

MONEY 6
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Kumbh ends after Modi's appeal 10 lakh new cases in just 7 days in India

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 Avdhesanand 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 Akhadhas.

Swami Avdhesanand 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 Akhadhas. 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.

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-safe antiviral drug Remdesivir. A major-



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

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 live-savers in case of critical Covid-19 cases. He, however, said the State Government was receiving cooperation from the Centre.

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) NI Chowdhury on Saturday 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 curfew aimed at breaking the



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

Ranjan Dimri | Pioneer

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 the city with police personnel and officials deployed, checking people having valid movement passes and issuing challan to those not following the guidelines.

CAPSULE

BENGAL: 78.09% POLLING AMID SPORADIC VIOLENCE



Kolkata: West Bengal recorded over 78 per cent turnout in the fifth phase of its Assembly poll amid incidents of violence and attack on a candidate on Saturday after the bloodshed in the previous round of election. An EC official said around 78.09 per cent of the 1.13 crore voters exercised their franchise till 5 pm in 45 seats.

POPULAR TAMIL COMEDIAN VIVEKH DIES

Chennai: Popular Tamil comedian Vivekh who won the hearts of millions of people by his sharp wit and noted for his social work, promoting environmental protection died on Saturday.

Resume talks with protesting farmers, Dushyant urges PM

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Haryana Deputy Chief Minister Dushyant Chautala on Saturday wrote to Prime Minister Narendra Modi urging him to resume talks with the farmers protesting against the Centre's controversial three farm laws at Delhi borders.

Chautala said a team of three to four Cabinet Ministers may restart discussion with the farmers who have been camping at the Delhi borders for over 100 days. The Deputy Chief Minister wrote the letter days after State's Home Minister Anil Vij's missive to Union Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar, saying talks with peasants should be resumed to resolve the issue.

Vij had said he was concerned as a large number of farmers were sitting on

Haryana's borders amid a surge in Covid-19 cases in the State.

Haryana Chief Minister ML Khattar had also urged farmers and the Centre to resume talks.

"I would like to bring to your kind attention that our 'Annadattas' are on roads at Delhi border agitating in respect of newly enacted three farm laws of the Central government. It is a matter of concern that such agitation is going on for more than a hundred days," Chautala wrote in the letter. Chautala said he believes every problem has a solution by way of mutual discussions.

"The earlier discussion between the Central Government and farmers' union brought a few solutions to the concerns raised by Samyukt Morcha," he wrote in his letter dated April 15.

4 Sikhs among 8 killed in mass shooting in US

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

The distraught families of Indian-Americans working at a FedEx facility in the US state of Indiana have expressed their anger, fear and anxiety in the aftermath of the latest mass shooting incident in the country that killed eight people, including four Sikhs.

Brandon Scott Hole, 19, a former employee at the facility in Indianapolis, carried out the mass shooting on late Thursday before allegedly committing suicide.

About 90 per cent of the workers at the FedEx delivery service facility are said to be Indian-Americans, mostly from the Sikh community.

On Friday night, the Marion County Coroner's



A body is taken from the scene where multiple people were shot at a FedEx Ground facility in Indianapolis on Friday

AP

Office and Indianapolis Metropolitan Police Department (IMPD) released the names of the victims: Amarjeet Johal (66), Jasvinder Kaur (64), Amarjit Skhon (48)

and Jaswinder Singh (68). The first three deceased are women. Four others were Karli Smith (19), Samaria Blackwell (19), Matthew R. Alexander (32) and John Weisert (74).

Lalu to walk free after serving half fodder sentence

Jharkhand HC grants bail in Dumka treasury case; release from jail expected tomorrow

MRITUANJAY KUMAR ■ RANCHI

The Jharkhand High Court on Saturday granted bail to former Bihar Chief Minister and RJD Chief Lalu Prasad in a fodder scam case involving illegal withdrawal of funds from Dumka treasury, paving his release from jail on completion of half the sentence period. Lalu is presently being treated at AIIMS, Delhi.

The court granted bail to Lalu on bail bond of ₹5 lakh and a personal bond of ₹1 lakh.



Lalu's lawyer Devarshi Mandal told PTI that they will move Special CBI court in Ranchi after it opens on Monday to seek his release following High Court order.

Explaining the release procedure, Mandal said, they have send an application to Lalu for his signature which will be submitted to the CBI court here on Monday along with the High Court order.

HOMETHEATRE

Gripping tale of terror from young eyes

UTOYA: JULY 22
Norwegian with English subtitles &PriveHD
***ing: Andrea Berntzen, Aleksander Holmen, Solveig Koløen 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 Saksena

films & tv 02

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 Sarraaam* 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 Nimit 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 Sarraaam* 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), Pragma (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 not 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.
■ Omkara Singh Oberoi was a much loved character...
Each show has his trials and a story to tell. *Ishqbaaz* 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 I look 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.

Covid explosion in State; 37 deaths, 2,757 +ve cases in one day

Recovery percentage drops, Doon, Haridwar reel under the onslaught of contagion

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

Breaking all records of numbers and fatalities the contagion of novel Coronavirus (Covid-19) has gathered explosive momentum in Uttarakhand. The state health department reported 2757 cases of the disease with 37 casualties. The state now has 121403 (cumulative) cases of the disease while the death toll has mounted to 1856.

The health department discharged 802 patients from different hospitals of the state following their recovery from the disease on Saturday. A total of 101659 patients have recovered from the disease in the state and the recovery percentage has now dropped further to 83.74 and the sample positivity rate is 3.68 per cent.

The provisional state capital Dehradun, Haridwar, Udham Singh Nagar and Nainital districts are continuing to reel under an onslaught of the disease. In Dehradun 1179 cases of the disease were reported while 617 new patients surfaced in Haridwar district on Saturday. The

authorities also reported 265 patients from Udham Singh Nagar, 248 from Nainital, 155 from Pauri, 79 from Rudrapur, 51 from Almora, 50 from Tehri, 44 from Champawat, 28 from Chamoli, 15 from Bageshwar, 14 from Uttarkashi and 12 from Pithoragarh. The senior BJP leader Bachi Singh Rawat was airlifted to AIIMS Rishikesh on Saturday after his condition deteriorated.

The Sushila Tiwari Government Hospital Haldwani reported an unprecedented number of deaths on Saturday. Here 16 patients of Covid-19 were reported dead on Saturday. Three patients each were reported dead at the Himalayan hospital and Mahant Indresh hospital Dehradun on the day. Similarly two patients each died at All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) Rishikesh, Government Doon Medical College (GDMC) hospital Dehradun, Mahant Indresh hospital, Military hospital Dehradun and Arianth hospital Dehradun. One patient each succumbed to the disease at

Medicity Rudrapur, Sai hospital Haldwani, Brijlal hospital Nainital, SDH Narendra Nagar, district hospital Chamoli, District hospital Gopeshwar and HNB Base hospital Srinagar on Saturday.

The state now has 15386 active patients of the disease. Dehradun continues to be at the top of the table of active cases of the disease with 6398 patients, Haridwar has 4481, Nainital 1577, Udham Singh Nagar 866, Pauri 599, Tehri 399, Almora 230, Champawat and Rudrapur 219 each, Bageshwar 123, Chamoli 110, Pithoragarh 87 and Uttarkashi 78 active cases of Covid-19.

In the vaccination drive 40309 people were vaccinated in different parts of the state on Saturday. In the state 232177 people have been fully vaccinated so far as they have received both the first and second dose of the vaccine.

The Chief Operations Officer (COO) of state Covid-19 control room, Dr Abhishek Tripathi said that 606 vaccine sessions were organised in different parts of the state on Saturday.

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

Stepping up measures to tackle the surge in Covid-19 cases, the state government has extended the duration of the night curfew in the state. From Sunday, the night curfew will be imposed in all districts from 9 PM to 5 PM. Further, while weekly Covid curfew will be imposed in Dehradun city on Saturday and Sunday, in the other districts the weekly curfew will be imposed every Sunday. The weekend curfews will continue throughout April.

According to the guidelines issued by chief secretary Om Prakash on Saturday, the night curfew which was imposed first in Dehradun from April 10 and in the remaining districts from April 16 from 10:30 PM to 5 AM will now be imposed across the state from Sunday from 9 PM to 5 AM. In the area under the purview of the Municipal Corporation of Dehradun (MCD) in Dehradun district, weekend

Covid curfews will be imposed every Saturday and Sunday. In the rest of the districts, the weekend Covid curfew will be imposed every Sunday. In Dehradun district, the governmental and non governmental offices related to essential services will remain open on Saturday also. Employees of industrial units where work is done in shifts, movement of people and goods for emergency operation on national and state highways, those involved in loading and unloading of goods carriage vehicles, those going to their destination after disembarking buses, trains and flights, and those involved in marriage functions will be allowed relaxation during the restrictions. Citizens aged above 65 years, those with comorbidities, pregnant women and children aged below 10 years are advised to remain indoors and venture out only if necessary.

As stated in the earlier guidelines, Covid appropriate



behaviour- wearing masks in public, maintaining social distancing and frequent washing of hands will be mandatory for all locals and tourists in all pub-

lic places. Further, all public transport vehicles will operate at 50 per cent capacity. Cinema halls, restaurants and bars too will function at 50 per cent

capacity. All gymnasiums will function at 50 per cent capacity while coaching institutes in all districts will be shut down.

