN JAGATSINGHPUR URBAN AREAS

Jagatsinghpur: The Jagatsinghpur district administration on Friday night clamped Section 144 of the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPc) with effect from April 17 in the urban areas restricting the movement of individuals from 9 pm to 5 am. The urban areas are the Jagatsinghpur and Paradip municipalities, Raghunathpur market, Tarpur market, Jaipur market, Rahama Market, Kujanga market and Tirtol market. Collector Sangram Keshari Mohapatra stated that in view of the increasing numbers of Covid cases in the district, the administration imposed the prohibitory orders.

GANJAM CHAMBER KICKS OFF COVID AWARENESS DRIVE

Brahmapur: The Ganjam Chamber of Commerce, in association with the Rotary Club of Berhampur and the Marwari Mahila Samiti, started a public awareness campaign on Covid-19 from Saturday onwards and it will continue for 21 days. A vehicle is moving around the city and nearby villages with messages on Covid-appropriate behaviour, precautions, awareness on vaccination, etc. Such a joint initiative had also been carried during July 2020. The campaigners will also distribute pamphlets, telemedicine details and details about vaccine centres, etc.



B'PUR JUDICIAL FRATERNITY GREETES NEW DIST JUDGE

Brahmapur: The judicial fraternity in Brahmapur on Saturday greeted new District Judge Shashikant Mishra, who assumed office as District and Sessions Judge of Ganjam on April 13. Judicial officers, lawyers and staffs offered flower bouquets and exchanged pleasantries among themselves and with the new judge at the court premises. Members of the Ganjam District Bar Association led by secretary Pradeep Behera, vice-president Bhagi Rao and joint secretary Sudhir Kumar Patro also welcomed the new judge. Earlier, Mishra had served as District Judge of Keonjhar and Angul, Chairman Sales Tax Tribunal and Secretary, Law Department at Bhubaneswar.



HC CJ INAUGURATES N'RANGPUR DIST COURT BUILDING

Nabarangpur: Orissa High Court Chief Justice Dr S Muralidhar inaugurated a newly-constructed District Court building here on Saturday through videoconferencing. District Judge Ashok Kumar Panda delivered the welcome address. Justice CR Dash of High Court who is also the administrative judge of Nabarangpur Judgeship also addressed the function. Nabarangpur Bar Association president Asis Ranjan Pattnaik said the new court building with state-of-the-art facilities would be a fitting seat for the district judiciary. Among others, Nabarangpur MP Ramesh Chandra Majhi, Collector Dr Ajit Kumar Mishra and Superintendent of Police Prahalad Sahi Meena were present.



Night curfew

Sec 144 clamped in Cuttack, BBSR

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The Commissionerate police imposed prohibitory orders under Section 144 of CrPC restricting unnecessary movements during night curfew, which began in the twin cities of Bhubaneswar and Cuttack on Saturday.

The orders would remain in force from 9 pm to 5 am with effect from April 17 under Bhubaneswar-Cuttack Commissionerate police jurisdiction till further order, said Commissioner of Police Saumendra Priyadarshi. With

imposition of prohibitory orders, movements of vehicles and people in non-essential duties would be completely restricted. However, essential service workers would be allowed movement on showing their identity cards issued by their respective organisations for bonafide official work.

Priyadarshi urged citizens to cooperate with police and local administration to curb spread of Covid-19 infection. "We appeal people to follow guidelines and not violate curfew restrictions as stringent action will be taken against violators," he said.

Team formed to check medicine black-marketing

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The State Government has formed a State-level committee to check hoarding and black-marketing of medicines and other medical supplies essential for treatment and prevention of Covid-19.

The move came after reports of the medicines and medical supplies being hoarded and black-marketed by unscrupulous elements. Additional DGP, CID, CB has been appointed as chairman of committee. An officer not below rank of Joint Secretary from Health Department and

State's Drugs Controller are members of panel. The district-level authorities shall monitor position of availability of essential medical supplies and take such corrective action as deemed fit, including but not restricted to, search and seizure, a notification of Home Department said.

The committee would supervise district-wise positions of availability of essential medical supplies and ensure that officers conducting raids, search and seizure get full cooperation from various agencies, especially police.

Haider tests +ve; remand put on hold

PNS ■ CUTTACK

Gangster Sheikh Haider, who had escaped from the SCB Medical College Hospital here last week and was brought back to Odisha from Telangana on Friday, has tested positive for Covid-19.

Haider had undergone RT-PCR test and his report came out positive. He has been kept in isolation. His remand has also been put on hold, informed Cuttack DCP Prateek



Singh on Saturday. The gangster was scheduled to be taken on a seven-day remand by the Commissionerate police (CP) on basis of a case registered at Mangalabag police station.

1 more area brought under containment in Rourkela

PNS ■ ROURKELA

One more area of the steel city was declared as micro containment zone by the Rourkela Municipal Corporation (RMC) on Saturday.

The RMC declared Income Tax colony of Uditnagar as micro containment zone due to detection of more Covid-19 positive cases. Measures were taken for active contact tracing and to contain spread of coronavirus. "All vehicular movement, movement of public

transport and personal movement would be stopped. All inhabitants within containment zone would strictly remain in home. The supply of essentials and medical requirements will be ensured through various teams of RMC," stated an order by RMC Commissioner Dibya Jyoti Parida.

Notably, the civic body declared Sector-1 and Sector-20 of city as containment zone on Friday. On day, Sundargarh district reported 523 positive cases, highest in the State.

Online exam demand Khallikote College students hold dharna

Authorities decided to conduct 3rd semester exams reportedly in offline mode that gave rise to student's unrest

PNS ■ BRAHMAPUR

Hundreds of students of the Khallikote Autonomous College have been on a dharna in front of their institution for last three days demanding online examination following Covid-19

protocols. According to the agitating students, due to Corona pandemic, only 30% of their courses have been taught online, while another 10-15% of their courses have been covered through off-line teaching.

This means, hardly 45% of their prescribed courses so far have been covered in both online and off line modes. As a result, the students are yet to acquire knowledge on the remaining 55% of their courses, meaning their courses have



not yet been completed fully on the sheer pretext of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Recently, the college authorities had decided to conduct the 3rd semester examinations reportedly in offline mode that gave rise to

student's unrest in the campus. Majority of the students were not happy with the decision of the college authorities. According to some students, conducting off-line examination at this juncture would be unjust.

Married woman raped in truck for 20 days

After being abducted from Balewar to Nayagarh

PNS ■ BALESWAR/ NAYAGARH

A 30-year-old married woman of Khuluda village under the Jaleswar police station in Baleswar district has alleged that she was raped for 20 long days in a container truck after being kidnapped

by unknown miscreants on March 24. She has lodged a complaint in connection with the incident with the Fategarh police in Nayagarh district. Jaleswar police station IIC Manas Deo said the woman is now at home with family including husband and five-year-old daughter after her rescue.

Deo said the case would be investigated thoroughly after receiving all relevant documents from the Nayagarh police. According to the woman's statement on the fateful day while she was going to a nearby shop to make photo-

copies of some documents, an SUV stopped near here and one of the occupants of asked her for the directions to a particular route.

When she stopped to show the direction, suddenly the man opened the door and dragged her into the vehicle and then hit on her head following which she fell unconscious.

When she regained consciousness, she found herself in a container parked on a road. When she screamed for help, two persons in the truck threatened to kill her if she did not follow their orders. She alleged

that she was sexually assaulted her several times in the three week period between March 24 and April 14. However, getting an opportunity she could manage to escape from clutches of the rapists, when they went to have lunch at a nearby hotel.

"The medical examinations of the victim and other preliminary investigations have been by carried out by the Fategarh police.

We are waiting for the reports and documents. When we receive that a thorough probe would be carried out," said Deo.



What then went wrong?

SANJOY SATPATHY

When you do not know the strength and weakness of your enemy, you are likely to make mistakes after mistakes. Yes, you are writing it's the Corona RNA virus.

When it came first, we took it lightly and said, "It's like common cold, will get cured of its own." Some said come warmer months, this virus will die out.

Once it started to kill human life then only did we become alert that it's not so simple a virus. In the meanwhile, doctors and hospitals started minting money and Governments all over the world started blaming China. Pharmaceutical companies

began earning huge money by selling drugs over the counter without doctor's prescription. Ventilator companies became richer than car manufacturers. Some car company started making ventilators instead of costly cars. Our Prime Minister started donating HCQ to others which later proved to be useless.

Then, some brainy doctors started giving plasma and antiviral drugs to Covid patients, but the end point was the same.

Some went for ayurvedic drugs and even drank cow urine to survive. The last hope was the vaccine. The Government of India started making (indigenous?) vaccines and started its use without

proper trial; it was used as an emergency medicine. Even the PM started distributing the vaccine in different countries without knowing the stock in the country.

He is still behaving like a doctor and health minister. He probably does not know that ventilators and oxygen do not prevent death. Lots of people started dying due to the aftereffects of the different vaccines which is underreported.

Now due to various Melas (social, religious congregations), corona has spread like wildfire in the country, which does not see an end to the pandemic. The last word is vaccine does not protect you! Different State Governments are playing hide-and-seek by opening



schools, bus service and train service and are busy publishing their leaders' photographs in newspapers. Then after a few weeks, they come out in TV to announce that there will be curfew. We do not know where

corona is heading for. The intelligent brains (100 out of 100) may highlight on this article.

(The writer is an ex-Joint Director, SAIL)

In Cuttack dist

STF rescues live pangolin; 1 held

PNS ■ ATHAGARH

The Crime Branch's Special Task Force (STF) rescued a live pangolin and arrested a person in this connection following a raid at Abhimannpur in Cuttack district on Friday. The accused was identified as Keshab Sahoo.

STF SP Prashant Bhoi said the weight of the pangolin is around 14 kg and the accused was planning to sell the mammal. A case under Sections 379, 411, 120(B) IPC and 51 of Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972 was registered against the accused.

The pangolin was handed over to the Athagarh DFO and Wildlife Warden for safe

custody. The SP further said there is a huge market in several countries, particularly China and Singapore, for pangolin for its meat, scales, blood, tail and claws which are used for several purposes, including for traditional medicines.

The cost of a pangolin varies in the international market from Rs 2 to 3 lakh per kilogram of its weight.

The accused has confessed to have procured the pangolin from another person and it is being verified and further investigation is underway," Bhoi added.

During last one year, the STF has seized as many as 12 leopard skins, six elephant

tusks, two deer skins, three live pangolins and five kg of pangolin scales and arrested 25 wildlife smugglers in a special drive during the past one year. A total of 14 cases have been registered against the criminals.

COVID-19
15 DANICS officers, 20 probationers deployed in city hosps

SAPNA SINGH ■ NEW DELHI

Amid high surge in the Covid-19 cases, Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Saturday deputed IAS and DANICS officers in Government hospitals to ensure better Covid management.

According to the order of Director General Health Services (DGHS), Delhi Government, 15 DANICS officers have been deployed in private hospitals and 24 DANICS probationers were deployed in State Government hospitals to assist the Nodal IAS officers in overall general superintendence.

“The IAS officials shall spearhead and oversee the entire COVID management apart from their regular duties, and will be assisted by DANICS officials, with immediate effect,” the order stated.

Arava Gopi Krishna deputed in Lok Nayak Hospital, Vikram Malik in GTB and Rajiv Gandhi Super Speciality Hospital, Dr Sonal Swaroop in Deen Dayal Upadhyay, Satendra Dursawat in SRHC, Awanish Kumar in DCB hospital, Himanshu Gupta in Ambedkar Nagar, Ramesh Verma in Dr BSA and Bupesh Chaudhry in Acharya Shri Bhikshu hospital.

Delhi government’s order to depute officers in hospitals

came a day after the capital witnesses highest single – day surge with 19,486 Covid -19 positive cases in 24 hours while the positivity rose to 20 percent.

Delhi government said that these IAS officers, designated as Nodal Officers, will oversee overall management of the COVID-19 hospitals assigned to them, and will exercise general superintendence, and scan the directions and control over the functioning of the hospitals. Additionally, Medical Superintendents and Directors of the respective hospitals would obtain concurrence of all decisions relating to COVID management from the assigned Nodal Officer.

Besides, CM Kejriwal also instructed to Nodal Officers to utilise their staff from the original office to assist them with the operations at the hospital. “The DANICS Officers who have been stationed in private hospitals as Nodal Officers will handhold the management of the hospitals and oversee that the government instructions and orders are being adhered to, and compiled in letter and spirit,” he said, “Moreover, the grievance redressal systems, operated via telephone helpline numbers, shall be overseen and examined by the Nodal Officers both in private and government hospitals,” he added.

City Government to add 6000 oxygen beds in 3 to 4 days: CM

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

To meet the demand of beds amid high surge in corona cases, Delhi Government will be adding 6000 oxygen beds in the next three-four days to its health infra, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal said.

After a meeting with health officials, Kejriwal said the health infrastructure has its limits; due to rapidly increasing cases in Delhi, we are facing a shortage of oxygen, Remdesivir, and Tocilizumab. “Some labs have started taking up more samples than their actual capacity; strict action would be taken against such labs that collect more samples than their actual capacity and do not provide the report within 24 hours,” he said. “We have been receiving multiple complaints of hospitals denying beds to patients.

Those hospitals that are providing wrong information on the app or on phone calls would have to face strict action, strict instructions to the officials have been given to carry out raids,” he added further.

Sisodia, Health Min inspects Rajiv Gandhi, GTB hosp

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia along with the Health Minister of Delhi Satyendar Jain visited the Rajiv Gandhi Super Speciality Hospital and GTB Hospital on Saturday to review the situation at the hospitals.

Sisodia inspected the admission system of the hospitals. “Inspected the patient admission system at Rajiv Gandhi Hospital. Our government is determined to provide the best medical facilities,” he tweeted.

AAP national spokesperson Raghav Chaddha who is also an MLA from Rajinder Nagar constituency visited the LNJP Hospital to inspect the triage and casualty area.