Three different Covid tests must for Kumbh, Char Dham Yatra

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

Taking cognisance of the surging Covid-19 cases including that of the new strain across the nation, the State's Tourism and Culture minister Satpal Maharaz has said that CBNAAT, RT-PCR and TrueNat tests are mandatory for devotees coming from other states to the Kumbh Mela in Haridwar and the Char Dham Yatra. The minister has also requested all to get vaccinated.

Maharaz said that devotees coming to the Kumbh or Char Dham Yatra should follow all the Covid guidelines including the wearing of masks and maintaining social distancing while observing religious traditions. Welcoming Prime Minister Narendra Modi's appeal to observe the Kumbh Mela symbolically considering the surge in Covid-19

cases, the minister reiterated that CBNAAT, RT-PCR and TrueNat tests will be mandatory for all coming from other states to the Kumbh and Char Dham Yatra. He said, "We welcome the Sadhus who want to observe the complete Kumbh as per tradition. However, I would like to stress here that the Covid regulations should be followed during the Snans to be held on April 27 and 30 in the Kumbh." He further said that the Snan of the Dev Dols in the Kumbh will be held on the designated date with observance of the Covid regulations. Maharaz said that he had talked to the chief minister Tirath Singh Rawat regarding this, adding that wearing of masks, observing social distancing and use of sanitiser will be mandatory on this occasion. The minister averred that the state government is



fully prepared for the Char Dham Yatra. In addition to observance of Covid regulations, three different Covid tests have also been made mandatory. Any person coming from another state will have to get these tests done mandatorily. Online registration will be done for the Char Dham Yatra and approval will

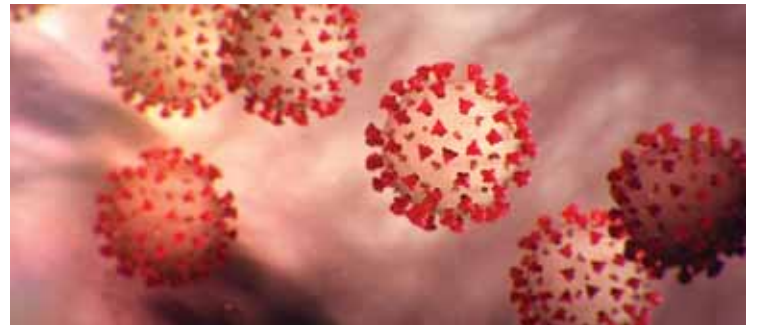
be granted after the different necessary tests. Pilgrims will be allowed to undertake the Char Dham Yatra as per the fixed capacity, he added. It is pertinent to mention here that Gangotri and Yamunotri will be reopened to the public on May 14, Kedarnath will be reopened on May 17 and Badrinath on May 18.

New Covid-19 virus five times more contagious: AIIMS Rishikesh

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The experts of the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) Rishikesh have warned that the virus of Covid-19 during the second wave of the pandemic is five times more infectious than the first wave. The director of the AIIMS Rishikesh Dr Ravikant said that the strain of the virus has undergone mutation. He added that the patients are not getting enough time for treatment as the initial symptoms are not clearly visible. The AIIMS director stated that the new virus is so deadly that it is able to infect people at a speed of about five times more than the first wave.

The Head of Department (HOD) of the CFM Department, Vartika Saxena said that the second wave is more deadly for people who



were infected with the virus last year.

"We should not get afraid but take measures to prevent the infection from spreading. The person infected with the new virus can show symptoms such as fever, dry cough, headache, muscle pain, shortness of breath, chest pain, and

feeling of chest pressure, difficulty in waking, diarrhoea and general feeling of weakness. People above 45 years should get Covid-19 vaccine," she said. Dr Saxena said that according to recent research done at the Imperial College, London, the new strain of Covid is 40 to 70 percent more contagious

than the last time. It is pertinent to mention here that in the last two weeks the number of Covid-19 patients admitted in the AIIMS Rishikesh have shown a sudden increase. On April 1 the hospital had 16 Covid-19 patients which have increased to 199 on April 17.

SCPCR to start campaign against substance abuse amid pandemic

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The State Commission for Protection of Child Rights (SCPCR) of Uttarakhand will conduct a campaign against substance abuse among the children in Dehradun even amid the recent surge in Covid-19. According to the chairperson of the commission, Usha Negi, substance abuse is one of the major issues in the State and the child commission is committed to work against this issue in coordination with all the departments concerned. She said that several organisations, activists and associations have come forward and expressed their wish to join the

commission in the campaign against substance abuse. Negi said, "We had already made a plan according to which we were preparing for the campaign in Dehradun. It is true that the recent surge in covid cases has slightly affected our plans of running the campaign against the substance abuse but it would not lead to its cancellation," asserted Negi. The SCPCR chief said that Covid-19 appears to become a part of our life and crucial works cannot be cancelled or postponed every time because of it. "We would execute our plan of running the campaign with some minor changes while following all the Covid-19 guidelines. We

would mainly interact with parents as they are the ones who influence children the most," informed Negi. She said that along with psychologists, the commission would also include youths, social activists and prominent organisations like Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) that would work to raise awareness against the issue of substance abuse in society. She disclosed that the commission will soon start this campaign in Dehradun. Meanwhile, Negi also disclosed that she would soon visit children homes and orphanages across the State too for inspection while following the Covid-19 guidelines.



The Pant Park which generally bustles with tourists on the weekends wears a deserted look on Saturday with few arrivals in Nainital due to the fresh surge in Covid-19

Pioneer photo

Haridwar Kumbh — A saga of confusion & changed strategies

PM Modi's tweet on symbolic Kumbh vindicates stand taken by former CM Trivendra Singh Rawat on organising a limited Kumbh

GAJENDRA SINGH NEGI ■ DEHRADUN

The appeal of the Prime Minister Narendra Modi for a symbolic Kumbh in Haridwar in the wake of grim situation of pandemic of Covid-19 has not only highlighted the failure of authorities concerned in ensuring a safe Kumbh but also vindicated the stand taken by former chief minister Trivendra Singh Rawat on the manner in which the grand event should be organised. The experts believe that a change in strategy on the organisation of the Kumbh with the change of chief minister last month also created a situation of confusion among the Kumbh Mela authorities which also resulted in late and faulty planning and its implementation.

It is well known fact that the former CM was in the

favour of a limited Kumbh to minimise the chances of the event becoming a super spreader of Covid-19. Though his stand had annoyed some sections of the religious fraternity but the government during his tenure was firm on giving priority to safety over the religious sentiments. It should be recalled that in the first week of February when the signs of second wave of Covid-19 were clearly visible in some states, the Uttarakhand government had made plans to put a cap on number of devotees for the Kumbh. The chief secretary Om Prakash had even requested the Indian Railways not to run any special trains for the event. The state government had taken a stand that pilgrims would be allowed to enter Haridwar only on production of a negative report of RT-PCR test. This plan of action for a limited Kumbh got changed with the change of chief minister. Immediately after assuming charge, the new chief minister Tirath Singh Rawat announced that there would be no unnecessary restrictions on the pilgrims as the mega reli-

gious event is organised after a gap of 12 years. He however stressed that Covid-19 protocol would be followed and authorities would enforce a safe Kumbh. The change in the plan also created confusion among the organisers. On the intervention of Uttarakhand High Court (HC) which ordered that the negative RT-PCR test report should be mandatory for the pilgrims, the administration made preparation of checking the borders. The HC also directed that the authorities should ensure at least 50,000 Covid-19 tests daily on the borders during the Kumbh, however this figure was not achieved by the Mela authorities.

With the advent of Kumbh which saw congregation of about 50 Lakh pilgrims from two Shahi Snans on April 12 and 14 the contagion of the Covid-19 also gathered



momentum. Many saints including the President of Akhil Bharatiya Akhada Parishad (ABAP) Swami Narendra Giri became positive for the disease during their stay in Kumbh. The data of the state health department clearly show that the number of cases of Covid-19 in Haridwar with the progress of Kumbh. On March 31, a day before the Kumbh started the state health department reported only 70 cases of the disease.

This figure bounced to 149 on April 1 and climbed to 613 on April 15, a day after the Shahi Snan of Baisakhi.

The founder of the Social Development for Communities (SDC) foundation, Anoop Nautiyal said, "The fact that PM had to make an appeal to curtail Kumbh vindicates that the state government and Kumbh Mela authorities failed in ensuring a safe Kumbh. Their claims of making adequate pandemic safety preparations have fallen flat."

Salt by-election: Fate of candidates sealed in EVMs

Prestige of CM Tirath Singh Rawat, Harish Rawat and Madan Kaushik at stake

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The former chief minister Trivendra Singh Rawat has said that the focus should be on protection of people from the contagion of Covid-19. When asked to comment on tweet of PM Modi, the former CM Trivendra Singh Rawat told The Pioneer that the PM's concern is about the safety of the people from Covid-19. "We cannot eliminate the disease but can slow down the contagion so that there is less stress on our health infrastructure. We are witnessing increase in number of the patients in different hospitals. Our focus should be on prevention of the disease," he said.

The fate of the candidates in the crucial assembly by-elections of Salt in Almora district was sealed in the EVMs on Saturday after the end of polling. Being held under the contagion of Covid-19 which is increasingly getting intense, 43.28 percent voters had cast their franchise till 5 pm on the day. The assembly has a 95000 strong electorate. The district magistrate of Almora and district election officer Nitin Bhadoria and Senior Superintendent of police (SSP) of Almora Pankaj Bhatt visited several polling booths and gave necessary directions to the officials. No major unto-

ward incident was reported and the polling was by and large peaceful.

After the end of the voting on Saturday all eyes are now on May 2 when the EVMs would be opened for counting.

The by-election is necessitated due to the death of the BJP MLA Surendra Singh Jeena. The Congress party has fielded Ganga Pancholi from the seat who had given a tough fight to Jeena in the election of 2017. In an attempt to garner sympathy of voters the BJP has fielded Mahesh Jeena who is the elder brother of Late Surendra Singh Jeena from Salt. Though the result of the By-election would have no impact in the assembly where the BJP enjoys an overwhelming majority, the prestige of chief minister Tirath Singh Rawat, former CM Harish Rawat and newly appointed state chief of BJP Madan Kaushik is at stake here.

COVID SCARE IN THE REGION

Haryana records highest single-day spike of 7,717 infections

32 MORE DEAD

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

There was no let-up in the Covid-19 surge in Haryana on Saturday as the State reported a record 7717 new cases of the disease which took its cumulative infection tally to 3,49,794.

Thirty two more fatalities due to the viral disease were reported in the State in a span of 24 hours, pushing its overall death toll to 3,386, according to a health department bulletin.

Of the fresh cases, Gurugram, the worst-hit district in the state, accounted for 2549, its highest single-day spike so far. Among other districts that reported a big spike are Faridabad (987), Karnal (477), Sonapat (646), Panchkula (349), Hisar (507), Ambala (173), Kurukshetra (201) and Sirsa (231), the bulletin said.

On Friday and Wednesday, the State had recorded 6277 and 5858 coronavirus cases

respectively.

Among the latest deaths, five each were from Faridabad and Panipat, three were from Hisar, Karnal, Rohtak and two each from Gurugram, Ambala, Panchkula, Palwal and Jind. One each from Fatehabad, Yamunanagar, Kurukshetra districts.

The number of active Covid-19 cases in Haryana stands at 38558. So far, 3,07,850 people have recovered from the disease, and the state has a recovery rate of 88.01 per cent, the bulletin said.

Amid rising COVID-19 cases in the State, the Haryana government has decided to allow officials equal to the rank of under secretary or below to work from home and restrict their physical attendance in offices to 50 per cent. A letter in this regard has been issued by the Chief Secretary's office.

Officers of the level of deputy secretary, equivalent and above are to attend offices on a regular basis, it said. According to the order, rosters



for employees' attendance are to be prepared by divisional and wing heads and if required, they can call for more than 50 per cent physical attendance on administrative grounds. Officials who do not attend office on a particular day will make themselves available on phone and other electronic means of communication at all times from their residence and work from home, it said.

PUNJAB REPORTS HIGHEST SINGLE-DAY SPIKE OF 4498 CASES, 64 MORE DIE Punjab's daily Covid-19 cases

surged to a record high of 4498 on Saturday, taking the State's cumulative tally to 2,95,138, according to a medical bulletin.

The state's previous biggest jump of 4333 Covid-19 cases was reported on April 15 while 3,477 cases on April 12. Punjab's death toll climbed to 7834 as 64 more people succumbed to the disease, the bulletin said. The number of active cases increased to 32499. There are 46 critical patients who are on ventilator support while 401 are on oxygen support, it said.

Ludhiana reported the

highest number of fresh cases at 835, followed by 790 in SAS Nagar, 449 in Jalandhar, 372 in Patiala and 352 in Amritsar. Of the latest fatalities, 10 were reported from SAS Nagar, seven from Patiala, six each were reported from Amritsar, Ludhiana and Gurudaspur; four each from Tarn Taran and Bathinda.

A total of 2615 coronavirus patients were discharged after they recovered from the infection, taking the total number of cured persons to 2,54,805. So far, 65,61, 028 samples have been collected for testing in the state, it added.

431 CASES, 2 DEATHS IN CHANDIGARH

Chandigarh on Saturday reported two deaths and 431 cases of coronavirus, taking the infection count to 33,309 in the joint capital of Punjab and Haryana. It had on Friday recorded 481 Covid-19 cases, the highest single-day since global pandemic struck. Last year, on September 13, Chandigarh logged 449 cases.

With two deaths, so far, 410 people have died from the infection in the union territory, according to a medical bulletin. The number of active cases stood at 3414. A total of 438 patients were discharged after they recovered from the infection, taking the number of cured persons to 29,485. A total of 3,58,865 samples have been taken for testing so far.

12 DEATHS, 1,392 NEW CASES IN HIMACHAL

The COVID-19 death toll in Himachal Pradesh rose to 1,167 on Saturday with 12 more fatalities, while 1,392 new cases took the infection count to 75,587, an official said. The active cases in the state climbed to 8,444, the official said.

Special Health Secretary Nipun Jindal said three people each died in Shimla and Kangra, two in Solan and one each in Sirmour, Mandi, Kullu and Lahaul-Spiti districts. Meanwhile, 647 people recovered from the disease in the past 24 hours, he added.

Punjab procures 86% of wheat arrived so far in mandis, Sangrur leads

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

Punjab Government on Saturday said that 29.65 LMT of Wheat has arrived so far in mandis across the State of which 25.61 LMT i.e. 86.37 per cent has been procured within a period of just one week from April 10 despite the challenging task amid Covid-19 pandemic.

Expressing satisfaction over the ongoing wheat procurement operations and arrangements put in place to facilitate all stakeholders, the Secretary Mandi Board and Director Food & Civil Supplies Ravi Bhagat pointed out that district Sangrur is leading in terms of Wheat arrival where 4.76 LMT of Wheat had arrived in the mandis, followed by Patiala and Mansa with 3.87 LMT and 2.32 LMT respectively. He said that the targeted procurement of Wheat in the state is 130 LMT during ongoing Rabi Marketing Season. He said that 5.74 lakh passes have already been given to farmers through Arthiyas by Mandi Board and various Market Committees in view of the staggered movement of wheat due to Covid-19. Regarding the problems faced by farmers and delay of crop payment, Bhagat pointed out that the DBT system had been introduced for the first time from this season, adding that there were some teething problems due to some technical issues, which were being resolved at the earliest by the Food and Civil Supplies Department on priority so that this system to be made more streamline and also to ensure timely payment to the farmers.

The Secretary Mandi Board today visited the Mandis of Shaheed Bhagat Singh Nagar district to take stock of the ongoing procurement operations. During interacting with various stakeholders in the Rahon, Nawanshahar and

Balachaur mandis, the Secretary clarified that there is no shortage of Bardana and state has sufficient stock and need now worry about it. He also assured that the Government was fully committed to procure every single grain the farmers produce in these difficult times.

Emphasizing the need to strictly adhere to the health protocol especially the social distancing, Bhagat appealed to all the stakeholders to comply with these preventive measures for their health and safety. Divulging details about the preventive measures being taken in view of coronavirus, the Secretary said that Punjab Mandi Board has also made elaborate arrangements to strictly observe health protocol.

By providing 10,000 masks (N-95) and 10,000 bottles of sanitizers to its 5600 officials/staff so as to ensure smooth and hassle free procurement of wheat in difficult phase due to COVID-19 pandemic. Mandi Board also arranged another one lakh masks and 35,000 liters sanitizers for providing to the farmers during their arrival in purchase centres.

SAD ASKS PUNJAB GOVT TO REMOVE HURDLES IN WHEAT PURCHASE

The Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) on Saturday said the Congress-led government in Punjab must remove "hurdles" in wheat procurement or else it would hold state-wide protests.

Even though wheat procurement started 10 days late, it was further delayed due to "lack of preparedness" on the part of the state government, SAD leader Prem Singh Chandumajra said in a statement issued here. He claimed that "severe shortage" of gunny bags was set to lead to a glut in mandis (agricultural markets) which are already facing labour problems.



Due to the weekend lockdown imposed by Chandigarh Administration, the popular tourist place of Sukhna Lake remained deserted and the crowded Sector 22 Market remained closed on Saturday



T Sharma | Pioneer Photo

Haryana Deputy CM urges PM to resume talks with protesting farmers

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

Haryana Deputy Chief Minister Dushyant Chautala has written to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and urged him to resume talks with the farmers protesting the Centre's three farm laws.

In his letter, Chautala said a team of three to four cabinet ministers may restart discussion with the farmers who have been camping at the Delhi borders for over 100 days. "I would like to bring to your kind attention that our 'Annadattas' are on roads at Delhi border agitating in respect of newly enacted three farm laws of the Central government. It is a matter of concern that such agitation is going on for more than hundred days," Chautala wrote in the letter.