The Delhi Government under the leadership of Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal has taken the decision of deputing 10 IAS officers as nodal officers in state government hospitals, 15 ‘Delhi, Andaman and Nicobar Islands Civil Service’ (DANICS) officers as nodal officers in private hospitals and additionally 24 DANICS probationers who are currently undergoing financial training in ‘Health



and Family Welfare Department’.

The IAS officials shall spearhead and oversee the entire COVID management apart from their regular duties and will be assisted by DANICS officials with immediate effect.

“These officers, designated as nodal officers, will oversee overall management of the COVID-19 hospitals assigned to them and will exercise general superintendence and scan the directions and control over the functioning of the hospi-

tals,” the government said in a statement.

Additionally, Medical Superintendents and Directors of the respective hospitals would obtain concurrence of all decisions relating to COVID management from the assigned nodal officer.

The nodal officers have also been instructed to utilise their staff from the original office to assist them with the operations at the hospital, it said.

The DANICS officers who have been stationed in private

hospitals as Nodal Officers will handhold the management of the hospitals and oversee that the government instructions and orders are being adhered to, and compiled in letter and spirit, it added.

Moreover, the grievance redressal systems, operated via telephone helpline numbers, shall be overseen and examined by the Nodal Officers both in private and government hospitals.

In a review meeting held on Friday Kejriwal stated, “Not only one, but there should be multiple assistance numbers in the hospitals and nodal persons should be appointed at every helpline number. No urgent calls should be missed or turned down.” The respective hospital staff has also been instructed to see that the contact information of the Nodal Officers are displayed in the hospitals at the right spots.

During the review meeting, Kejriwal also said, “Our health teams must reach out to every individual in home isolation and provide oximeters, where in the general public should receive every form of assistance while they are in home isolation.”

Vaccination centre opened in Rohini Jail, 50 inmates vaccinated

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Prisons department on Saturday established a Covid vaccination centre in Rohini Jail and vaccinated 50 eligible inmates, officials said. The officials said that a total of 363 inmates vaccinated so far in three jails of Delhi Prisons - Tihar, Mandoli and Rohini.

According to senior prison official, on Saturday, a COVID Vaccination Centre was started in Rohini Jail with the help of District Immunization Officer (DIO), North.

“A total of 50 eligible inmates of Rohini Jail were vaccinated on Saturday. Earlier the eligible and willing inmates of Rohini Jail were being taken outside to the nearest COVID vaccination centre for the vaccine, under police guard,” said Sandeep Goel, the Director General of Prison, Delhi.

Resident Medical Officer Tihar Jails Dr Ajay Dalal and Superintendent of Jail number 10, Rohini, Sunder Bora supervised the vaccination drive and encouraged the inmates, he said.

Union FM urged to waive GST off KL, Beedi OKKS reminds Sitharaman of BJP poll manifesto

PNS ■ SAMBALPUR

In a letter to Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, Odisha Kendupatra Karmachari Sangha (OKKS) president Bijay Kumar Mohanty demanded to waive GST off kendu leaf (KL).

Mohanty in his letter to the FM further reminded her that delinking KL from GST was in the manifesto of the BJP during the general election. He said that the present system not only goes against the tribal population of the State, it also violates the Forest Right Act (FRA) 2006 and PESA 1996.

Further, it violates policy of the Government of India after introduction of the GST, he added. The Government of Odisha, in order to boost the financial condition of

the KL workers who are mostly tribals, doesn’t take any profit from the KL trade as it distributes the entire profit among them equally in the form of wages, social security measures, bonus and incentives, he said. “It is the



Government of Odisha that always looks into the greater interest of the KL workers and constituted the Kendu Leaf Development Board (KLDB) to ensure that they get the entire profit equally,” Mohanty told.

But after introduction of GST in 2017 on KL and finished product-Bidi, sale of KL is reducing gradually that directly affects the profit. This does nothing but stops the welfare schemes and social measures meant for the poor workers, Mohanty told further.

For the reason, only KL is getting a poor market now-a-days that ultimately results in one million pluckers and 18,000 seasonal workers to suffer. Hence, he appealed before the Finance Minister to waive GST from KL and Bidi to help the tribal people most of whom are women.

In Jaipur

Youth held for killing lover, dumping body in pond

PNS ■ JAIPUR

A youth, Arun Jena, of Mirchandrapur village under the Sadar police station in Jaipur district has been arrested on the charges of dumping the body of his girlfriend in a pond after killing her on January 23.

The accused was nabbed in Hyderabad on Thursday. Arun and the victim Subhashree Rout (22) of Khandara village under the Sadar police station were in a relationship for over

two years. But when Subhashree got to know that Arun was getting married to another girl, she stated objecting vehemently. In a bid to get rid of Subhashree, Arun hatched a conspiracy and accordingly, he strangled her to death and dumped the body in a pond at Kapileswar village.

The matter came to light when police found the skeletal remains of Subhashree on April 8, said Sadar police station IIC Banshidhar Behera.

Lovers’ bodies’ seizure Two arrested for vulgar comments in Kendrapada

PNS ■ KENDRAPADA

The Rajnagar police have arrested two persons for threatening and passing vulgar comments on a boy and a girl who were found dead on April 9 at the Jaudia beach.

The deceased who were lovers had gone missing from their homes and later, their bodies had been recovered from just 5 km of Penthia beach, under the Rajnagar police limits.

Police station IIC Tapan Kumar Nayak said the arrestees

were identified as Muna Singh and Lipu Samantray of Rajnagar village. They were working temporarily at R&B office of Rajnagar.

According to the police, Singh and Samantray earlier threatened the deceased juveniles of dire consequences and used to pass vulgar comments on the girl. Even the family members of the deceased also had lodged complaint against them for killing their wards.

Notably, the Rajnagar police on April 9 had seized the bodies of two juveniles Prasant

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The 24th death anniversary of legendary leader and former Chief Minister Biju Patnaik was observed by the Utkal Sammilani Mancheswar branch here on Saturday.

Sammilani members garlanded Patnaik’s statue. Speakers at a meeting paid rich tributes to the late leader recalling his contributions for the development of the State. Prominent among the members present were branch head Dillip Dashsharma and advisor

Nimai Charan Das. In a separate programme at the Patharbandha Basti, people from all walks of life participated and paid homage to the tall politician of the State.

The meeting was chaired by Patharbandha Unnayan Parishad president Ranjita Das and coordinated by youth leader Bholanath Maharana.

The city-based Biju Patnaik Foundation also observed the occasion with Kshetramohan Das presiding over a meeting. Foundation chief Shaktiprasad Mohanty and others recalled



Biju Patnaik’s immense contributions for the State of Odisha.

Nalco gets mining Utkal-E coal block

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The National Aluminium Company Limited (Nalco) has been granted the mining lease of Utkal-E coal block by the State Department of Steel & Mines through a notification issued on April 12.

The lease is over an area of 523.73 hectare in villages Nandichhod, Gopinathpur Jungle, Kundajhari Jungle, Kosala and Korada under Chendipada tehsil of Angul district. The initial capacity of the coal block is 2 million

tonnes per year with a total mineable reserve of about 70 MT. Notably, the Nalco has already executed the mining lease for the Utkal-D coal block in March 2021.

With the grant of Utkal-D and E coal blocks, the total mineable coal reserve of the company will be 175 MT, which will be pivotal in meeting the coal requirement of its captive power plant at Angul. Nalco CMD Sridhar Patra has thanked the State and Central Governments for sanctioning the mining lease and said the

Nalco is very optimistic on starting the mining operation from Utkal-D coal block in this financial year.

“With the grant of the mining lease of Utkal-E coal block, the company’s planned expansion activities will get a boost and contribute significantly to the bottom line of Nalco,” he said. The Nalco would be able to produce 4 MT of coal per year from the operation of Utkal-D and E blocks. The lease for both coal block has been granted to the Nalco for a period of 30 years.

Weekend curfew: Life comes to halt in Capital

SHEKHAR SINGH ■ NEW DELHI

Life in the national Capital came to a halt after weekend curfew was imposed by the Delhi Chief Minister, Arvind Kejriwal, amid rise in Covid-19 cases. The CM also appealed to people to adhere to the restrictions. Roads, markets and buses across Delhi were largely empty from Saturday morning, as the weekend curfew began in the city. Apart from essential service providers working in pharmacies, grocery shops, hospitals, some restaurants, police stations, and banks, a majority of the National Capital’s residents appeared to have stayed at home.

The weekend curfew aimed at breaking the chain of spiralling coronavirus infections was clamped at 10 pm on Friday and will continue till 5 am on Monday. Delhi Police Commissioner, S N Shrivastava also remained in the field and visited several places across the city. Police pickets could be seen around the city with police personnel and officials deployed, checking people having valid movement passes and issuing challan to those not following the guidelines.

Since Saturday morning, all the major markets including Sarojini Nagar, Connaught



Place, Lajpat Nagar, South Extension, Chandni Chowk were closed. Only a few shops providing essential services remain open. These include pharmacies, grocery stores, some food outlets and banks.

However, the Municipal services including collection of garbage, watering of plants, and sweeping of the roads continue on Saturday. Food delivery service agents were also seen on roads as restaurants were given permission for continuing the service of home delivery. At some areas across the city some vegetable vendors were also present, as some people flocked to them for the

essential supplies.

Few numbers of public transport including Delhi Transport Corporation (DTC) and cluster buses were also seen on roads while Delhi metro trains ran at reduced capacity and frequency for those involved in essential services and activities.

However, small a little crowd was seen at All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) and Sardarjung hospitals where people had come for treatment or get them coronavirus tested. Several, daily-wagers including rickshaw pullers and auto-rickshaw drivers were also seen on roads

that were waiting to get passengers.

“There is a curfew but my only source of income is through rickshaw. Our daily needs are fulfilled through it,” said Rahim (40), a rickshaw puller near Green Park in South Delhi.

During the day, Delhi Police Commissioner, Shrivastava also visited several places across the city to take stock of the execution of weekend curfew orders. The areas toured include, inter alia, Samastpur Picket, Akshardham, Ghazipur Crossing, Maharajpur Check Post, NH 24 Anand Vihar,

Jagatpuri, Krishna Nagar, New Usmanpur, Signature Bridge, Majnu Ka Tilla, ISBT Kashmiri Gate, Rajghat and Tilak Marg. Police personnel were found wearing all safety gears.

A vigorous awareness by using public announcement systems and flexi informative boards for the general public at various places were also seen on ground.

“All the district deputy commissioners of police are on the ground. The movement of essential goods and services is being facilitated. Police have also placed banners on pickets and outside the gates of residential colonies to inform people about the curfew and asked them not to come outside their houses unnecessarily,” said Chinmoy Biswal, the Public Relation Officer (PRO) of Delhi Police.

“Police teams are also monitoring the COVID helpline and assisting people facing difficulty in getting movement passes,” said Biswal.

The Delhi government and the police have issued e-passes to exempted category people who need to go out during the curfew for necessary services and activities like vaccination, going to railway stations, airports, buying grocery, fruits and vegetables.

AAP leader Sanjay Singh lashes out at PM, Amit Shah, Yogi for lax attitude

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Following the surge in Covid cases across the country, the senior Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader and Rajya Sabha MP Sanjay Singh on Saturday lashed out at Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister (CM) Yogi Adityanath, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah with regards to the dire state the country is in due to coronavirus.

Singh also questioned the Centre’s decision to send vaccines to various countries. “There are dead bodies across the country, at crematoriums, at burial grounds; there is a shortage of vaccines here and people are anxious to get vaccinated.

However, before vaccinating the population in India, Narendra Modi is busy sending vaccines to countries like Pakistan and Canada,” said Singh.

He said both PM and Home Minister appear to care more for elections than for the lives of citizens. “Uttar Pradesh is particularly in bad shape, with no beds available. Family members are running from pillar to post trying their best to arrange for oxygen, a hospi-

tal bed and basic medicines. People are dying in hospitals, but the Yogi Adityanath government, instead of attempting to improve or address the situation, is busy putting up screens in front of cremation grounds,” said Singh.

“Yogi Adityanath government has colossally failed in addressing the coronavirus situation in Uttar Pradesh and it’s time that the Centre made an immediate intervention. People had to wait for hours to cremate their loved ones. The Varansi where Modiji said ‘I’ve been called by Ganga Maiyya’, saw 125 corpses being cremated at the Harishchandra Ghat on Friday,” said Singh.

Singh also raised the issue of being unable to get a COVID test in some districts in Uttar Pradesh, referring to a case in Ambedkarnagar where the patient could not get a ventilator in the medical college despite his lungs having failed.

The senior AAP leader also spoke about reports of unavailability of beds, oxygen and ventilators in hospitals of all districts. “The Centre should keep an eye on Uttar Pradesh and make special announcements given the situation in the state,” he said.

Masks in trains, railway stations must ₹500 fine for violation



PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

In view of upsurge in Covid-19 cases, the East Coast Railway (ECoR) on Saturday appealed to the people, especially the train passengers, to wear face masks compulsorily while in station premises and in trains during their journey.

Controlling spitting and act of similar nature due to any person not wearing mask and entering railway premises and trains is important to avoid creation of unhygienic, unclean conditions which may cause danger to public life.

Hence, to ensure wearing of masks by all persons at railway premises and trains, the Railways would impose fines of up to Rs 500 from persons not wearing masks in railway premises and trains, an ECoR release said.

Facing shortage of oxygen, Remdesivir, ventilator: States



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Grappling with the surge in Covid-19 cases, various States in a meeting with the Centre on Saturday highlighted the shortage of oxygen cylinders, Remdesivir in hospitals, ventilator stocks and poor supply of vaccine doses. Eleven States and Union Territories, including Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh and Delhi, account for 79.32 per cent of the new coronavirus cases in the country were present at the meeting. The high-level meeting was chaired by Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan with the Health Ministers of 11 States and Union Territories to review measures taken by them for prevention, containment and management of the recent surge in Covid-19 cases. Prime Minister Narendra Modi is scheduled to meet top officials of several ministries later in the evening to review the overall covid situation and vaccination drive.

M a h a r a s h t r a , Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Kerala, West Bengal, Delhi, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh have been reporting an unprecedented surge in new infections. In a statement here, the Ministry said “Many of them (States) raised the issue of dovetailing the medical oxygen supply lines and capping of



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

US must lift export ban on raw materials for production of vaccines, says CPM

The CPI(M) polit bureau on Saturday said that the United States must lift their export ban on raw materials for the production of vaccines. In a statement, the Left party pointed out that the export ban by the US is a double-speak, citing US President Joe Biden's assurances in the recently convened Quad Summit. “The ban on exports of materials used in vaccine production goes completely against these stated aims. The Modi government, which sets

prices of essential drugs like Remdesivir which has been sold in the black market at exorbitant prices. “Double mutant strain in Maharashtra was a key point of concern. The Delhi Government requested for additional beds in Central Government hospitals as was done in 2020 to help tide over the emergent health crisis,” the Ministry said. The notification of the Home Ministry, granting permission to states to utilize up to 50 per cent of their annual allocation of State Disaster Response Fund, and that of the Union Health Ministry, allowing utilisation of unspent pending balance under National Health Mission as on April 1, 2021 for COVID management purposes, were reiterated, it said. Union Health Secretary Rajesh Bhushan informed the states on the steps taken to provide medical grade oxygen and augmenting Remdesivir stocks in the country. The states were also informed about the issuance of the calendar of medical oxygen supply from different oxygen

much store on the Quad alliance, must ensure that the Biden administration keeps to its committed word and immediately ensures supply of essential vaccine material to India. This is the least that must be done when India is facing vaccine shortage in the face of an unprecedented surge of Covid infections,” said CPI(M). The CPI(M) also pointed out the concerns raised by Serum Institute of India head Adar Poonawala on hampering of production in India due to the US Government's ban on export of raw materials of vaccine. “The scaling up of vaccine production in India is being hampered by the shortage of the intermediate material required for vaccine production. Much of this material such as filters, solutions and plastic bags come from the United States. But the U.S. Administration has banned the export of vaccine material under its Defence Production Act. Despite requests by the Indian authorities, no relaxation or exemption has been given for export of these items,” the CPI(M) said in a statement.

manufacturers in the country. The steps taken for unhindered movement of oxygen cylinders from their manufacturing units across states were also detailed, the Ministry said. Taking note of the active surge in cases witnessed since last February in which most states have now crossed their highest tally, Harsh Vardhan urged the states to give special focus on the prominent five to six cities in their administration and map medical colleges to either these cities or adjoining 2-3 districts. The states were asked to seek out positive

Cong's 14-point attack on Govt over Covid 'mismanagement'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Maintaining that India has been caught off guard in its fight against the deadly coronavirus once again despite having a year to prepare, Congress president Sonia Gandhi on Saturday urged the Government to ramp up its strategy to tackle the menace as she pointed out to the overwhelmed medical infrastructure and shortage of vaccines and drugs.

Sonia was speaking during the meeting of the Congress Working Committee (CWC) meeting, which was attended by former party chief Rahul Gandhi, general secretaries and State in-charges of the party.

She reiterated her insistence on lowering the immunisation age to 25 years and above “as also all younger persons with at-risk health disorders like asthma, angina, diabetes, kidney & liver diseases and other similar ailments.”

The Congress came out with a 14-point attack on Government over 'grave errors' in Covid-19 management.

Sonia also spoke about her letter to Prime Minister



Narendra Modi after her meeting with chief ministers of Congress-ruled states to take a jibe at the Centre.

Both Sonia and Rahul earlier have written to Modi asking him to expand the country's vaccination drive against Covid-19.

“I have written to the Prime Minister after meeting with them. Our Chief Ministers have spoken to the Prime Minister and written to the concerned minister from time to time pleading for relief. Some of them were left with only a few days of vaccine, no oxygen or ventilators. But there has been thundering silence on the part of the Government. On the contrary some other states have received preferential treatment/relief,” she said.

“Instead of listening to the constructive suggestions of the opposition, Union Ministers are pressed into service to attack leaders of opposition for giving those sugges-

tions. This convoluted “me versus you” debate is childish and totally unnecessary,” she added.

Sonia said Goods and Services Tax (GST) on all equipment, instruments, medicines and support required to prevent and treat Covid-19 should be made free. “It is a matter of grave concern that life saving drugs like Remdesivir etc. and medical oxygen as also other basic supplements are subjected to GST @ 12%. Even basic equipments like Oxymeters and life saving critical equipment like ventilators are subjected to 20% GST. In the current state of affairs, this is inhuman and untenable,” she added.

The Government must provide financial support for the poor in the form of monthly income support and transfer ₹6,000 in the account of every eligible citizen, who have been hit by the partial curfews, travel restrictions, closure and lockdowns put in place by authorities, she said in her CWC meeting statement.

“Similarly, with reverse migration of labour already having started, it will be critical to immediately address

their need of safe transportation as indeed their suitable rehabilitation in host as well as home States,” Sonia said.

At the meet, she said that the Modi government was unprepared in evaluating and managing the crisis. She added that the Congress believed that fighting the pandemic was national challenge and that it should be kept above party politics. She said that the government did not listen to constructive suggestions made by the Opposition on the management of the pandemic, and that Union ministers attacked leaders of opposition for giving suggestions.

“This convoluted ‘me versus you’ debate is childish and totally unnecessary,” Sonia asserted accusing the Centre of giving preferential treatment to some states while maintaining “thundering silence” on requests of states ruled by the Congress and opposition parties.

“As the central and state governments move ahead to control the situation by resorting to partial curfews, travel restrictions, closure and lock downs; we will again be restricting economic activity that will hit the already beleaguered people, especially the poor and the daily wagers,” she said.

Taking on these challenging times as Indians rather than as political opponents will be true ‘Rajadharma’, Sonia stressed.

Vardhan said about 1.58 crore doses are still available with the states while another 1.16 crore doses are in pipeline, to be delivered by next week.

Emphasizing that there is no shortage of vaccines, he strongly pushed for further ramping up the vaccination exercise.

Wearing 2 face masks more effective in beating Covid: Study



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Wearing two face coverings or masks can nearly double the effectiveness of filtering out SARS-CoV-2-sized particles, preventing them from reaching the wearer's nose and mouth and causing Covid-19, as per a recent study.

The findings published in JAMA Internal Medicine also states that the reason for the enhanced filtration is not about adding too many layers of cloth but eliminating any gaps or poor-fitting areas of a mask.

“The medical procedure masks are designed to have very good filtration potential based on their material, but the way they fit our faces isn't perfect,” said Emily Sickbert-Bennett, PhD, associate professor of infectious diseases at the UNC School of Medicine and lead author of the study. To test the fitted filtration efficiency (FFE) of a range of masks, UNC researchers worked with James Samet, PhD, and colleagues in the USEPA Human Studies Facility on the campus of UNC-Chapel Hill. There they filled a 10-foot by 10-foot stainless-steel exposure chamber with small salt particle aerosols and had researchers don combinations of masks to test how effective they were at keeping particles out of their breathing space.

A transmission electron microscopic image that shows SARS-CoV-2 also known as 2019-nCoV, the virus that causes Covid-19, isolated from a patient in the US, as the Virus particles are shown emerging from the surface of cells cultured in the lab- the spikes on the outer edge of the virus particles give coronaviruses their name, crown-like.

Each individual mask or layered mask combination was fitted with a metal sample port, which was attached to tubing in the exposure chamber that measured the concentration of particles entering the breathing space underneath the researcher's mask. A second tube measured the ambient concentration of particles in the chamber. By measuring particle concentration in the breathing space underneath the mask

Lack of Covid-suitable behaviour, virus mutation cause Covid spurt: AIIMS head



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Lack of Covid-appropriate behaviour and mutation of the virus are the two main reasons behind the rapid spread of coronavirus infections in the country, AIIMS director Dr Randeep Guleria on Saturday said even as he expressed concern over the religious and political activities taking place in a few States, cautioning that they must be done in a restricted manner.

“The cause for the surge ... is multifactorial. But two main causes are that people have stopped following Covid-appropriate behaviour during January-February when the vaccination started and cases went down. Also, at this time, the virus mutated and spread more rapidly,” Dr Guleria said to a news agency.

“This is a time when a lot

of religious activities happen in our country and polls are also underway. We must understand lives are also important. We can do this in a restricted manner so that religious sentiment is not hurt & Covid appropriate behaviour can be followed,” said Dr Guleria. He also highlighted that India was witnessing a huge strain in the healthcare system and efforts need to be stepped up to keep increasing our hospital beds/resources for the increasing number of cases.

We also have to urgently bring down the number of Covid-19 cases, he added.

“This is a time when a lot of religious activities happen in our country and polls are also underway. We must understand that lives are also important. We can do this in a restricted manner so that

religious sentiments are not hurt and Covid-appropriate behaviour can be followed,” he said.

His remarks come in the backdrop of the ongoing Kumbh mela in Uttarakhand, which has attracted people from different parts of the country in large numbers.

Talking about the immunisation drive, Dr Guleria said that India should gradually lift or lower the age bar for beneficiaries to widen the vaccination ambit. “We should gradually lift or lower the age bar so that more and more people come into the pool of people who can be vaccinated. That will happen in the coming few weeks.

“We will have more and more vaccines that will come into the common pool which will allow us to open up the vaccination to a larger population,” he said.

altering the fit is about 40-60 per cent effective at keeping Covid-19-sized particles out. A cloth mask is about 40 per cent effective.

Their recent findings on doubling of face masks show that when a cloth mask is placed over a surgical mask, the FFE improved by about 20 per cent, and improved even more with a snug-fitting, sleeve-type mask, such as a gaiter. When layered over procedure masks, cloth masks improve fit by eliminating gaps and holding the procedure mask closer to the face, consistently covering the nose and mouth.

DRDO setting up hosp in Ahmedabad for Covid patients



RAKESH K SINGH ■ NEW DELHI

The Centre has conveyed to the Gujarat Government that DRDO is establishing a 900-bedded hospital in Ahmedabad to cater to the “alarming surge” in Covid-19 cases there.

The Union Home Ministry has also directed the Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs) or the Central paramilitary forces to spare 25 doctors and 75 paramedics and ensure that they report by April 21 to man the hospital in Gujarat.

“The hospital is being established at the Gujarat University Convention Centre, Ahmedabad to cater to the alarming surge of the Covid cases there,” reads an order issued by Additional Director General (Medical) of CAPFs under the Union Home Ministry on Friday.

It has further been decided and conveyed that CAPFs are required to provide 25 medical officers and 75 paramedical/nursing staff, reads the order.

“It is, therefore, requested that the following number of doctors and paramedics/nursing staff be detailed for the purpose please,” it said.

The detailed staff should report to the nodal officer (Colonel B Chaubey, DRDO Hospital, Ahmedabad by April

21 positively, it said.

Through the order, the ADG (Medical), CAPFs, Dr Mukesh Saxena has also named Devarshi Raval as the nodal officer for making logistical arrangements at Gujarat University.

The letter has been circulated to Inspector General (Medical) of the Border Security Force (BSF), Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) and Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB).

The BSF will send 10 doctors and 30 paramedics, the CRPF will spare 10 doctors and 25 nursing staff and SSB to chip in with five doctors and 20 paramedical personnel for the DRDO hospital in Ahmedabad.

Through the communication to the heads of CRPF, BSF and SSB, the Ministry has asked them to send their team on priority and the doctors and paramedics have to report to the nodal officer of the said hospital latest by April 21.

The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) hospital set to be operationalised by late next week, officials said.

On Friday, the Defence Minister Rajnath Singh directed the DRDO to reopen the Sardar Vallabh Bhai Patel Covid care hospital here which was set up in July last year. He has also asked the defence body to set up a new facility in Lucknow.

Kumbh Mela: Plea in SC seeks direction to clear mass gathering from Haridwar

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

A plea has been filed in the Supreme Court seeking directions to the Centre and others to clear the “mass gathering” from Haridwar amid a surge in Covid-19 cases across the country and prescribe a safety protocol with respect to people returning from Kumbh Mela.

The plea, which referred to the recent spike in COVID-19 cases, has also sought directions to the Centre and the Uttarakhand government to immediately withdraw the advertisements inviting people to Haridwar for Kumbh Mela.

It said that the Election Commission should be asked to issue direction to the authorities in the states where elections are being held to strictly enforce COVID-19 guidelines during the poll process and take appropriate action against the violators.

The plea, filed by Noida-resident Sanjay Kumar Pathak, said that COVID-19 cases are increasing rapidly across the country and the health infrastructure is “crumbling” in many states.

It claimed that hospitals and crematoriums are running out of space and shortage of essential drugs has been reported from many cities.

The petition said that India is currently witnessing its highest surge in COVID-19

cases since onset of the pandemic, but visuals of lakh of devotees crowding in Haridwar for Kumbh Mela and in election rallies in states have surfaced.

“On the one hand, poor common man on the street is often punished and treated violently by the police and executive authorities for individual violations of COVID-19 rules and regulations in the name of strict enforcement, and on the other hand, the authorities are not only permitting but facilitating and promoting congregation of people in the events like Kumbh-2021 and election rallies,” the plea has alleged.

It sought the apex court's direction to the Centre, Uttarakhand government and the National Disaster Management Authority to not encourage or promote any gathering or event “inconsistent with the spirit and object of the COVID guidelines” and orders issued by these authorities.

“It is axiomatic that the respondents have turned a blind eye towards the violation of COVID-19 guidelines at the Kumbh Mela and during election campaigns and rallies which have the potential to become super spreader events but common people on the street is being fined and challans are being issued,” the plea has claimed.

Private vehicle would not come within expression of public place: SC

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

A private vehicle does not come within the expression of a “public place” as per the explanation given under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act, the Supreme Court has said.

A bench comprising justices U U Lalit and K M Joseph made the observation while deciding an appeal challenging an order passed by the Punjab and Haryana High Court affirming their conviction and sentence under the NDPS Act.