Chautala said he believes every problem has a solution by way of mutual discussions. "The earlier discussion between the central govern-

ment and farmers' union brought a few solutions to the concerns raised by Samyukt Morcha. "In this regard, a team consisting of three to four senior cabinet ministers may lead the delegation for resuming talks with farmers so as to bring an amicable conclusion in this issue," he wrote in his letter dated April 15.

The deputy chief minister wrote the letter days after state's home minister Anil Vij's mis-sive to Union Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar, saying talks with peasants should be resumed to resolve the issue. Vij had said he was concerned as a large number of farmers were sitting on Haryana's borders amid a surge in COVID-19 cases in the state.

Haryana chief minister Manohar Lal Khattar too has appealed to the farmers to end their agitation due to the increase in the number of Covid cases in the state.

90% of Covid patients in Himachal in home isolation: CM

PNS ■ SHIMLA

Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Jai Ram Thakur on Saturday said over 90 per cent of the Covid patients are under home isolation in the state.

Presiding over a virtual review meeting of Covid-19 situation in Sirmour district from Nalagarh, he said special thrust must be laid on increasing the number of tests to detect covid-19 patients besides strengthening the mechanism of home isolation in the State.

He said that doctors must ensure proper treatment and regular monitoring of the patients under home isolation, adding that the health department must regularly monitor health parameters of the patients under home isolation. He said that elected representatives of the panchayati raj institutions must also be involved to keep a watch on the health conditions of those under home isolation.

Thakur said that the industrialists of Kala Amb and Poanta Sahib areas must be asked to ensure that the workers in their units strictly follow the SoPs and guidelines issued by the State Government to check the spread of this virus. He said that focus should be laid on contact tracing of the covid-19 positive patients.

He said that this would go a long way in timely detection of covid-19 cases in the State. He said that oxygenated bed capacity in the district should also be increased. He said that the shopkeepers must also ensure to strictly follow 'No Mask, No Service' policy to check the spread of coronavirus.

The Chief Minister said that the district administration must also ensure the social functions such as marriages etc. must strictly follow the maximum limit prescribed for such events. He said that action, if required, could be taken against the violators. He said that dis-



trict administration must also ensure that adequate arrangements be made to meet out the demands in case of any major surge in the cases.

He said that people must be motivated to use face masks and hand sanitizers and also avoid overcrowding in public places and that effective regulation of devotees must also be ensured in temples and other religious places to avoid overcrowding.

Secretary Health Amitabh

must be asked to be prepared as their services may be required in case of any eventuality.

Deputy Commissioner Sirmour R.K. Pruthi, participating in the meeting virtually from Nahan of Sirmour district, said that there has been a sharp surge in the number of Covid-19 cases in the district. He said that out of the total 598 active cases, about 500 were from industrial areas of Kala Amb and Poanta Sahib.

He has that out of these about 580 patients were under home isolation.

He said that the biggest cause of concern was the increase in the number of cases in rural areas, adding that effective IEC campaign has been launched in the district to educate the people regarding precautions to be adopted to check the spread of this pandemic.

CM REVIEWS COVID-19 SITUATION WITH STAKE-

HOLDERS AT TRADE CENTRE BADDI

The State Government is making all out efforts to check the spread of coronavirus by educating the people to take preventive measures by wearing face masks and maintaining social distancing. Chief Minister Jai Ram Thakur said this while addressing the review meeting with the stakeholders at Trade Centre Baddi in Solan district on Saturday.

He said that now the second surge in the cases of Covid-19 pandemic was more alarming and challenging, pointing out that there were only 218 active Covid-19 cases left in the State on 23rd of February this year whereas today this number has crossed 7700 mark.

He said that the State has reported about 200 deaths during the last about 50 days. He said that the State has crossed that 2000 figure of active cases only in twenty days which was a serious matter of concern.

Every second Covid-19 infected patients admitted at PGIMER: PGI Dean (Academic) Dr GD Puri



PGI Dean (Academic) Dr GD Puri

MANOJ KUMAR ■ CHANDIGARH

Dr GD Puri, Dean (Academics) and Head, Department of Anaesthesia and Intensive Care, Post Graduate Institute of Medical Education and Research (PGIMER) on Saturday said that every second Covid-19 infected patient admitted at PGIMER, Chandigarh is below 45 years of age. He said the new strain apparently affected younger patients and spread much faster than the earlier strain. Patients (young) should not wait if the baseline saturation falls below 94 per cent or drops after walking and immediately report to PGIMER, he adds.

He says that Punjab and Chandigarh region is now witnessing peak of the second wave of covid-19 pandemic. This peak may continue for another couple of weeks. The decline of Covid-19 cases in this region may witness after mid-May onwards, he adds.

Dr Puri further says that both the vaccines Covishield and Covaxin are very much effective against new variants. The Covid vaccine reduces severity of illness, even if the person gets an infection after taking the vaccine, then it reduces the chances of hospitalisation. The vaccine will help to build the herd immunity hence it would help to contain the pandemic. In an interview with *The Pioneer*, Dr GD Puri talks about Covid situation in Chandigarh after confirmation report of UK variant as well as arrangement for Covid-19 and non-Covid-19 patients at PGIMER, Chandigarh: Excerpts from the interview:

The number of Covid-19 cases in Chandigarh is increasing. How do you read the new numbers? Is UT now witnessing the peak of the sec-

ond wave of pandemic?

Yes, this region (Punjab and Chandigarh) is witnessing the peak of the second wave of covid-19 pandemic. This peak may continue for another couple of weeks. We may see a decline of Covid-19 cases after mid-May onwards. As much as people will continue to adhere to Covid appropriate behaviour, the pandemic will be contained at the earliest.

How is the second wave of covid-19 different from the first wave of the pandemic?

In the first wave of the pandemic, the Covid-19 illness used to give a time of seven days, and the condition of patients used to deteriorate after the seventh day. This time, a lot of younger patients are deteriorating faster in just 4-5 days. In the first or second CT scan itself, lung involvement is diagnosed in patients. Patients are complaining with Covid pneumonia, breathlessness, chest tightness and abdominal symptoms like diarrhoea. The cough is coming late in these patients and high grade fever is there. This strain is highly contagious as all fam-

ily members are getting infected, including children. Getting a flu shot lessens the risk of severe influenza (flu) among adults, including reducing the risk of hospitalisation and admission to the intensive care unit (ICU), and also decreases the severity of illness. We all must wear face masks, maintain social distancing and adopt hand hygiene daily otherwise we will continue to face many more waves of the contagion.

Some people including Chandigarh DGP Sanjay Beniwal were infected by covid-19 even after taking both the doses of the vaccine. What would you say?

It is early to say anything regarding this as the study is on. Both Covishield and Covaxin are very much effective against new variants. Getting a flu shot decreases the risk of severe influenza (flu) among the people and also the severity of illness. The vaccine will help to build the herd immunity hence it would help to contain the pandemic. Both Covishield and Covaxin are very much effective against new variants. One should fol-

low Covid Appropriate behaviour even after vaccination because it will take time to develop antibodies against the virus. The priority groups of the population should get vaccinated against Covid-19 disease which will help to protect against this disease and reduce the intensity/severity of the disease which will further help in breaking the chain of the Covid-19 transmission.

Do you think, Covid-19 cases increased in Chandigarh due to the UK variant? Which age groups of people are infected more from the UK variant?

Covid-19 cases surging at a rate much faster in the second wave than the first wave in this region and UK variant could be responsible for this faster rate as it was proved by the latest findings of the PGIMER samples sent to National Centre for Diseases Control (NCDC), New Delhi. UT and neighbouring States including Punjab had witnessed the first wave of Covid-19 peak in September last year. Currently, this region has been witnessing the second wave of Covid-19 peak. 50 per cent of total patients having

moderate and severe symptoms of Covid-19 admitted in PGIMER are below 45 years of age. A lot of younger patients need intensive care treatment and many of them are in their 20s or 30s only. The patients are deteriorating faster than before and developing severe illness. The deterioration was slow last time as the oxygen saturation used to dip at a slower pace. This time, the oxygen saturation dips faster as soon as it dips below 95 if there is lung involvement. Considering the high transmission and faster spread of Covid-19 by the UK variant, it is suggested that everyone should follow Covid Appropriate Behavior.

After a confirmation report of UK variant among Covid-19 patients in Chandigarh, what are the additional arrangements made at PGIMER?

Only, patients having moderate and severe symptoms of Covid-19 are admitted at Covid hospital in PGIMER which has increased its beds for Covid-19 patients from 200 to 300 out of which 50 are of ICU beds. We are seriously following Centre Government's

guidelines including 'Test, Track and Treat' to stop this emerging peak of the virus. We have scaled up the rate of RT-PCR tests, with a special focus on those areas where positive rates are high in Chandigarh. We are taking all measures to ensure that every patient can get treatment.

Whether any health workers of PGIMER are infected to Covid-19?

PGIMER has about 2000 doctors and 2000 nurses. Around 250 health workers of PGIMER have isolated themselves in the last one and half months (second wave of the pandemic). In the first wave of Covid-19, around 1500 health workers were infected to covid-19. We have a sufficient number of health workers to take care of the patients admitted here in PGIMER.

Amid a surge in Covid-19 cases, Chandigarh administration imposed weekend lockdown. Do you think some more steps should be taken to contain the peak of the pandemic?

The need of the hour is to

contain the peak of the pandemic. We must take precautions as the cases are on rise again. Chandigarh administration has taken several steps including shutting down gymnasium and spa among others to contain the pandemic. At the same time, people must adhere to the safety protocol like washing hands thoroughly with soap or using sanitizer, wear masks and maintain social distancing.

THE PIONEER

CLASSIFIEDS

PUBLIC NOTICE

In my service record my son's name is Rohit Gusai which is wrong whereas my son's correct and real name is **Rohit Gusain** Army No-JC571630M RANK SUB Gosai Laxman Singh S/o Darwan Singh UNIT 9 Mahar 56 APO.

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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



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

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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.

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 late 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

manufacturers in the country.

The states were also informed about the issuance of the calendar of medical oxygen supply from different oxygen

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 lockdowns; 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.

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 mask compared to that in the chamber, researchers determined the FFE.

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 Vallabhbhai 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 the 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.

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 crore it 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 (Pharmexil) 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 Pharmexil 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 substantially. 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 margin (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 AREH Fifteen L has bagged a 150 MWac solar energy project capacity from Torrent Power.

Adani Renewable Energy Holding Fifteen Ltd (AREH Fifteen L), 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.

AREH Fifteen L 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 FY2021 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. Late, 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."

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>

Phone: 011-24368638, 24368641 P.S. Vijay Vihar, Delhi
Fax No. 011-24368639 Rohini Distt., Delhi
DP/781/RD/2021 Ph. No. 011-27061294, 27061295

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.

Website : <http://cbi.nic.in> SHO
E-mail : cic@cbi.gov.in P.S., Vijay Vihar, Delhi
Fax : 011-24368639 Ph : 011-27061294
Ph. : 011-24368638, 24368641 27061295
DP/781/RD/2021

SEARCH FOR MISSING/KIDNAPPED GIRL

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:-



Kusum @ Kiran

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>

Telephone 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 SHO
Ph.: 011-24368638, 24368641 P.S. Jama Masjid, Delhi.
Fax : 011-24368639 Ph. No. 011-23269777, 2326125
DP/764/CD/2021

SEARCH FOR MISSING/KIDNAPPED BOY

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/-
Telephone No. : 011-24368638 or 24368641 SHO, Vijay Vihar, Delhi
FAX No. : 011-24368639 Tel.: 011-27061294-95
DP/762/RD/2021 Mob.: 8750870329

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 have committed) the offence in case CC No.7962/17 S. k. Motor V/s 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 V/s 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

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:



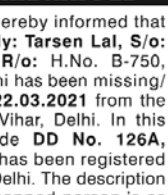
Name: Lakhan, **Gender:** Male, **Age:** 20 years, **Height:** 5'1", **Complexion:** Wheatish, **Face:** Long, **Built:** Medium, **Wearing:** Blue colour jeans, green colour t-shirt and slippers on his feet.

If anyone has any information regarding this missing boy, kindly inform SHO/Vijay Vihar, Delhi.

E-mail : cic@cbi.gov.in SHO
Ph. : 011-24368638, 24368641 P.S. Vijay Vihar, Delhi.
Fax : 011-24368639 Ph. No. 011-27521294, 27521295
DP/779/RD/2021

SEARCH FOR MISSING/KIDNAPPED

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> SHO
E-mail Id - cic@cbi.gov.in P.S. Vijay Vihar, Delhi
Ph.: 011-24368638, 24368641
Fax No. 011-24368639 Ph.: 011-27511294, 8750870329
DP/772/RD/2021

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 Mogoke, 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, Bangladesh 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.

After outcry, White House says Biden will lift refugee cap in May

AP ■ WASHINGTON

Facing swift blowback from allies and aid groups, the White House said President Joe Biden plans to lift his predecessor's historically low cap on refugees by next month, after initially moving only to expand the eligibility criteria for resettlements.

In an emergency determination signed by Biden earlier Friday, he stated the admission of up to 15,000 refugees set by former President Donald Trump this year "remains justified by humanitarian concerns and is otherwise in the national interest." But if the cap is reached before the end of the current budget year and the emergency refugee situation persists, then a presidential determination may be issued to raise the ceiling.

That set off a deluge of criticism from top allies on Capitol Hill such as the second-ranking Senate Democrat, Dick Durbin of Illinois, who called that initial limit "unacceptable." White House press secretary Jen Psaki said later that Biden is expected to increase the refugee cap by May 15, though she didn't say by how much.

Biden has been consulting with his advisers to determine what number of refugees could realistically be admitted to the United States between now and October 1, the end of the fiscal year, Psaki said.

"Given the decimated refugee admissions program we inherited," she said it's now "unlikely" Biden will be able to boost that number to 62,500, as he had proposed in his plan to Congress two months ago.

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 hosted 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 typically 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 Rodriguez. Castro's retirement ends an era of formal leadership that began with his brother Fidel and country's 1959 rev-

olution. "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

Britain's Queen Elizabeth II led a small group of senior royals at the ceremonial funeral of her husband and consort Prince Philip, the Duke of Edinburgh, at Windsor Castle on Saturday.

The funeral incorporated hymns and readings chosen by the late royal himself and focussed on the "unwavering loyalty" of the longest-serving consort in British history to his wife, the monarch, and service



to Britain and the Commonwealth.

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

Windsor Castle with a national minute's silence at 1500 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

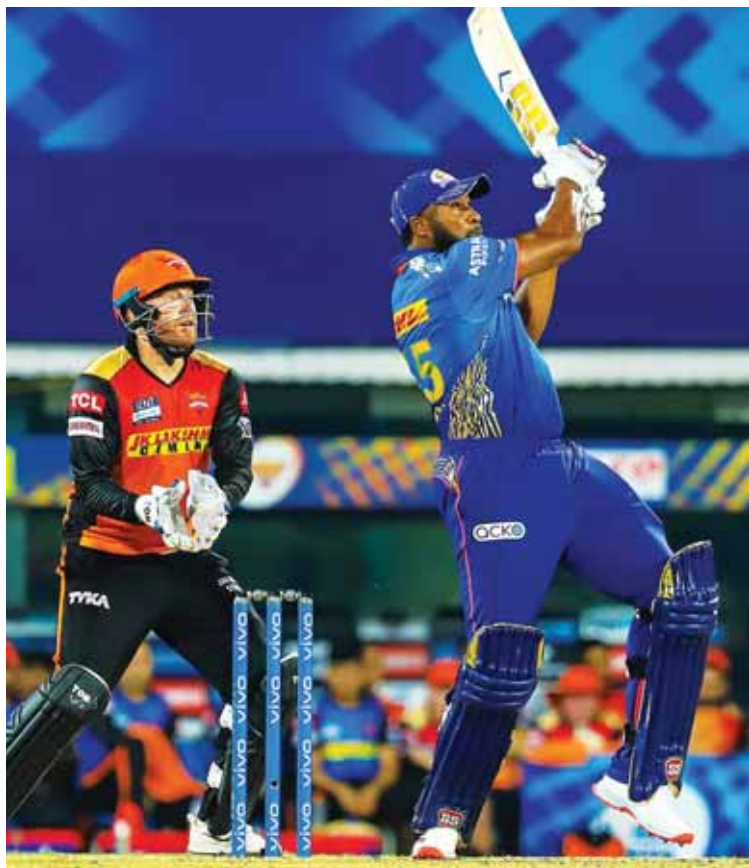
Reference to publication of ICICI Bank Limited vs SHISHIR DUTT SHARMA, Case No-Suit No 1967/17., ICICI Bank Limited vs SANJAY KUMAR PANDIT, Case No-Suit No 933/18, ICICI Bank Limited vs KULVINDER SINGH, Case No-FAO 213/2015, ICICI Bank Limited vs MEHKAR SINGH, Case No-CM(M) 549/2020 & CM APPL. 27986/2020, 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

कार्यालय नगर निगम, भरतपुर	
क्रमांक :- न.नि.म./निगम/ 2021-22 / 02-07	दिनांक :- 05.04.2021
ई- निविदा सूचना- 01 /2021-22	
नगर निगम, भरतपुर द्वारा नगर निगम, भरतपुर में उपयुक्त श्रेणी में एवं अन्य विभागों के "A" & "AA" श्रेणी में पंजीकृत स्वेदकों से निर्धारित प्रपत्र में ई प्रक्रिया के माध्यम से निविदाएं http://eproc.rajjasthan.gov.in पर ऑनलाईन निविदा आमंत्रित की जाती है। निविदा की महत्वपूर्ण शर्तें एवं विवरण वेबसाइट http://sppp.rajjasthan.gov.in एवं http://eproc.rajjasthan.gov.in पर देखा जा सकता है।	
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वेब साईट http://eproc.rajjasthan.gov.in से ऑनलाईन निविदा अपलोड करने की अंतिम समय व तिथि	दिनांक 05.05.2021 सायं 6.00 बजे
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निविदा खोलने की समय व तिथि	दिनांक 07.05.2021 दोपहर 12.00 बजे
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आयुक्त नगर निगम, भरतपुर	

POLLARD TAKES PALTAN TO 150

Windies all-rounder's back to back sixes in last two balls help Mumbai to post fighting total



Mumbai Indians batsman Kieron Pollard hits SRH pacer Bhuvneshwar Kumar for six during IPL game in Chennai

PTI ■ CHENNAI

Vijay Shankar and Mujeeb Ur Rahman shine with the ball as Sunrisers Hyderabad produced a disciplined bowling performance to restrict Mumbai Indians to 150 for 5 in their IPL match at Chepaunk on Saturday.