Two bags of poppy straw were recovered from the accused while they were sitting in a jeep at a public

place.

The trial court, after considering the evidence on record, acquitted accused Major Singh but convicted accused Boota Singh, Gurdeep Singh and Gurmohinder Singh, under the NDPS Act and sentenced them to rigorous imprisonment for 10 years.

They were also asked to pay a fine of Rs 1 lakh, failing which they were directed to undergo further rigorous imprisonment for two years.

The accused argued before the top court that the vehicle in question was a private one belonging to accused Gurdeep Singh and was not a public conveyance, though it was parked on a public road.

Myanmar pardons prisoners

Unclear if
coup foes
among them

AP ■ YANGON

Myanmar's junta on Saturday announced it pardoned and released more than 23,000 prisoners to mark the traditional Thingyan New Year holiday, but it wasn't immediately clear if they included pro-democracy activists who were detained in the wake of the military's seizure of power in February. The releases were announced on state broadcaster MRTV, which said that junta chief Senior Gen. Min Aung Hlaing had pardoned 23,047 prisoners, including 137 foreigners who will be deported from Myanmar. He also reduced sentences for others.

The move comes as daily protests against the February 1 ouster of the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi continue, as does the use of deadly force against them.

According to the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners, which monitors casualties and arrests, government forces have killed at least 728 protesters and bystanders since the takeover. The group says 3,141 people, including Suu Kyi, are in detention.



A man is embraced by two women outside Insein prison in Yangon, Myanmar on Saturday

AP

Unconfirmed but credible accounts with photos on social media claimed that three people were killed Saturday by security forces in a violent crackdown in the central city of Mogok, in Myanmar's gem mining region.

Detainees released Saturday from Yangon's Insein Prison included at least three political prisoners who were jailed in 2019, said witnesses and local press reports.

The three are members of the Peacock Generation per-

formance troupe where were arrested during that year's New Year celebrations for skits that poked fun at military representatives in Parliament and military involvement in business.

Their traditional style of acting is called Thangyat, a mash-up of poetry, comedy and music with a sharp undertone of satire. Several members of the troupe were convicted under a law banning circulation of information that could endanger or demoralise members of the military. The actors may have

drawn the special wrath of the military because they performed in army uniforms.

Several members were also found guilty of online defamation for livestreaming their performances. It could not be ascertained if all imprisoned members of the troupe were released.

Another freed prisoner was Ross Dunkley, an Australian newspaper entrepreneur sentenced in 2019 to 13 years in a Myanmar prison for drug possession. His release was con-

firmed by his ex-wife Cynda Johnston, reported The Sydney Morning Herald newspaper.

Dunkley co-founded the The Myanmar Times, an English-language daily, but was forced to give up his share in it. He became well-known for co-founding or acquiring English-language publications in formerly socialist states that were seeking foreign investment as they liberalised their economies, but was sometimes criticised for doing business with authoritarian regimes.

Early prisoner releases are customary during major holidays, and this is the second batch the ruling junta has announced since taking power.

Following the release of more than 23,000 convicts to mark Union Day on February 12, there were reports on social media that some were recruited by the authorities to carry out violence at night in residential areas to spread panic, especially by setting fires. Some areas responded by setting up their own neighborhood watch groups.

In March, more than 600 people who were imprisoned for demonstrating against the February coup were released from Insein Prison, a rare conciliatory gesture by the military that appeared aimed at placating the protest movement.

Those freed were mostly young people caught in sweeps of street demonstrations, while those considered protest leaders were kept locked up.

Troops level may increase in Af before withdrawal: Pentagon

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

Before the complete withdrawal of US troops from Afghanistan by September 11, there might be an increase in number of soldiers to ensure safe and orderly drawdown, the Pentagon has said.

"It is not out of the realm the possibility that for a short period of time, there will have to be some additional enabling capabilities added to Afghanistan, to help effect a safe, orderly, and deliberately planned drawdown of everybody by the president's deadline, early September," Pentagon spokesman John Kirby told reporters at a news conference on Friday.

However, Kirby did not elaborate on the nature of the increase in US troops. "I can't speak today with exactly what that would look like, how many, when they would be going in. But as we transitioned out of Iraq, of course, it's logical to assume that you may need some logistics help, maybe some engineering help," he said.

"You may have to add some force protection capabilities, temporarily, just to make sure that the drawdown goes in a safe, orderly, and effective way. Again, we'll know more as we get closer, but that would not be out of the realm of possibility," Kirby said.

Responding to a question, Kirby said that the Department



of Defense is still working out what the future bilateral security relationship is going to be with Afghanistan.

"We're going to transition to a bilateral relationship, a military relationship that's more akin to the kinds of relationships we have with other countries," he said.

"It will not include a US military footprint on the ground in Afghanistan with the exception of what's going to be required to support the diplomatic mission there. All that's still being worked out. So, I can't speak with specificity today about what contract support the Afghan security forces are going to need going forward," he said.

The United States, he said, will maintain counterterrorism capabilities to continue to prevent Afghanistan from becoming a launching pad for terrorist attacks on the US.

"We have a vast range of

capabilities available to us and we're not going to speak to the details of exactly how we're going to maintain those capabilities and utilise those capabilities," he said.

During a televised address to the nation earlier in the week, President Joe Biden said that keeping thousands of troops grounded and concentrated in just one country at a cost of billions each year made "little sense" to him.

He said all US troops would be withdrawn from the strife-torn country by September 11 to end America's longest war that has cost trillions of dollars and the lives of over 2,400 American soldiers.

The US and the Taliban signed a landmark deal in Doha on February 29, 2020 to bring lasting peace in war-torn Afghanistan and allow US troops to return home from America's longest war.

Worldwide Covid death toll tops a staggering 3m

AP ■ RIO DE JANEIRO

The global death toll from the coronavirus topped a staggering 3 million people Saturday amid repeated setbacks in the worldwide vaccination campaign and a deepening crisis in places such as Brazil, India and France.

The number of lives lost, as compiled by Johns Hopkins University, is about equal to the population of Kyiv, Ukraine; Caracas, Venezuela; or metropolitan Lisbon, Portugal. It is bigger than Chicago (2.7 million) and equivalent to Philadelphia and Dallas combined.

And the true number is believed to be significantly higher because of possible government concealment or the many cases overlooked in the early stages of the outbreak that began 16 months ago in Wuhan, China, at the end of 2019. Around the world, the trajectory of the virus and the race to bring it under control vary widely from country to

country. Even as the U.S. And Britain see their vaccination drives hit their stride and they begin to contemplate life after the pandemic, other places both rich and poor — France and India among them — are lagging behind in putting shots in arms and have imposed new lockdowns and other restrictions as cases soar.

Worldwide, deaths are running at over 12,000 per day on average and new cases at more than 7,00,000 a day.

The US toll alone is over 5,60,000, accounting for more than 1 in 6 of the world's Covid-19 deaths, by far the highest reported by any country. The United States is followed by Brazil, Mexico, India and Britain. This month, the US recommended a pause in the use of Johnson & Johnson's Covid-19 vaccine while authorities investigate extremely rare but dangerous blood clots, and some European countries are putting the vaccine on hold, too.

5 workers killed in police firing in power plant in B'desh: Reports

Dhaka: At least five people working at a under construction coal power plant being built by a Chinese firm in Chittagong were killed and 20 others injured in a clash with the police following a protest by the workers over wage and allowances, Bangladeshi media reports said on Saturday.

The incident happened when the protesting workers of the plant clashed with the police, prompting them to open fire in which five workers were killed, the *Dhaka Tribune* reported.

"The violence broke out around 10:30 am at the coal-fired power plant. Five have died while at least 20 others were injured in the clash, including police and local residents," a senior police officer was quoted as saying in the report.

"They attacked police who are on duty, forcing the policemen to retaliate. Four were killed during the incident while three policemen were injured," Chattogram Range Deputy Inspector General Anwar Hossain was quoted as saying by the Daily Star newspaper. *PTI*

Russia expels Ukrainian consul over classified information

Moscow: Russia detained a Ukrainian diplomat for allegedly receiving classified information from a database of the country's main security agency.

The Federal Security Service, or FSB, said Saturday that Alexander Sosonyuk, Ukraine's consul in St Petersburg, was taken into custody on Friday during a meeting with a Russian in which he received "information of a classified nature contained in the databases of law enforcement agencies and the FSB".

The FSB statement, reported by Russian news agencies, didn't give further details.

Ukrainian Foreign Ministry spokesman Oleg Nikolenko said Sosonyuk has been released from custody and is on Ukrainian diplomatic property. It wasn't immediately clear if Russia would move to expel him.

Nikolenko said Ukraine was preparing a response, but didn't elaborate. The detention comes amid escalating tensions between Russia and Ukraine amid a Russian military buildup along the border with the eastern Ukraine region. *AP*

US Prez Biden, Japanese PM Suga discuss Chinese influence over Indo-Pacific

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

US President Joe Biden and Japan Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga, in their first in-person bilateral meeting at the White House, discussed the increasing Chinese influence over the peace and prosperity of the Indo-Pacific and ways to strengthen the QUAD, comprising of India and Australia as the other two nations in the grouping.

Other issues like climate change, fight against coronavirus pandemic and North Korea did appear in their talks on Friday, which was the first for Biden with a foreign leader as the president of the United States.

"Our alliance has served its role as the foundation of peace and stability for the Indo-Pacific region and the world. In light of the current regional situation and the severe security environment, the importance of our alliance has reached new heights," Suga told reporters at a White House news conference with Biden.

In addition to the bilateral relationship, Suga said they

discussed the free and open Indo-Pacific.

"We agreed that while Japan and the US will take the lead to promote the vision through concrete efforts. We will also cooperate with other countries and regions, including the ASEAN, Australia, and India," he said.

"We also had serious talks on China's influence over the peace and prosperity of the Indo-Pacific and the world at large. We agreed to oppose any attempts to change the status quo by force or coercion in the East and South China Seas and intimidation of others in the region," Suga said.

Beijing claims almost all of the 1.3 million square mile South China Sea as its sovereign territory. China has been building military bases on artificial islands in the region also claimed by Brunei, Malaysia, the Philippines, Taiwan and Vietnam.

Beijing has impeded commercial activity like fishing or mineral exploration by countries like Vietnam and the Philippines.

Italy's Salvini to stand trial for 2019 migrant standoff

Rome: A judge in Sicily on Saturday ordered former Interior Minister Matteo Salvini to stand trial for having refused to let a Spanish migrant rescue ship dock in an Italian port in 2019, keeping the people at sea for days.

Judge Lorenzo Iannelli set September 15 as the trial date during a hearing in the Palermo bunker courtroom, the LaPresse news agency reported. Salvini, who attended the hearing, confirmed the outcome and insisted he was only doing his job and his duty by refusing entry to the Open Arms rescue ship and the 147 people it had rescued in the Mediterranean Sea. *AP*

After China, US envoy Kerry in S Korea for climate talks

Seoul: US climate envoy John Kerry met with South Korea's foreign minister in Seoul on Saturday for talks ahead of a virtual climate summit of world leaders called by President Joe Biden for next week.

Kerry arrived in South Korea after a four-day visit to China where he held closed-door meetings with senior Chinese officials in Shanghai.

While Kerry's discussions with South Korea's Foreign Minister Chung Eui-yong were focused on Biden's climate meeting and another video summit on environmental issues that South Korea will host in May, Chung also conveyed Seoul's "serious concerns" over Japanese government plans to start releasing treated radioactive water from the wrecked

Fukushima nuclear plant into the sea in two years.

Chung also requested US help for South Korea's efforts to secure more coronavirus vaccines as it wrestles with a slow vaccine rollout and a steady rise in infections, South Korea's Foreign Ministry said. The ministry didn't release any specific comments made by Kerry during the meeting.

Chung and Kerry agreed that the countries should cooperate to create "mutual synergy" between the virtual summits hosed by each country in the coming weeks, which would help set up the UN Climate Change Conference scheduled to be held in Scotland in November, the ministry said in a statement. *AP*

Era ends as Raul Castro steps down as Communist Party chief

AP ■ HAVANA

Raul Castro said he is stepping down as Cuban Communist Party leader, leaving the island without a Castro guiding affairs for the first time in more than six decades and handing control of the party to a younger generation.

The 89-year-old Castro made the announcement in a speech Friday at the opening of the eighth congress of the ruling party, the only one allowed on the island.

"I concluded my task as first secretary ... With the satisfaction of having fulfilled (my duty) and confidence in the future of the fatherland," he said in a typical terse, to-the-point finale that contrasted with the impassioned

verbal pyrotechnics of his brother Fidel, who died in 2016.

Castro didn't say who he would endorse as his successor as first secretary of the Communist Party. But he previously indicated he favors yielding control to 60-year-old Miguel Diaz-Canel, who succeeded him as president in 2018 and is the standard bearer of a younger generation of loyalists who have been pushing an economic opening without touching Cuba's one-party system.

"All processes have a continuity and I think Diaz-Canel should be there now," said 58-year-old driver Miguel Rodríguez. Castro's retirement ends an era of formal leadership that began with his brother Fidel and country's 1959 revolution.

"One has to step aside for the young people," said 64-year-old retiree Juana Busutil, for whom Castro "is going to continue being the leader."

The transition comes at a difficult time for Cuba, with many on the island anxious about what lies ahead.

The coronavirus pandemic, painful financial reforms and restrictions imposed by the Trump administration have battered the economy, which shrank 11% last year as a result of a collapse in tourism and remittances. Long food lines and shortages have brought back echoes of the "special period" that followed the collapse of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s.

Prince Philip laid to rest in royal funeral

PTI ■ LONDON



to Britain and the Commonwealth.

The ceremony, which began at St George's Chapel in

Windsor Castle with a national minute's silence at 15:00 local time on Saturday, was a religious one though without any

sermons, as planned by the Duke — who passed away aged 99 last week on Friday.

"The Order of Service for the funeral was agreed with the Duke of Edinburgh during his lifetime, and reflects the Duke's military affiliations, and personal elements of His Royal Highness' life," Buckingham Palace said in a statement.

At the end of the ceremony, the Duke's coffin was carried to his resting place in the royal vault beneath St George's Chapel.

CORRIGENDUM	
Reference to publication of ICICI Bank Limited vs SHISHIR DUTT SHARMA, Case No-Suit No 1967/17., ICICI Bank Limited vs SANJAY KUMAR PANDIT, Case No-Suit no 933/18, ICICI Bank Limited vs KULVINDER SINGH, Case No-FAO 213/2015, ICICI Bank Limited vs MEHKAR SINGH, Case No-CM(M) 549/2020 & CM APPL.27986/2020, ICICI Bank Limited vs SUBODH KUMAR, Case No-CM(M) 602/2020 & CM APPL.30659/2020, ICICI Bank Limited vs JITENDRA CHATURVEDI, Case No-CM (M) 22/2020, ICICI Bank Limited vs MOHD ASIF, Case No-CM(M) 178/2021, ICICI Bank Limited vs ARCHANA RAJ, Case No-CM(M) 573/2020 & CM APPL.29273/2020, ICICI Bank Limited vs MOHAMMAD ARIF, Case No-CSSCJ.1871/19, ICICI Bank Limited vs VIJAY GUPTA, Case No-Suit No. 1088/2018, ICICI Bank Limited vs RAHUL YADAV, Case No-CM (M) 222/2020, ICICI Bank Limited vs VIJAY GUPTA, Case No-Suit No. 1088/2018 of April 17, 2021 published in The Pioneer (Eng.) and The Pioneer (Hin.). Due to inadvertent mistake the Auction Date was wrongly mentioned as May 1, 2021 and April 22, 2021 instead of May 06, 2021. We therefore, requesting to read it as May 06, 2021. and remaining content is unchanged.	
Dated: April 17, 2021 Place : Delhi/ NCR	

Portland: Police in Portland, Oregon, said on Saturday they arrested four people after declaring a riot Friday night when protesters smashed windows, burglarised businesses and set multiple fires during demonstrations that started after police fatally shot a man while responding to reports of a person with a gun.

Police said they dispersed the crowd so firefighting crews could douse fires before they spread in extreme fire hazard conditions.

The vandalism downtown came after the police shooting earlier Friday and was also was part of vigils and demonstrations already planned for the night in the name of people killed in police shootings nationwide. They include 13-year-old Adam Toledo of Chicago and Daunte Wright, a Black man in a Minneapolis suburb. Deputy Police Chief Chris Davis told reporters a white man in his 30s had been shot and killed in Portland by police. The man was pronounced dead at the scene in Lents Park, a leafy, residential neighbourhood of the city.

Two officers fired a 40mm device that shoots non-lethal projectiles, and one officer — an eight-year veteran — fired a gun, police said

in a statement. The officer is on paid administrative leave, and his or her name will be released, authorities said. *AP*

कार्यालय नगर निगम, भरतपुर			
क्रमांक — न.जि.म. / निर्माण / 2021-22 / 02-07		दिनांक — 05.04.2021	
ई-निविदा सूचना- 01/2021-22			
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AMID COVID 2.0

Fiscal package may be on cards to maintain economic recovery

■ NEW DELHI

A fiscal stimulus package may be on the cards again as the Government looks at ways to prevent the present surge in Covid-19 cases and the ensuing restrictions imposed by the States from derailing the economic recovery.

After last year's lockdowns, which resulted in the country's GDP contracting by (-) 23.9 per cent, it was hoped that the economy will grow hand-somely in FY22 to register a double digit growth.

For this to happen, the RBI has projected a Q1 FY22 GDP growth of 26.2 per cent. But the recent surge in the pandemic has again raised serious ques-

tions about the health of the economy.

There are some discussions within the government about the need, shape and timing of a fresh fiscal stimulus package.

The idea is to see that the poor and small businesses do not suffer and their livelihood support is not disturbed, said an official source, on condition of anonymity.

The source said that any such package, if finalised, would come up later this month or next month.

The Union Finance Ministry has so far not indicated about any new stimulus to contain the disruptions caused by the fresh Covid-19

wave in the country.

Last year, the government and the RBI came up with a series of announcements to provide relief to the common man and businesses impacted by the Covid-induced lockdown.

Under its 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat' package and the Garib Kalyan Yojana, the government had announced packages worth over Rs 20 lakh crore.

While the economic situation is still much better than last year and the government has indicated against a complete lockdown this year, support measures could just look at the most vulnerable sections of the society and the industry.

Sources said that like last year, the package may include measures by the government as well as compliance relief offered by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI).

Already, various ministries are providing inputs to the Centre.

The worry for the government this time round is also about inflation that has seen an increase in the last few months.

This actually means that people are already struggling with higher food prices while their income is dogged with uncertainty.

The RBI will also have to do a balancing act over growth aspirations and containing inflation.

DPIIT notifies PLI scheme for ACs, LED lights

MERE ASSEMBLY OF FINISHED GOODS NOT TO BE INCENTIVISED

■ NEW DELHI

The department for promotion of industry and internal trade (DPIIT) has notified the PLI scheme for ACs and LED lights and said that selection of companies to avail the incentives would

done to support manufacturing of components which are not made in India presently.

It said that mere assembly of finished goods would not be incentivised and companies investing in basic/core components would get a higher priority.

Earlier this month, the government approved a production linked incentive (PLI) scheme for white goods - Air Conditioners (ACs) and LED Lights - with a budgetary outlay of Rs 6,238 crore. It will be implemented over 2021-22 to

2028-29. According to the notification of the DPIIT, the Empowered Group

of Secretaries chaired by Cabinet Secretary will monitor the PLI scheme, undertake periodic review of the outgo under the scheme, ensure uniformity of all PLIs and take appropriate action to ensure that the expenditure is within the prescribed outlay.

The group will be empowered to make any changes in the modalities of the scheme within the overall financial outlay of Rs 6,238 croreIt said

that the incentive per beneficiary will be applicable on incremental sales (net of taxes) of manufactured goods (as distinct from traded goods) over the base year (2019-20) subject to ceilings.

"Mere assembly of finished goods shall not be incentivised. Selection of companies for the scheme shall be done so as to incentivise manufacturing of components or sub-assemblies which are not manufactured in India presently with sufficient capacity," it said.

Indian pharma exports grow at 18% to 24.44 bn USD in FY 21

■ HYDERABAD

Pharma exports from India witnessed over 18 per cent growth to USD 24.44 billion during the last financial year against USD 20.58 billion in FY20, Pharmaceuticals Export Promotion Council of India (Pharmexcil) said on Saturday.

"We have observed a big leap in our exports in the month of March 2021 which is USD 2.3 billion (figures for March are provisional) and is highest among the exports of all the months of this financial year, the growth rate for this month is 48.5 per cent against the exports in March 2020 (USD 1.54 billion)," Udaya Bhaskar, Director General of Pharmexcil said in a release.

Growth rate seems relatively big as the exports of March 2020 was crunched due to lockdown across the world and supply chain disruption, he was quoted as saying.

When the global pharma market is negatively grown by 1-2% in 2020, there is a big surge in demand for Indian made generics owing to its quality and affordability, the official said adding Drug formulations and Biologicals is the second largest Principal commodity being exported by India. The Pharma exports body is expecting big growth in Indian vaccine exports in the coming years and the government policy on PLI (production Linked Incentive) scheme will also help the domestic

pharma to grow by reducing import dependence and develop export potential in the days to come as most of the countries are looking at India for APIs (active pharmaceutical ingredient) he said.

North America is the largest exporting region for Indian pharmaceuticals with more than 34 per cent share.

Country wise exports to the US, Canada and Mexico have recorded a growth of 12.6, 30 and 21.4 per cent respectively. South Africa being the second largest exporting country, recorded a big jump of 28 per cent growth while Europe was the third largest exporting region which has recorded approximately 11 per cent growth over previous year.

Crude to be around \$60 a barrel in 2021

■ NEW DELHI

Global crude oil prices are expected to be in the range of \$60 a barrel over the long term period as OPEC+ decision to cap supply until demand recovers and the pandemic continuing to keep a check on consumption.

According to a research report by ICICI Securities, Brent has recovered and is over \$ 60/bbl since February, 21 vs April, 20 low of \$ 21/bbl driven by demand recovery from lows and OPEC+ capping supply to ensure supply deficit since July last year.

"OPEC+ capping supply until demand recovers is estimated to ensure supply deficit of 1.3 million barrels of oil per day in calendar year 2021 and keep Brent above \$60/bbl," the brokerage said.

The expectation for the crude was that it may surge in 2021 on the back of economies recovering as vaccinations tamed the spread of Covid-19. But the lockdowns again due to fresh surge in Covid cases has delayed demand recovery in Europe.

Also, the probability of US sanctions on Iran's oil exports being lifted appears to have increased significantly. EU and other signatories to the nuclear deal are talking to Iran and US separately to bring

them on the same page and revive the deal.

Indications are that US sanctions on Iran exports may be lifted as early as before Iran's presidential elections due on June 18.

"While OPEC+ capping supply should keep Brent above \$ 60/bbl, delay in demand recovery and US lifting sanctions on Iran exports would cap further rise. We estimate long-term Brent at \$60/bbl," ICICI Securities said.

With regard to gross refining magind (GRMs) the outlook is modest as capacity addition is expected to exceed to refined products demand growth.

Second Covid wave to disrupt fabric demand: Ind-Ra

■ NEW DELHI

The second wave of Covid-19 resurgence can potentially disrupt fabric demand, said India Ratings and Research (Ind-Ra).

"Woven fabrics production continued to improve mom, though marginally, in January 2021, despite remaining 21 per cent YoY lower," Ind-Ra said.

"While recoveries for blended and knitted fabrics were quicker, that of woven is expected to be delayed with micro-lockdowns and work-from-home culture."

Besides, export demand for woven fabrics is expected to plunge over Q1FY22 with key destination countries grappling with a second wave of pandemic.

"Fabric exports remained muted in January 2021 on a mom basis, and 17 per cent YoY lower.

Demand for imported fabrics surged over December 2020-January 2021, led by restocking by retailers."

"Imports in value terms doubled between November 2020-January 2021 with higher shipments from China, Bangladesh and Vietnam."

AGEL arm bags 150 MWac solar project

■ NEW DELHI

Adani Green Energy arm AREHFifteenL has bagged a 150 MWac solar energy project capacity from Torrent Power.

Adani Renewable Energy Holding Fifteen Ltd (AREHFifteenL), a wholly-owned subsidiary of Adani Green Energy Ltd (AGEL), participated in a Tender issued by Torrent Power Ltd for procurement of power through competitive bidding process, from grid connected solar photovoltaic power projects to be setup in Gujarat.

AREHFifteenL has been awarded a project capacity of 150 MWac Solar Power Project, a BSE filing said.

The fixed tariff for this project capacity is Rs 2.22/ kWh for a period of 25 years.

Operating margins of sugar companies expected to moderate in FY22: ICRA

■ NEW DELHI

The operating margins of sugar companies are likely to moderate in FY22 due to higher production cost and reduced export subsidy, ratings agency ICRA said in a statement.

Besides, benefits from improved distillery performance was also cited by the agency as a factor that might moderate operating margins.

"In the medium term, the government support measures for higher diversion of sugar for ethanol production would reduce the sugar surplus and support in improving the demand supply dynamics of the industry on a sustainable basis," ICRA said.

As per the agency, domestic sugar production is expected to increase by 10 per cent to 30.2 million MT in SY2021 and outstrip consumption by

around 4.2 million MT.

ICRA expects sugar exports at around 5.5 million MT supported by the export policy and the closing stocks are likely to remain higher than normative sugar stock levels of 6-6.5 million MT at around 9.5 million MT for SY2021 season.

However, the stocks are expected to be lower than the previous season at around 11.0 million MT.

"Given the sugar surplus scenario in the domestic market, any significant increase in the sugar prices is ruled out in the near term. However, the higher diversion of sugar towards ethanol and the remunerative pricing of ethanol is expected to result in an improved distillery performance in FY2022," said Sabyasachi Majumdar, Senior Vice President & Group Head, ICRA.

Correction an opportunity to add cyclical: MOFSL

■ MUMBAI

Market correction due to Covid resurgence is an opportunity to add cyclical stocks said Motilal Oswal Financial Services.

In a report, MOFSL said resurgence in second wave of Covid-19 has led to elevated market volatility and correction. Lately, both Nifty and Bank Nifty are down 5 and 15 per cent from their recent highs, respectively.

"To contain the pandemic, several states have announced localised restrictions with Maharashtra yesterday unveiling set of broad-based measures for two weeks mini-lockdown."

"We expect the set of restrictive measures to impact near-term economic recovery till cases stabilise. However, key

government authorities and policymakers have ruled out national lockdown."

Consequently, MOFSL recommend that correction should be viewed by the investors as a buying opportunity and advocated adding a balanced mix of growth, cyclical and defensive stocks in their portfolios."We continue to be 'OW' on the BFSI, IT, Metals, Cement and Capital Goods, Neutral on Consumer, Auto and Pharma while staying 'UW' on Energy, Utility and Infrastructure."

On the bright side, it said that vaccinations are gradually beginning to accelerate.

"As vaccination pick up further with approvals for more vaccines now in place, we expect the focus to shift back to growth, cyclical recovery and fundamentals.0

FICCI writes to 25 CMs on Covid management, urges to avoid lockdown

■ NEW DELHI

Industry body FICCI has written to Chief Ministers of 25 States urging them to avoid imposing partial or total lockdown in the wake of fresh surge in Covid cases.

The industry body also argued that the economy has barely begun to turnaround from the impact of the earlier lockdowns and such decisions now will push the push the economy into downward spiral.

In the letter written to state CMs by FICCI President Uday Shankar, the chamber has acknowledged the need to break the Covid chain but has suggested the strategy to focus more on ramping up covid testing, awareness drive and enforcement of Covid appro-

priate behaviour rather than lockdown.