The opening duo of Rohit Sharma (32 off 25)

and Quinton de Kock (40 off 39) scored 53 in the powerplay after opting to bat but Vijay (2/19) and Afghanistan spin duo of Mujeeb (2/29) and Rashid Khan (0/22) brought the SRH back in the game. Kieron Pollard managed to lift MI to 150 with the help of a 22-ball 35 which included two sixes of the last two balls of the innings.

Earlier, Rohit completed 4000 T20 runs as a

SCOREBOARD	
MUMBAI INDIANS	
Quinton de Kock c (sub)J Suchith b Mujeeb	40
Rohit Sharma c Virat Singh b Vijay Shankar	32
Suryakumar Yadav c and b Vijay Shankar	10
Ishan Kishan c Bairstow b Mujeeb	12
Kieron Pollard not out	35
Hardik Pandya c Virat Singh b Khaleel Ahmed	7
Krunal Pandya not out	3
Extras (b 0, lb 6, w 4, nb 1, p 0)	11
Total (5 wkts, 20 Overs)	150
Did not bat: Rahul Chahar, Adam Milne, Jasprit Bumrah, Trent Boult	
Fall of Wickets: 55-1 (Rohit Sharma, 6.3), 71-2 (Suryakumar Yadav, 8.3), 98-3 (Quinton de Kock, 13.5), 114-4 (Ishan Kishan, 16.5), 131-5 (Hardik Pandya, 18.4)	
Bowling	
Bhuvneshwar Kumar	4-0-45-0
Khaleel Ahmed	4-0-24-1
Mujeeb Ur Rahman	4-0-29-2
Abhishek Sharma	1-0-5-0
Vijay Shankar	3-0-19-2
Rashid Khan	4-0-22-0

skipper and also surpassed Mahendra Singh Dhoni's record of hitting the most number of sixes by an Indian in the tournament.

The 33-year-old now has 217 sixes in IPL, one ahead of Dhoni.

With Rohit and de Kock looking in full flow, it seemed MI will put up a big score.

However, MI soon slipped to 71 for 2 with Vijay Shankar dismissing Rohit and Suryakumar Yadav (10) in his two overs.

While the MI skipper holed out to Virat Singh in the sixth over, Suryakumar was caught and bowled in the 9th over.

Rashid Khan and Mujeeb then tightened the screw on MI as the well-set de Kock next perished at deep mid-wicket in his pursuit for a big shot.

Pollard then joined Ishan Kishan (12 off 21) in the middle but the scoring remained difficult.

With MI at 107 for 3 in 16 overs, Pollard clubbed one over mid-wicket to break the shackles but Mujeeb soon dismissed Ishan with wicketkeeper Jonny Bairstow taking a fabulous catch.

New man Hardik Pandya and Pollard couldn't produce their trademark hitting as the former holed out to Virat in the deep.

Pollard, who was dropped by Vijay, managed to smash the last two balls of the innings for two sixes as MI reached 150 in the end.

Dhoni is heartbeat of CSK: Fleming



Chennai Super Kings captain MS Dhoni cuts the cake to celebrate his 200th game for CSK

@ChennaiIPL

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Chennai Super Kings head coach Stephen Fleming has called skipper Mahendra Singh Dhoni the team's heartbeat and said the desire to do well even after playing 200 matches is a testament to his attitude towards the game and the franchise.

Dhoni has been leading the side since the inaugural edition of the league in 2008.

"His longevity has to be mentioned and appreciated... To play 200 games and still have a desire to do well is a testament to his attitude towards the game and franchise," Fleming said after CSK's win against Punjab Kings.

"I think the franchise has grown and MS has grown with it, so it is a great relationship and great fun," the former New Zealand skipper added.

Terming Dhoni the heartbeat of CSK, Fleming said, "He is the heartbeat of CSK, there's no doubt about it. Whether it's performance, guidance or leadership, you run out of things to say about him."

He said the manner in which the team bounced back after the first game was impressive and praised Man of the Match Deepak Chahar for his efforts (4/13).

"Really impressed with the way he bounced back after the first game. Without doubt, when Deepak gets a little bit of swing and a little bit of movement, he is one of the finest around. His ability to swing the ball is one. But his control and skill set is also very high.

"The key is keeping him simple in his plans and just operating in and around the stumps. He is very effective when the ball swings. A great bounce back from a below par performance in the first game."

►boundarymeter

4s	252
6s	97

PLAYER	RUNS
1. Nitish Rana (KKR)	137
2. Sanju Samson (RR)	123
3. Manish Pandey (SRH)	99

PLAYER	WKTS
1. Harshal Patel (RCB)	7
2. Andre Russell (KKR)	6
3. Avesh Khan (DC)	5

MOST SIXES	
1. Sanju Samson (RR)	7
2. Deepak Hooda (PBKS)	6
3. Nitish Rana (KKR)	6

SUMMER SLAM

MOTION PICTURE



Rajasthan Royals English all-rounder Ben Stokes bids goodbye to his teammates before he leaves for England to undergo surgery for his fractured left index finger

@Rajasthanroyals



Chennai Super Kings share throwback picture of Punjab Kings batsman M Shahrulkh Khan

@ChennaiIPL

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 hand 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.

PADIKKAL IS A GREAT TALENT: LARA

Devdutt Padikkal needs to "iron out" a few technical things but Brian Lara is confident that the RCB opener would better his performance during this IPL with a few Man of the Match awards. "He's (Padikkal) such a great talent. Last year, he got a couple of (5) fifties, he batted well, he supported Virat very well," Lara told Star Sports' *Select Dugout Live Feed*. "What I want to see in 2021 IPL is for him to go on and get a few Man of the Matches and get a couple of triple figures under his belt. Such a great little player," Lara added.

RCB eye hat-trick of wins

KEY PLAYERS	
	ANDRE RUSSELL Dre Russ took his maiden IPL fiver against MI in the last match & now he'll be eager to contribute with bat
	AB DE VILLIERS ABD single-handedly won against Mumbai and his 360° stroke play can turn the match at any point

PTI ■ CHENNAI

The misfiring Kolkata Knight Riders will look to bring their campaign back on track when they take on table-toppers Royal Challengers Bangalore at Chepaunk on Sunday.

In the battle between the world's two best white-ball captains, Eoin Morgan and Virat Kohli, the Bengaluru franchise will hold a slight edge over Kolkata after its two wins from as many outings.

Known for his tactical nous and man-management skills, the World Cup-winning English skipper will be keen to bring KKR back on track after a familiar middle-order collapse cost them the game against Mumbai Indians.

After two ordinary seasons, the purple brigade started its campaign in an emphatic fashion, ticking all the boxes against Sunrisers Hyderabad.

But against their nemesis MI, KKR middle-order collapsed in an inexplicable fashion to suffer their 12th loss from 13 matches.

Morgan's astute captaincy in using his bowling resources was the highlight as KKR had bowled out MI for a modest 152.

In his new role of bowling at the death, Andre Russell has taken six wickets at an impressive average of 7.83, but has failed to deliver with the bat.

With 14 runs from two matches, the big-hitting Jamaican has looked a shadow of his past.

Vice-captain Dinesh Karthik, too, will be under pressure to deliver after his painstaking stay in the middle in the last game.

While Nitish Rana has impressed the most in batting, their star opener Shubman Gill has faltered after impressive starts, and KKR would hope the youngster fires in the coming days.

On a slow Chepaunk deck where batting at the death has been a concern, KKR's bowling has been a revelation with Morgan cleverly using his resources.

Against the star-studded RCB who are yet to fire in unison this season, KKR's bowling would once again look to make an impact. It would not be a bad idea to bring in left arm wrist

VENUE: CHIDAMBARAM STADIUM, CHENNAI	
HEAD TO HEAD	
Matches	26
Royal Challengers Bangalore	12
Kolkata Knight Riders	14

LAST YEAR'S MATCHES	
	Royal Challengers Bangalore beat Kolkata Knight Riders by 82 runs in Sharjah
	Royal Challengers Bangalore defeated Kolkata Knight Riders by 8 wickets in Abu Dhabi

79

Eoin Morgan who scored 6921 runs at an average of in 297 innings of 314 matches, needs 79 runs to become the 4th Englishman and 22nd batsman overall to score 7000 runs in T20 matches

56

Virat Kohli who scored 5944 runs at an average of 38.10 in 186 innings of 194 matches, needs 56 runs to become the first batsman to complete 6000 runs in the history

Faisel Features

spinner Kuldeep Yadav in place of veteran Indian off-spinner Harbhajan Singh, who has bowled just the opening over in each of the two matches.

Boasting a famed batting line-up in Kohli, AB de Villiers, Glenn Maxwell and the talented youngster Devdutt Padikkal, RCB are yet to perform to their full potential.

But it did not matter much as RCB have won both their matches with new signing Maxwell holding fort in the middle and the likes of Shahbaz Ahmed and Harshal Patel making the difference in bowling.