"The population may be sensitised about the Covid appropriate behaviour like wearing masks, physical distancing and personal hygiene.

Support may be taken by involving volunteers from the schools, colleges and the NGOs. Strict compliance to Covid protocol may be ensured with suitable penalties for violations," the letter states.

FICCI has represented to the Union Government to open up the vaccination for all the people above 18 years of age to give a massive push to the vaccination drive as there is no shortage of vaccines and the inoculation capacity can be increased with the participation of the private sector.

Petrol, diesel price unchanged for 2nd consecutive day

■ NEW DELHI

Fuel prices in the country remained unchanged on Saturday as oil marketing companies decided to go on a pause mode and analyse the global developments on oil prices before effecting a revision.

Accordingly, pump price of petrol and diesel remained at ₹90.40 a litre and ₹80.73 a litre respectively in Delhi.

The price of the two auto fuels had fallen by 16 paise and 14 paise per litre respectively on Thursday after a 15 day break when OMCs kept its prices static.

Across the country as well the petrol and diesel price remained unchanged on Saturday but its retail levels varied depending on the level of local levies on respective states.

SEARCH FOR MISSING



ISHANI @ POOJA
General public is hereby informed that a girl (depicted in the photo), **Namely: Ishani @ Pooja D/o Shri Dharam Das R/o H. No. D-153, Vijay Vihar, Ph-II Delhi** has been missing since 26.03.2021 from her house. In this regard a case vide DD No. 91A dated 27.03.2021 has been lodged at Police Station Vijay Vihar, Delhi. Her physical description is as under:-
Age : 20 Years, **Height:** 5'1", **Complexion :** Fair, **Face:** Long, **Built:** Thin, **Wearing:** Blue colour suit and cream colour leggy and sandal in feet.
Any person having any information/Clue about this missing girl, may inform SHO, Vijay Vihar, Delhi at E-mail Id – **cic@cbi.gov.in** or Website: **http://cbi.nic.in**

SHO
P.S., Vijay Vihar, Delhi
Rohini Distt., Delhi
Ph. No. 011-27061294, 27061295

Phone:
011-24368638, 24368641
Fax No. 011-24368639
DP/784/RD/2021

SEARCH FOR MISSING



Sachin Mittal
General Public is hereby informed that a person namely **Sachin Mittal S/o Sh. Sajjan Kumar, R/o H.No. B-1/9, Budh Vihar Ph-I, Delhi** has been missing since 31.03.2021 from the area of PS. Vijay Vihar. In this regard a **DD No. 107-A Dated 31.03.2021** has been lodged at PS, Vijay Vihar, Delhi. The description of Missing person is as under:
Name: Sachin Mittal, **Father's Name :** Sh. Sajjan Kumar, **Age :** 35 years, **Height :** 5'9", **Face :** Long, **Complexion :** Wheatish, **Built:** Medium, **Wearing :** Blue Jeans, White Shirt, Sports Shoes in feet.
If anyone having any clue/information, kindly inform the undersigned.
SHO
P.S., Vijay Vihar, Delhi
Ph : 011-27061294
27061295

Website : **http://cbi.nic.in**
e-mail : **cic@cbi.gov.in**
Fax : **011-24368639**
Ph. : 011-24368638, 24368641
DP/781/RD/2021

SEARCH FOR MISSING/KIDNAPPED GIRL



Kusum @ Kiran
General Public is hereby informed that one girl (depicted in the photo) namely **Kusum @ Kiran D/o Sh. Ashok R/o Jhuggi No.424, Cow Street, Indira Camp, Sector-03, Rohini, Delhi Aged-17 Years** has been reported missing/kidnapped since 21.03.2021 at about 4 AM from her residence vide **FIR No.097/21 u/s 363 IPC Dated 22.03.2021** registered at Police Station South Rohini, Delhi. Her physical description is as under:-
Complexion: Wheatish, **Height:** 5'2", **Face:** Long, **Built:** Thin, **ID:** KS mark on right hand, **Clothing:** Green coloured suit, Green coloured salwar.
Any person having any information/Clue about this missing/kidnapped girl, may inform SHO, South Rohini, Delhi at E-mail : **cic@cbi.gov.in** or website : **http://cbi.nic.in**
Tele No. : 011-24368638 or 24368641 **Sd/-**
FAX No. : 011-24368639 **SHO, South Rohini, Delhi**
DP/775/RD/2021 **Tel.: 011-27512189, 27510515**

APPEAL FOR IDENTIFICATION



The general public is hereby informed that an unidentified person about 75 years of age whose name, residence, and family is unknown had been found dead opposite Kabutar Market, Jama Masjid, Delhi. In this regard, a vide has been registered with **DD No: 49-A, dated 12.04.2021 at PS Jama Masjid, Delhi**. Sincere efforts have been made by the local police to identify the deceased person, but no clue has come to light so far.
The description of the UIDB is as under:
Sex: Male, **Age:** 75 Years, **Height:** 5'6", **Complexion:** Shallow, **Face:** Oval, **Built:** Thin, **Wearing:** White colour kurta and white colour pajama.
If anyone has any information about his relatives, kindly inform the SHO/Jama Masjid, Delhi.
E-mail : **cic@cbi.gov.in**
Ph. : 011-24368638, 24368641 **SHO**
Fax : 011-24368639 **P.S. Jama Masjid, Delhi**
DP/764/CD/2021 **Ph. No. 011-23269777, 2326125**

SEARCH FOR MISSING/KIDNAPPED BOY



Neeraj
General Public is hereby informed that one boy (depicted in the photo) namely **Neeraj S/o Sh. Shambhu Nath R/o E-86, Ground Floor, Vijay Vihar, Ph-2, Delhi Aged-13 Years** has been reported missing/kidnapped since 13.03.2021 at 5 PM vide **FIR No.118/21 u/s 363 IPC Dated 20.03.2021** registered at Police Station Vijay Vihar, Delhi. His physical description is as under:-
Complexion: Wheatish, **Height:** 5'5", **Face:** Long, **Built:** Thin, **Clothing:** Cream coloured pant, Blue coloured T-shirt and sport shoes in feet.
Any person having any information/Clue about this missing/kidnapped boy, may inform SHO, Vijay Vihar, Delhi at E-mail: **cic@cbi.gov.in** or website : **http://cbi.nic.in**

Sd/-
SHO, Vijay Vihar, Delhi
Tel.: 011-27061294-95
Mob.: 8750870329

Tele No. : 011-24368638 or 24368641
FAX No. : 011-24368639
DP/762/RD/2021

PROCLAMATION REQUIRING THE APPEARANCE OF ACCUSED PERSON

(See Section 82 Cr.PC)

Whereas complaint has been made before me that **Pooja Mishra, D/o Ravinder Mishra R/o RZ 123, Gali No.5, Naryan Vihar, Prem Nagar 2nd, Kirari Suleman Nagar, North-West Delhi** has committed (or is suspected to has committed) the offence in case **CC No.7962/17 S. k. Motor Vs Pooja Misra u/s 138 NIA Act, P.S. Prem Nagar, Delhi** and it has been returned to a warrant of arrest thereupon issued that the said accused Pooja Mishra cannot be found and whereas it has been shown to my satisfaction that the said accused Pooja Mishra has absconded (or is concealing herself to avoid the service of the said warrant).
Proclamation is hereby made that the said accused Pooja Mishra of **CC No.7962/17 S. k. Motor Vs Pooja Misra u/s 138 NIA Act, P.S. Prem Nagar, Delhi** is required to appear before this Court to answer the said complaint on or before **24.05.2021**.


By Order,
Ms. Anuradha Sonker
Metropolitan Magistrate (NI Act)-08
DP/787/RD/2021 **Room No.215, 2nd Floor, Dwarka Court, New Delhi**

SEARCH FOR MISSING



Lakhan
General public is hereby informed that a boy **Lakhan S/o Raju, R/o Aasha Kiran, Home sector-1, Rohini, Delhi** has been missing since 03.03.2021 at 04:00 PM from the area of PS Vijay Vihar, Delhi. In this regard, **DD No. 61-A dated 03.03.2021 has been registered at P.S. Vijay Vihar, Delhi**. Sincere efforts have been made by the local police to trace out the missing boy but no clue has come to light so far. The description of the missing boy is as under:
Name: Lakhan, **Gender:** Male, **Age:** 20 years, **Height:** 5'1", **Complexion:** Wheatish, **Face:** Long, **Built:** Medium, **Wearing:** Blue colour jeans, green colour t-shirt and slippers on his feet.
If anyone has any information regarding this missing boy, kindly inform SHO/Vijay Vihar, Delhi.
E-mail : **cic@cbi.gov.in**
Ph. : 011-24368638, 24368641 **SHO**
Fax : 011-24368639 **P.S. Vijay Vihar, Delhi**
DP/779/RD/2021 **Ph. No. 011-27521294, 27521295**

SEARCH FOR MISSING/KIDNAPPED



Tarsen Lal
General Public is hereby informed that one person **Namely: Tarsen Lal, S/o: Sh. Durga Das, R/o: H.No. B-750, Sec-1, Rohini, Delhi** has been missing/ kidnapped since **22.03.2021** from the area of P.S. Vijay Vihar, Delhi. In this regard a case vide **DD No. 126A, dated 22.03.2021** has been registered at P.S. Vijay Vihar, Delhi. The description of the missing/ kidnapped person is as under:
Age: 64 years, **Height:** 5'8", **Face:** Long, **Built:** Thin, **Complexion:** Shallow, **ID Mark:** Mentally Disturb, **Wearing:** Blue colour kurta, pajama and slipper in feet. Sincere efforts have been made by local police to trace out the missing person but no clue has come to light so far. Any person having any information or clue about this missing person kindly inform to the following.
Website: **http://cbi.nic.in**
E-mail Id - cic@cbi.gov.in **SHO**
Ph. : 011-24368638, 24368641 **P.S. Vijay Vihar, Delhi**
Fax No. 011-24368639 **Ph.: 011-27511294, 8750870329**
DP/772/RD/2021

SAMS JOINS RCB BIO-BUBBLE
Australian all-rounder Daniel Sams on Saturday joined the RCB's bio-bubble after returning with two negative RT-PCR results more than a week after testing positive for Covid-19. The 28-year-old born arrived in India on April 3 with a negative Covid-19 report but tested positive during the second test on April 7 and was in quarantine since then.

JAMIESON IMPRESSED WITH VIRAT
Virat Kohli's style of leadership complements his thought process, feels RCB all-rounder Kyle Jamieson, who has accepted that bowling on slower Indian tracks requires a different set of skill-sets. "He (Kohli) is such an experienced leader. He is a skilful and the way that he approaches the games certainly complements the way I like to go about things," Jamieson said. "Virat is competitive, aggressive and likes to take the game on, which is something I like to adopt as well," Kyle said.

BORING TO TALK ABOUT IPL TITLE: AB
RCB batsman AB de Villiers said on Saturday that "it's getting boring to talk about it (the IPL title)" and "there are things that are more special than winning the trophy". Speaking on RCB's *Bold Diaries*, AB said, "You can't lie, you want to win the trophy. I would love to win the trophy. I don't know how I would react if we do win the trophy one day. (But) it's getting boring to talk about it. At the end of the day, there are things that are more special than winning the trophy. And those are bonding with the team, being part of the IPL."

FIT NORTJE 'READY TO GO'
Staying confined to his hotel room for 10 days was "quite a lot" for him and DC pacer Anrich Nortje is hoping to get into the act straightaway against Punjab Kings on Sunday. "Ten days in the room was quite a lot for me. It was nice to get out, run around and bowl a bit. I really enjoyed it and hopefully I can build it up from here on," Nortje said in a press release.



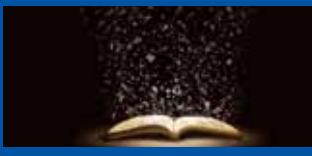
the pioneer agenda

FROM THE INSIDE

Lokas 2: What Exists Above

To move from the *Bhulok* to *Bhuvalok* (Astral Plan), from *Tamas* to more *Rajas*, we need to work on controlling our senses

2



4

Of learning and wisdom

Every seeker must undergo a mandatory grooming process before being allowed exposure to the particular subject of learning

I personally think that if you deny something or if you hide something you're inadvertently admitting it's wrong
— Amber Heard



TELLING THE TALE OF HERITAGE

Stories are an excellent mode of keeping the history of heritage alive, writes SUTAPA BASU, as she shares her impressions on the importance of making heritage a part of contemporary storytelling

Stories have disseminated consciousness of our past cultures since times immemorial. Whether through cave paintings or oral narrations, the earliest mode of passing traditions, history, customs, and rituals through generations has been only through storytelling. Before written language was discovered, even certain work skills were passed from father to son through stories. The reason is simple, anything woven into a story is unforgettable. Storytelling is a powerful tool that has massive lasting impact. When we listen to stories or read them, they boost our feelings of trust, compassion, empathy and positively influence our social behaviour. Storytelling has a unique ability to build connections. When we hear a well-told story, your brain reacts as if we are experiencing it ourselves. We respond to stories because they cultivate a sense of togetherness. Thus, stories that tell us about our past or what we have inherited from our ancestors make us feel, we are part of something bigger than ourselves.

WHAT IS HERITAGE?

Heritage is the complete scope of inherited traditions, monuments, objects, and culture. Most significantly, it is the range of contemporary activities, meanings, and behaviour that we draw from them. Heritage includes, but is much more than just preserving, excavating, displaying, or restoring a collection of old things. Heritage is tangible as well as intangible. Monuments, artifacts, books, archived records of events are tangible while traditions, lifestyles and mannerisms are some of the intangible elements that we inherit. We can explore heritage through excavations, conservation, restoration and display of concrete objects. However, history of songs, recipes, cuisine, nuances of language, dances, dress and other conventions of legacy need to be perceived and appreciated. An excellent mode of keeping the history of heritage alive, generation after generation, is through stories. For what is history but story telling? Let's see how some of the palpable as well as abstract elements of heritage have benefited through telling stories.

ARCHITECTURE

Old forts and castles, mansions and monuments are natural source for stories, myths, and tales. When I visited Chittorgarh fort, one of the myths I heard was about how the religious fervour of Meera Bai, the Princess of Mewar, had kept intact her chamber in the huge palace though the rest of the royal residence had been flattened. Obviously, I went back and read up everything available about the history of the palace and fort. I discovered more such myths. In *The Pillars of the Earth*, author Ken Follet

describes in great detail how a 12th century cathedral is built. He makes a tale of its unusual architecture, politics and weaves civil war, famine and religious strife around it. Bimal Mitra's Bengali novel *Saheb, Bibi, Golam* made into the famous film, *Sahib, Bibi Aur Ghulam* is set in a *zamindari* mansion that resonates with the culture of the period. His entire story is about the feudal and patriarchal traditions which emanate from the mansion. Another story like that is *Shatranj Ke Khilari* about the *nawabi* culture that has been filmed in the old palaces of Lucknow.

CUISINE

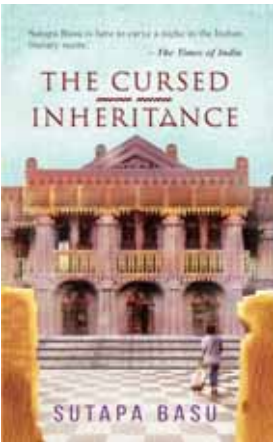
An amazing story that revolves around food, its concoction, history and influence is *Like Water For Chocolate* by Laura Esquivel. Tita, the tragic protagonist of the story, is only able to express herself when she cooks. The chapters even carry recipes. They fascinated me and I even cooked some of them. The stories about food gave me a wonderful view of regional cuisine. Another book that has enamoured me is *The Flavour of Spice* by Marryam H Reshi that gloriously celebrates spices. Reading her book, I embarked upon a delightful foray into the heritage of Indian cooking as she traces history of spices as far back as possible.

WAY OF LIFE

Reading *Gone With The Wind* by Margaret Mitchell gives the reader an excellent insight into lifestyles, dresses, social customs and attitudes prevalent in southern parts of USA during the American Civil War in the 1800s. The book has become a reference point for scholars of that period. Vikram Seth's novel *A Suitable Boy* brings us the perfume of courtesans and old-world charm of the pre-independence period. It gives us a peep into lifestyles, notions and sentiments of a bygone culture.

DRESS

Dramas written by playwrights such as Shakespeare, Kalidas or Anton Chekov, when staged, are a feast for costume designers. They display the fashions worn during a specific period in a certain parts of the world where the dramas are set. However, stories are created not only by writers but are also told by raconteurs. When the *Ramcharitra Manas* or *Meghdoot* is recited there are vivid descriptions of garments, headresses and weapons which make them come alive through mental visuals for the listeners. History and heritage of dresses come alive only through these descriptions. We can then compare them and find out what of that heritage still remains in our fashions today.



WE RESPOND TO STORIES BECAUSE THEY CULTIVATE A SENSE OF TOGETHERNESS. THUS, STORIES THAT TELL US ABOUT OUR PAST OR WHAT WE HAVE INHERITED FROM OUR ANCESTORS MAKE US FEEL, WE ARE PART OF SOMETHING BIGGER THAN OURSELVES

MEANS OF TRANSPORT

Read *Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austen and we find out about chaises, stagecoaches, barouches, phaetons, and curricles. What about *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea* by Jules Verne to know about submarines or fictional wonder vehicles such as the muggle car from the *Harry Potter* series? *Pather Panchali* by written by Bibhutibhushan Bandhopadhyaya and put on celluloid by Satyajit Ray shows its protagonist's obsession with the train that passes his village. Since his only travel experience had been on a bullock cart, the speeding train enthralled him.

TRADITIONS

Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* is a wonderful cameo on the traditional Christmas spirit. Similarly, *Sense and Sensibility* by Austen profiles the Victorian custom of older men marrying young girls. Emily Bronte's novel *Wuthering Heights* is all about how social class creates conflicts among its characters. Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan*, Jhumpa Lahiri's *Namesake* and *The Lowlands* are excellent profiles of traditions and rituals in different parts of India. Arvind Adiga's *The White Tiger* gives insights into class disparities of an India of a decade ago. Chitra Divakaruni's *Palace of Illusions* takes the reader back to the rituals of the *Mahabharata* period of Indian history while *Before We Visit the Goddess* is about multi-generational bonds, that rise from the countryside of Bengal, India and sweep into the streets of Houston, Texas.

NUANCES OF LANGUAGE

Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* is a wonderful study of the use of dialect by different social classes in nineteenth century America. In fact, introducing dialect into literary writing goes back to Chaucer. Non-standard spellings and slang are used often in literature to delineate characters and give them identity. Evolving language is one of true measures of heritage. Do you remember Eliza Doolittle in George Bernard Shaw's *Pygmalion*? If only learning the correct dialect could make a flower girl into a lady of consequence, how important can language be in the reconstruction of society? Ruskin Bond often uses regional nuances and dialect to create atmosphere and build his characters. Many of his stories are set in the terai of the Himalayas and his villagers often use words in their own dialect in dialogues. With such eminent authors to light up my path, I have included many features of heritage in my books to build ambience, build characters and bring authenticity to my storytelling. In all

my historical fiction books, I create the historical period through visual pen pictures of the dress, cuisine and traditions of the period and place. In *The Curse of Nader Shah*, I have exposed Nader Shah's obsession with the colour red on his garments and his creation of the four-cornered hat, the *kulah-e-naderi*. In *The Legend of Genghis Khan*, I have described the wide range of knives that the Mongols always carried on their belts and their varied purpose. *Padmavati* has numerous regional words sprinkled across the story for the sake of authenticity. My latest book, *The Cursed Inheritance* focuses on the city of Kolkata and its cultural nuances. The *zamindari* mansions that dot the city inspired the setting of this cozy mystery inside a dilapidated yet grand mansion of Kolkata, called Sarkar Bari. I describe egg concoctions being cooked that are special to Kolkata as well as a coal stove built inside an iron pail, a common cooking implement in Bengal. Kolkata is one of few cities which still has the hand-pulled rickshaws. Mentioned numerous times in my new book, is Kolkata's iconic vehicle though the protagonist also empathises with the emaciated pullers and their livelihoods. I have chronicled the tradition of celebrating the festival of Durga Puja in the mansions of old *zamindari* families in this novel. Belief in *tantric* practices and demons as guardians of treasures is one the regional features of rural Bengal which has been exploited to the hilt. Stories, narratives, and storytelling are central aspects of all cultures and thus, a part of heritage. For the storytelling to become an effective propagator of cultural history, it must engage the listener or reader, and provide a narrative that is both cognitively and emotionally compelling. People are natural storytellers. They tell narratives about their experiences and the meanings that these experiences have in their lives. All cultures and societies also possess their own stories or narratives about their past and their present, and sometimes about their view of the future. The memories and retelling of the past provide a sense of security in an uncertain world. Stories, both written and verbal, are veritable source for this history. Stories are a thread of timelessness that runs through a rapidly changing environment. Hence, stories revolving around heritage bring a special sense of belonging and of continuity. It reduces global conflict and brings empathy for co-existence. All said and done, storytelling is one of the dominant means of preserving heritage and passing down of values and traditions that make the global social fabric stronger. *The writer is an author and poet. Her book, The Cursed Inheritance, has been recently published*

Importance of behavioural economics during Covid

The coronavirus pandemic has not only grabbed the headlines but has also thrown the global health emergency care in disarray. The ubiquitous virus has not spared anyone, not even the most prosperous economies of the world.

Studies have shown that people living with comorbidity (i.e., concomitant morbidity) are under high risk of falling critically ill or succumbing to coronavirus. They are dying from the in-hospital complications and a high incidence of mortality. The comorbidity is mostly of non-communicable diseases (NCDs), such as diabetes, hypertension, obesity, cerebrovascular accident, malignancy, asthma, cardiovascular disease, chronic kidney and obstructive pulmonary diseases, etc.

Moreover, persons with diabetes have been in the lime-light since the inception of the pandemic as the epidemiological data have revealed their high risk of several clinical adversaries (The Lancet, 2020). As per the statistics, 71 per cent of deaths are owing to NCDs globally, 41 million people every year, of which 15 million are under the age of 70 years. Moreover 8.5 million cases are from low and middle income countries.

The Lancet Diabetes & Endocrinology published its findings based on 61 million individuals in England on their absolute and relative risk of mortality due to Covid-19 and the type of diabetes. It finds that the odd ratio of in-hospital deaths is 3.51, and 2.03 for persons with type-1 and type-2 diabetes, respectively. Information from 1561 Covid-19 patients from two hospitals in Wuhan showed that those with diabetes (9.8%) were more likely to need admission to the intensive care unit or to die, and similar cases are also noted from other parts of the world.

However, despite having a high percentage of diabetes, the



A patient waits inside an ambulance to be admitted to a dedicated Covid-19 hospital in Ahmedabad on April 15, 2021

AP

reported cases of mortality in India, Bangladesh and Pakistan are comparatively low so far. The climatic and geographical factors have some bearing on this low fatality rate in this region. (Apicella et. al., The Lancet, July 17, 2020).

Using the Longitudinal Aging Study in India (LASI, 2017-19) database of the Harvard, IIPS and the University of Southern California on disease and health condition of the popu-

lation aged 45 years and above, we estimated that 18.28 per cent have comorbidity. About 60 per cent of the patients with diabetes have high blood pressure, while 17.32 per cent of patients with high cholesterol levels are suffering from chronic heart diseases. This co-occurrence of more than one disorder in the same individual is a matter of utmost concern during the raging pandemic. Our results also demonstrated that 75 per cent of the indi-

viduals suffering from comorbidity are hardly ever or never engaged in vigorous physical activities. Out of total patients suffering from comorbidity, about one-quarter indulge in substance use. Cases among females are more than males and it increases with the rise in income from the second to fifth income quintile.

The Government's initiative to prioritise the people with comorbidity in this age group on the vaccination list is the

need of the hour and has been followed from March 1 to curb the second wave of covid.

However, the public spending on NCDs is less than 0.5 per cent of GDP in India. The findings of the National Family Health Survey (NFHS) of 2015-16 state that obesity has given a steep rise to hypertension among people with BMI more than 30. While 11 per cent of the eligible women (i.e, age 15-49) have hypertension, including 7 per cent having stage-1

hypertension, and stage-2 and stage-3 hypertension at 1 per cent each. On blood pressure parameter, it finds 61 per cent women as compared to 43 per cent men, but only 1 per cent of them take anti-hypertensive medicines.

The National Programme for Prevention and Control of Cancer, Diabetes, Cardiovascular Disease and Stroke (NPCDCS) has been executed by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare to

raise awareness regarding risk factors and establishment of NCD clinics, cardio care centre and screening at primary health-care level. The National Action Plan has also been conceived along the global monitoring framework to reduce the premature deaths from NCDs to 25 per cent by 2025. However, the Covid-19 pandemic has militated against Government's efforts of integrating NPCDCS with National Health Mission and AYUSH to promote a healthy lifestyle and strengthening infrastructure to detect NCDs at an early stage.

The focus of the healthcare system in India at present lies on four important directions -- intervention in maternal and child health, preventive and affordable healthcare, medical infrastructure, and communicable and non-communicable diseases. Under the aegis of Ayushman Bharat Scheme, the Health and Wellness Centres, Primary Healthcare Centres, Community Health Centres are providing free diagnostic services for the NCDs.

Simply designing and implementing policies are not sufficient to weaken the bond between Covid-19 and comorbidity. There is a need to eliminate practical and psychological barriers to healthy behaviour, which is possible by the adoption of a behavioural economics approach. Integration of these idiosyncratic approaches into policymaking will illustrate its ability to improve both the effectiveness and efficiency of policies through well-designed interventions in curtailing the comorbidity, especially during the second of Covid-19.

(Pratap C Mohanty teaches Economics at IIT Roorkee. He specialises in Health Economics. Pragya Taneja is a PhD Fellow, Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, IIT Roorkee)

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PRATAP C MOHANTY



PRAGYA TANEJA

PERSPECTIVE

Takers' total reliance key to vaccination success

From the early-vaccinated who share their experience with others to the vaccine administrators, local bodies that facilitate the vaccination centres, healthcare community, policymakers and the media, everyone has a role to highlight the need to support and encourage the vaccination drive



SUBHROJYOTI BHOWMICK

It is crucial that the world's largest vaccination campaign in India must succeed with more shots being administered because this is the green shoot of hope we have to rebuild our lives and our economy and to build India stronger.

Covid-19 has had an unprecedented impact in the way we live and work. The lockdown and quarantine protocols also fueled social anxiety as more cases were identified, and reports of deaths due to Covid-19 related complications trickled in.

Every death is a tragic loss; every death impacts people and families in ways that go unreported. With over 1.69 lakh lives already lost to the pandemic, there is urgent need to embrace the nationwide vaccination drive.

The nation's resilience and prompt action has seen it record among the world's lowest number of cases and deaths per million of the population, but we must continue to build on this through the most effective and safe tool that science has developed — prompt vaccination.

After all, vaccines have helped contain several contagious diseases. The fact that we are smallpox free is just one example of how successful vaccination campaigns have enabled the nation to address pressing health-care crises.

While the first dose of smallpox vaccine reportedly arrived in the country in 1802, the country's first national campaign in 1962 enabled us in achieving the desired effect through the tireless efforts of volunteers and a greater awareness among the public on the need to be vaccinated.

We have seen similar success in preventing tuberculosis through the BCG vaccination programme. Further, from being hyperendemic for polio in the early 1990s, India's success in eliminating wild polioviruses is another inspiring example of the success of the children vaccination programme and awareness campaigns. These successful

vaccination campaigns have helped save millions of precious lives.