DC face Punjab in battle of equals

KEY PLAYERS	
	KAGISO RABADA He was the highest wicket-taker in the 2020 edition and the South African is keen to repeat that feat
	ARSHDEEP SINGH The young pacer has impressed in the first two matches and will look to continue his good form

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Delhi Capitals skipper Rishabh Pant will aim to display better tactical acumen in *catch-22* situations against a 'blow-hot-blow-cold' Punjab Kings in what promises to be a battle of brittle middle-orders at Wankhede stadium on Sunday.

Both teams are coming into the *Norther Derby* of IPL after enduring defeats in their previous games but Delhi Capitals are definitely a better side on paper.

Pant, relatively inexperienced in terms of IPL captaincy, lost the plot in the last game where he didn't finish his best bowler Ravichandran Ashwin's quota and instead used Tom Curran's friendly medium pacers.

As coach Ricky Ponting pointed out, he would expect a better "on his feet" thinking from the young captain.

The likely addition of Anrich Nortje in the playing XI will only bolster Pant's bowling attack which lost its bearings during the last match with Curran's lack of pace on a slow track being cannon fodder for Chris Morris and David Miller.

Punjab Kings, on the other hand, suffered an inexplicable batting collapse against Chennai Super Kings with Deepak Chahar's extra bounce and slight seam movement causing the damage.

This was after a healthy 200 plus total in the opening game.

The nature of the Wankhede track is posing a few questions under lights for top-order batsmen as the last two games have shown with underlying moisture aiding quality fast bowling.

So KL Rahul versus Kagiso Rabada and Chris Woakes bowling to Chris Gayle could be as enticing as Prithvi Shaw encountering the guile of Mohammed Shami and Shikhar Dhawan trying to unsettle a disciplined Arshdeep Singh.

Both teams are top heavy in batting with DC dependant on Shaw, Dhawan and Pant for doing the bulk of scoring while the same job profile is held by KL Rahul, Chris Gayle and Deepak Hooda in the Punjab line-up.

Even the weaknesses of both the teams are pretty similar.

If Ajinkya Rahane's lack of power-hitting and Marcus Stoinis' indifferent

VENUE: WANKHEDE STADIUM, MUMBAI	
HEAD TO HEAD	
Matches	26
Delhi Capitals	11
Punjab Kings	15

LAST YEAR'S MATCHES	
	Delhi Capitals beat Kings XI Punjab in Super over after match ended in a tie in Dubai
	Kings XI Punjab defeated Delhi Capitals by 5 wickets in Dubai

62

KL Rahul who scored 4938 runs in 141 innings of 154 matches, needs 62 runs to become the 11th Indian and 70th batsman overall to score 5000 runs in T20 matches

1

Ravichandran Ashwin who took 249 wickets in 246 innings of 249 matches, needs just one wicket to become the third Indian and 23rd bowler overall to take 250 wickets in Twenty-20 cricket

Faisel Features



show is affecting the DC middle-order, Mayank Agarwal's prolonged bad-patch coupled with Nicholas Pooran's susceptibility to short balls over his shoulder are not great news for Punjab either.

The middle-orders' struggles in both the dugouts will make it an engrossing contest with DC bowlers expected to hold sway in Nortje's presence.

In case of Punjab Kings, save Mohammed Shami, the two high-priced pacers — Jhye Richardson and Riley Meredith — haven't exactly set the stage on fire. Neither has Murugan Ashwin, a mystery spinner who has done nothing of note that would force Pant and Ponting to have sleepless nights.

St. Thomas' College-Dehradun

CONDOLENCE MESSAGE

Principal, Staff and students of St. Thomas' College, deeply bereave and offer condolences for the loss of their most beloved teacher MR. D N BARTARYA. He served in the institution selflessly and loyally for forty years. He will be forever missed and our college will never be able to overcome this loss.

We request all of you to please keep the bereaved family in your prayers, so that they get strength to overcome this tragedy.

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

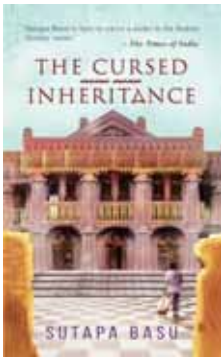
Reading *Gone With The Wind* by Margaret Mitchell gives the reader an excellent insight into lifestyles, dresses, social customs and attitudes prevalent in southern parts of USA during the American Civil War in the 1800s. The book has become a reference point for scholars of that period.

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, headdresses 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 carriages. 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 Bibhutibhusan 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 of the regional features of rural Bengal which has been exploited to the hilt.

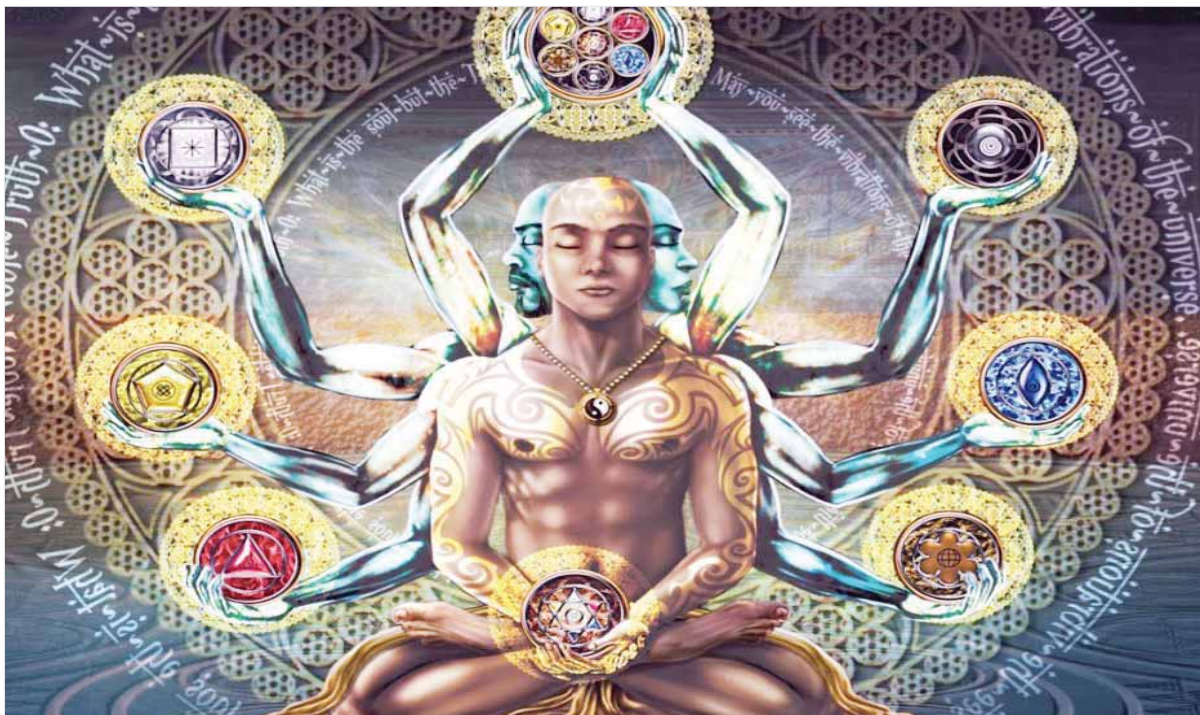
Stories, narratives, and storytelling are central aspects of all cultures and thus, a part of heritage. For the storytelling to become an effective propagator of cultural history, it must engage the listener or reader, and provide a narrative that is both cognitively and emotionally compelling. People 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

LOKAS 2: WHAT EXISTS ABOVE

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



It is believed that it is only when you have suffered enough and built a resolve to change, do you set an opportunity to get birth on the *Bhulok* or Earth. This is supposed to be true for most of the *lokas* and for movement from one to the other, either upwards or downwards. Only the Earth dimension provides the infrastructure for the relevant criss-cross Visas. This is the *Karma loka*, where there is opportunity to go against your nature and qualify for the better.

Higher *loka* beings descend downwards often to fulfil their own completions and final attainments. Many gurus are obligated to take the rebirth to uplift their disciples and help them gain completion. They do so to manipulate a change in their *gunas* through example setting, motivation, counselling and sharing their *gyan*.

The latest and one of the greatest was the *Mahaguru* whose *Karma Bhumi* was Gurgaon and afterlife headquarters is Najafgarh. While most prophets came with a small contingent of a few, he brought along hundreds of beings from higher *lokas* to accomplish his mission.

I have in the vision state visited a few *lokas* but never connected the dots and never pondered on the subject. Unfortunately my experience was limited and though theory not my normal choice, but in this case I had to resort to borrowing a few pages from the ancients and so these thoughts are a mixture of my realisations combined with those of others.

Before we come to our own to do list, let us look at the ladders that stand parallel to the snake. What are the higher *lokas*? What qualifications are required? What can we do to get higher on the ladders?

Let us imagine ourselves standing at a mid-landing of a staircase. Climbing is greater effort and needs agility. For those who like to sound profound call it *Purusharth*. Technically, you cannot climb up the ladder to higher *lokas*, you need to float up.