What is common across all successful vaccination campaigns is the fact there has been strong grassroots acceptance. With no clear sight on when the Covid-19 pandemic will end, and if the world will ever go back to the place as we knew it, it is crucial to take the jab.

Let us take a moment to look back on the same period last year: There was no hope in sight as the pandemic wreaked havoc across the world. Less than a year later, we have hope and confidence in a number of approved vaccines, highlighting the inspiring work of our scientists. With multiple variants of the virus being reported, being vaccinated is important to support humanity's collective effort to contain the pandemic.

As Prime Minister Narendra Modi has warned, the country, with its large population of 1.3 billion, stands to face trouble if vaccinations are not taken to prevent new infections. The strategy of the nation to first inoculate front-line workers followed by the elderly and now opening up vaccinations for all over 45 is the right direction as we need to ensure lower mortality, given that the elderly and those with medical conditions are more vulnerable to the complications arising from Covid-19.

With vaccination centres set up in key locations across all States, people have more access to vaccination. More than 10 crore doses of the vaccine have already been administered, including over nearly 1.35 crore people taking both the doses, as of April 14.

My family members and I have taken the jab, and the confidence it brings is enormous. The process was seamless; we visited the vaccination centre near our home. There were trained volunteers who explained to us the process of the vaccination, what to expect, and we were back home in no time.

It is both a privilege and an hon-



A medic prepares to administer a dose of Covid-19 vaccine during the vaccination festival Tilka Utsav, at EDMC Vishwakarma Park Dispensary in New Delhi

PTI

our to get the opportunity to protect oneself, and at the same time, support the safety of the family and community. Being vaccinated, I believe, is the first step to protecting yourself and your family, and thereby the wider community and the nation. While it is important to continue to follow all protocols, vaccine ensures that you are less vulnerable to the disease, which gives you a sense of immense relief.

The Government of India has taken the right steps, by authorising the emergency use of Russia's Sputnik

V Covid-19 vaccine, and also fast-tracking approval for other shots already passed by other major countries. With the rising cases in India, vaccination is the most effective tool in our battle against Covid-19. And as the Government rightly stated, "It is very critical to expand the basket of vaccines for domestic use and hasten the pace and coverage of vaccination".

What is the key to the success of this vaccination mission is that every member of the public plays a key role in contributing to it. From the early-

vaccinated who share their experience with others to the vaccine administrators, local bodies that facilitate the vaccination centres, the healthcare community, the policymakers and the media, everyone has a role in highlighting the need to encourage the vaccination drive.

We have a solution to the unprecedented challenge we faced, and it would be unwise, and in fact a disservice to the nation, to squander this opportunity due to apprehension, uncertainty, or misinformation. India's vaccination drive is


moving in the right direction and we must step up the tempo to enable safety for all our fellow citizens, so that as a country we can focus on our growth and socio-economic and developmental priorities.

(The writer is NABH Assessor for Hospitals and Ethics Committee and honorary lecturer, Institute of Clinical Sciences, University of Birmingham, UK; and Consultant, Digital Health Programmes, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad University of Technology (formerly WBUT), West Bengal)



YOUR
WEEK
AHEAD

MADHU KOTIYA





ARIES March 21-April 19

Health looks promising this week. Some of you may regain your health and feel a new spark of creativity. This is a great time to try a new health care approach, especially preventative care. Exercise, eating well, and rest are common approaches that you can reconsider. On the work front, a change of place, relocation; posting or transfer is on the cards. You are filled with new hopes and aspirations as it is a post for which you have been aspiring for a long time. The new avenues of progress will be opened, and you get a chance to prove your worth and potentials. On the personal front, you are demanding and very strict in your relationships, and this attitude will not go in married couples' favour.

Lucky number 10
Lucky colour Off-White
Lucky day Monday



LEO July 23-Aug 22

This week you are confused and pondering a change in your life's direction. Health is fluctuating and affecting the quality of life. You need guidelines, a session of counselling to gain the results of your past behaviour. It is never too late to improve. On the work front, there will be challenges. With your determination and will power you are likely to take hold of the situations and emerge a winner. Electrical, technical gadgets may create problems and take most of your time. On the personal front, this week is likely to bring love to the centre stage of your life. This is either a new relationship or a powerful re-bonding of an old one. You share your joy with those around you who need it.

Lucky number 16
Lucky colour White
Lucky day Sunday



SAGITTARIUS Nov 22-Dec 21

You need to let go of the wounds of the past to move forward. This is a time that you must look within yourself to analyse the areas of fears, trying to hold onto things. Non-attachment with anyone or anything will give you the independence to decide things. Learn about the energy centres in the body and meditate on how you are functioning. Be open to changes as it is the only constant in life. This week, professionally, the need of the hour is to give your time and attention to your work. You need to be sure that your work balance is where it needs to be. Do justice to your work. Avoid confrontations and conflicts with the people in the work area as that will only tarnish your image. You find success in love and rejoice this week.

Lucky number 9
Lucky colour Red
Lucky day Tuesday



TAURUS April 20-May 20

This week some challenges are foreseen on the health front. Problems may come up together and make you restless. Indigestion, gastric, BP and depression might leave you with no time to think. Your emotions and sensitivity are badly affected. You should spend more time relaxing. On the career front, your work graph will take a new turn this week, as your potentials will be duly recognised. Finances will improve. You will feel the positive vibrations at the workplace. This is a week of attainment, accumulation and finding inner satisfaction. On the personal front, be cautious in your relationships. You may be marked as arrogant or incompatible. Married couples may not be in harmony and want their own space.

Lucky number 1
Lucky colour Indigo
Lucky day Friday



VIRGO Aug 23-Sep 22

This week you will be balancing five elements in life and have harmony between body, mind, and soul. Those with an ongoing health issue may benefit greatly from alternative therapy like nutritional counselling, massage, dietary restriction etc. Professionally, you need career counselling at this stage to sharpen your skills. Attending short courses, workshops, or lectures etc will help you in your goals. Work will go well if you can organise yourself and work as per the rules. Relationship wise you are lucky as the people around you hear you with respect and value your ideas. Professional and personal both the fronts, you live life king size. In love, you make impression on your partner with your positive and honest approach.

Lucky number 20
Lucky colour Golden
Lucky day Sunday



CAPRICORN Dec 22-Jan 19

This is a great week for your creativity and optimism, and you believe that everything will turn out in your favour. You are generous and willing to share. You have learnt to accept your flaws and to accommodate others. It gives you the strength to be what you want to be. Health will be fine, and you enjoy it. On the work front, the feel-good factor will bring a smile to your face. This week you find the support of colleagues and seniors, and there is a chance that your name may be recommended for promotion. Make the best use of this time. On the love front, you may have your eye on someone who you feel is not treating you the way they should. It may be that that you need to stop fantasizing about this person entirely.

Lucky number 8
Lucky colour Camel Brown
Lucky day Friday



GEMINI May 21-June 20

You will overcome challenges and feel on top of the world. Appreciation, applause for a job well done on the domestic front will bring encouragement. You have the blessings of elders. As also, inner satisfaction, with positive energy after easing a difficult situation. On the career front, a good message is on the cards. Some of you will be promoted and assign an important task that will give a boost to your career. You might attend a virtual seminar or training session to enhance your skill. The stars are with you and you enjoy the results of your hard work. Relationship wise, you may not be very lucky this week. If you like someone goes ahead and express yourself. You may be expected to avoid the loose talk as this may spoil your relationship.

Lucky number 12
Lucky colour Yellow
Lucky day Wednesday



LIBRA Sep 23-Oct 22

Your efforts for being in good health will pay you well this week. You feel energetic, creative, and versatile. There is a purpose in life, and you want to recreate your life. You will get busy in various activities like Yoga, *Pranayam* and some healing up exercises to keep yourself fit and rejuvenated. Spiritualism will help restore your confidence and live a meaningful life. On the career front, you may find things going much better. A powerful person is likely to support you. This is a good time to ask for a raise or to seek employment that pays more if you are so inclined. Overall, your career front is looking up. In the context of love, it's important to remember that no relationship can stand up to constant analysis. Try to give your beloved some breathing space.

Lucky number 11
Lucky colour Pastel Blue
Lucky day Thursday



AQUARIUS Jan 20-Feb 18

The week starts with never-ending activities like meeting, attending to guests etc. This will give you no time for yourself. You are working hard. There are chances you may hurt yourself or get bruised. Stay focused while you drive and use all safety measures to avoid any unpleasant situation. On the work front, you feel at ease as things are going in your favour. Great things come in a small package and this is what is going to happen with you. There will be new opportunities at the job, and those who are unemployed will get that job in their desired field. On the personal front, your partner may put things in some challenging situations and give you excuses for not accepting your relationships. Be patient.

Lucky number 7
Lucky colour Brown
Lucky day Thursday



CANCER June 21-July 22

This week positive energy flows in your veins. You must use this energy in some creative pursuits. This can be a very creative time for you, and a good time for you to dream, play and be inventive as a child. On the professional front, things are likely to go your way. This seems to be an excellent time career-wise. A raise or promotion is certain for those who work in the private sector. Stay focused and the approach of a senior official will help make your work easy. On the relationship front, you need to talk to your partner face to face to sort out the mess which has been created knowingly and unknowingly between you two. Take out some time and plan a romantic endeavour to boost up your love life.

Lucky number 17
Lucky colour Silver
Lucky day Saturday



SCORPIO Oct 23-Nov 21

This week you will feel a great deal of stamina. You will be filled with confidence and be in the best of your health. Do not hesitate to consider alternative ways to treat or deal with health challenges. Professionally, the way your career graph is going, you need a break and professional counselling. Seek some advice from your senior for better results. To maintain control over your domain and to achieve mastering in your trade someone's guideline will give a boost to your career. Join a virtual professional course/seminar or workshop to increase your skills. On the love front, there will be tension. A rejection or break up might be faced. The singletons will remain single. This is the time to make thoughtful bonding whether in love or marriage.

Lucky number 13
Lucky colour Rose Gold
Lucky day Tuesday



PISCES Feb 19-March 20

This week you are advised to avert anger and aggression. Listen to your body and treat it accordingly. Seek the advice of an elder in the family, maybe your mother or aunt. Her homemade remedies will bring you relief from your current health problems. Workwise, you will follow your gut instinct and try your level best to achieve what you want in life. Those who are waiting for the final verdict in court in legal hassle will be pleased to get the case in their favour. Those in media, opposition, and justice etc fields will do well this week. On the personal front, love is not happening, neither you have time to think about the matters of the heart. The existing relationships too may suffer due to the lack of understanding and busy schedule.

Lucky number 3
Lucky colour Peach
Lucky day Saturday

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ASTROTURF
BHARAT BHUSHAN PADMADEO

Of learning and wisdom

Complex dynamics of man and the universe calls for necessary awareness. That alone would help articulate ways and means to steer life in conformity with the design parameters underlying our existence and secure its smooth run. We need to be aware of our individual as well as collective worth and limitations. For, we are all born ignorant and unaware, primarily driven just by our instincts. We are however, also born with an inherent urge to learn, expand one's reach and evolve.

The process of learning begins ever since the child begins to respond to suggestions. However, seeing the enormity and complexity of our life mechanism, as also limitations of mind and intellect, it is simply inconceivable to get to know the whole at one go. It does not come about easily either. That evidently calls for a well-articulated step-by-step learning process, as would India's age-old concept as scripted in the following verse from *Atreya Samahita* mean.

"JanmanajayateSudrah/
Samaskarataadvijauuchayate/
Vedapathibhavetaviprah/
Brahmajanatiibrahmanah".

Literally it means that by birth we are

born ignorant. Having learnt how to engage with the living world would mean being born the second time. Submitting to formal education, one becomes knowledgeable. And having realised the realities of life in holistic terms, one becomes wise.

Mind it: By birth one begins with a clean slate, apparently not carrying any impression of worldly object or experience in mind that could serve as a guiding principle. Although armed with all the faculties of mind to comprehend a thing or to act on their own, they do not have any image in mind that may provide them the right lead. They do not have enough of spoken words stock either to describe an object or express their feelings. Obviously, therefore, they would need a lesson in how to engage with the world around.

The children are, however, abound with energy, and curious to know everything that would come in sight. With all that, their minds keep jumping from one object to the other in succession. So, they suffer from attention deficiency. Accordingly, they are to be first given a lesson in the basics, in a manner befitting their age, as would be needed to conduct



themselves with ease. Evidently, they are first taught the civic and moral conduct norms. That qualifies them to relate well with the environment and conduct themselves in an orderly manner. Having been brought up to this level will literally mean being born afresh the second time.

Ground is thus laid down to step into the next course of learning, as the mind will still not be at rest. It will continue with its inherent urge to further expand its reach and strike. One is then provided with opportunity for exposure to various disciplines vital to our qualitative existence. Here, a reference to the word "Veda" as reflected in the above verse does not necessarily mean Veda parse. Vedas here implies all the acquired treasures of knowledge covering different aspects of life, be they philosophy, medicine, astronomy, warfare, justice.

However, it was necessary for every seeker to undergo a mandatory grooming process before being allowed exposure to the particular subject of learning. Purposely so that character is built, strength of mind is increased, vision and intellect get expanded. The whole process was directed towards the seeker getting well-grounded so that s/he could

approach the subject with an open mind without any egotistical preconditioning whatsoever. The purpose, obviously, is to invoke the spirit of an honest seeker as is usually evident in a curious child. In the process, the seeker develops enough of mental and moral control. That enables him/her to put in all acts together to pursue the learning process in the right spirit following an open enquiry system. The seeker, thus groomed, qualifies to easily grasp true import of the lessons imparted, both explicit as well as hidden between the lines.

It is pertinent to note here that in the ancient India's tradition, most of the knowledge treasures were purposely scripted in formulated language. It was supposedly done so in order that one could have in store, enough of memory implants in the least possible space and words possible. It needs to be appreciated here that but for honing one's intellect thoroughly well, it would not be possible to see through the truths veiled under the express words.

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