In order to move from the *Bhulok* or Earth plane to '*Bhuvalok*' or 'Astral Plane' or from the *Mooladhara Chakra* to the *Swadishthan Chakra*, from the Earth element to the water element, from the predominantly *Tamas* to more *Rajas* we need to work on controlling our senses.

IT IS BELIEVED THAT ABOVE THE SATYALOK ARE LOKAS LIKE VAIKUNTH, GOLOKA, SHIVALOK ETC. IT IS POSSIBLE THAT THE BHRAMLOK AND THESE ARE PARALLEL AND VARIABLE DUE TO THE INHERENT NATURE THE BEING HAS EVOLVED INTO

Remember this is a world ruled and perceived by senses. Our senses do not offer us more than 5% to 10% of reality. Between the *Bhuvarlok* and the *Svalok* or *Swarg*, the difference is quite huge.

At the *Bhuvarlok*, we have a slightly different set of off loads because this is a *loka* of intellect, memory, relationships, heroic attitudes, and emotions. On the other hand it is also a *loka* of attainment.

And then *Swarlok* is a place where you can spend your cosmic currency earned and stored. It is a place of immense pleasure and beauty. *Seva* leads to *Swarg* or beyond. It's a place where spiritual understanding and aspirations begin. People learn detachment and how to focus on the purpose of the self. They also prepare for rebirth on *Bhulok* when spiritual assets dwindle. They get born as kings and queens or administrators and dominating personalities maybe as celebrities as well. If they are philanthropic and kind, they retain their *loka* status. If not they catch a snake ride. If they are those who out do expectations, the ethereal ladder appears and the ascent is in order. The ascent is to the *Anahata chakra*

or the '*Maharlok*' which lies beyond the '*Dhruv Tara*' or the Pole star. *Mahar* is the land of the wise and balanced with qualities of selfless service, compassion and self-love. However, inactivity and observer capability is still one *loka* away. Birth on Earth comes as teachers, reformers, saintly people, healers etc.

Karmas are not doable at the level of these higher *lokas*. When one qualifies beyond devotion and beliefs and attains the status of knowing or *Gyan*, one becomes an invited resident of the '*Janalok*'. In the microcosm, this *loka* is at the level of the *Vishudhi Chakra*. One needs to be a sincere practitioner of spirituality and dispassion to qualify for a seat here. Till you harbour emotions, don't attain *Gyan* or intuitive knowledge, you can read about this *loka* but not live here. The senses especially the sense of sound and hearing needs to be history at this point.

When self-respect turns to self-reverence, when one feels the justification of self-worship, one takes birth, if and when one needs, on *Bhulok* as a spiritual leader and an aspirant to a higher *loka*. When Duality becomes an amalgam and wisdom hands the baton to observer-ship or *Sakshibhav*, one gets catapulted to the '*Tapalok*'. This is the *loka* of *Divya Bhakti* and reflection of oneself as divinity. You cease to be judgemental and identify as one with the universal consciousness. As this is a place of the third eye in the body, one has started the journey to shift consciousness.

There are 3 centres between the *Tapalok* and the *Satylok*. Above the *Ajna Chakra* are 3 *chakras* including the *Sahasra*, the location for final emancipation.

It is believed that above the *Satylok* are *lokas* like *Vaikunth*, *Goloka*, *Shivalok* etc. It is possible that the *Bhramlok* and these are parallel and variable due to the inherent nature the being has evolved into.

Gurudev once shared with me in confidence that when we die in our afterlife, we have to first pass through the *Dhruv Tara* or the pole star to get to where we belong. He also mentioned that we come across crossroads, and at these crossroads, one side has very bare looking places, while the other has very aesthetically lovely looking places. And he warned that the bare ones are the higher ones, and we should avoid getting stuck due to our sense of sight.

So choose wisely in this life and in your afterlife.

The writer is the author of Hingori Sutras series of spiritual books



HIDDENSOULS
PRAMOD PATHAK



Corona: Fear is the key

As the second round of Corona scare grips the world as many had predicted, mass hysteria of gargantuan proportions seems to be building up again. Psychologists may call this reaction a paranoia that seems to affect large sections of the people all over the world. And Corona is not the only worry. US is worried about the gun purchases reaching alarming levels as a sizeable section of Asian Americans are in some kind of an insecurity syndrome. Worry and fear are all at the top of the mind as death seems to be lurking round the corner. The situation is eerily similar to the Corona scare round 1 suggesting that experience is not always a good teacher. Rather, it accentuates the past behaviour many times over. Against this backdrop, we once again need to ask the same questions that were raised during the previous round. The responses are of the same trial and error nature. To add to the woes some new questions have cropped up. Is this a different Corona? Does the vaccine has the answer? Difficult to say but history seems to be repeating itself. As the scare mounts and the toll counts rise to alarming levels, there is a need to have a relook at the entire scenario and examine things in totality. And things may not appear to be as simple as they look. Yes, it has impacted lives, ruined families and caused death and destruction of enormous proportions. Yes, it has shattered economies and crashed GDPs. But there is another side of the story. It has raised the number of billionaires in both developed and developing countries and there are some in the queue to graduate to the trillionaire status. It has pushed the growth of e-commerce companies astronomically while online platforms rose in geometric proportions. Investors now realise that putting money in Pharma stocks yields big dividends, and rather fast, even though there is no sure medicine in sight. It also threw quacks and charlatans in thousands sermonising on dos and don'ts on the social media. YouTube has become the most handy tool for the propaganda brigade who are delivering unsubstantiated pearls of wisdom almost at the same pace as the speed of the spread of the virus. Quite interestingly the biological virus seems to have acquired traits of computer virus. So we are told that this time the vaccine provides immunity for some months rather than a lifetime, as it used to be earlier. The connection between computer and Corona seems interesting as there is an uncanny relationship between people having stakes in computers and Pharma. It is not just the medical angle. An interesting aspect is that one voice of dissent on the social media meets with systemic campaign from troll brigade that makes sure that such voices are lost in the din. That apart, there are many intriguing aspects to ponder. But we must understand that while exercising utmost caution helps us, getting scared helps others who have something to gain from our fear. Fear is a big industry these days and marketing negativities pushes demand of goods and services that are often not required. Making a fast buck is seldom done through fair business. As Mario Puzo wrote in *The Godfather* — *Behind every great fortune there is a crime*. Corona is certainly bad, but cashing in on Corona is rather worse.

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IN KRISHNA'S LOVE

Each one of us, whether in heart or mind, is trying to fill the void with energy. In my case, it is Krishna energy, says RAJIV KAPOOR

In the hollow emptiness within, a dark passage to seemingly nowhere, I search for myself, or perhaps dismiss myself in the perfect burial ground that one's consciousness could serve. The more inward I look, the more beyond me the vision wants to travel. Whereto, if not Krishna's feet or the sound of His Flute that beckons many hearts. The outcome is peace when I tread with faith, and frustration when I digress to alleys not in His name. That alternating peace and frustration is because I am human. In that lies both my hope and disappointment.

Why Krishna, and not simply emptiness? Buddhist proponents may argue. Or, another name to fill the void such as Jesus or Mohammed, that few minority religious minds in India might be provoked to ask. In raising those questions, the adult mind remains minor. For all of us, whether in your heart or mine, are trying to fill the void with energy. In my case, it is Krishna energy. The big personal journey inside would be best served without the myopic lens of religion, and instead with an intuitive eye of the seeker. It is in Krishna consciousness that this pen flows.

"Among the mountains, I am the Himalayas," said He.

We are all trying to climb successive peaks that we see. Any relative comparison among the peers is useless. Glorious peaks for a few could be futile plateaus for others. Within us those subjectively defined heights are measured and more importantly, a climbing process where life is felt and lived.

I saw the peak of a woman, and in her true love, my elixir. The energy that flows in true love is the same, whether it is for God or a person. If I could not be consciously in God's love round the clock, then I needed her love. May be, through her love only, could I hope to reach the higher realms in my spiritual world that was con-



ceived from His Flute.

Indeed, from atop that peak, one of love and not marriage, I saw Krishna more relevant. So, I decided to talk to Him through my writings, in a more inspired version of myself and in His own language of creation. In humility, I called my spirit to drop ink on paper floor. Then, with abandon, I danced upon it. Krishna must be merry in the heavens too.

As I wrote in my book, *Conversations With My Love*: Creativity is God. In it, we find ourselves; His scheme, how he fulfills; Promises He makes, Ours' that He keeps; Many through progeny, follow the creative path; I found other way, I came to write.

Another peak climbed, and yet not high enough. Krishna was not always there to keep me drowned or submerged in Him. He had not yet granted me that fortune.

"Krishna, wither those clouds, that hide the next peak, and not my limbs," said I, and continued, "before I leave my pot of earth behind, present yourself Master."

"Climbing shall not end. Know this, that with every step of yours howsoever made, I will make one towards you." Replied the Master.

In that leap of faith I continued. The only glimmer of light in the dark passage within. The light of Krishna energy, that I nurtured from emptiness, dropping off all that was useless in the climb towards the next peak.

I conjured up Krishna's idol of white, spotless marble. Ganges flowed down His entire length and out through the door that my soul had opened. "It is my birthday, mate," said He, "of your Venusian heart, tell me which void shall I fill?"

My Lord, in your presence, and when your eyes meet mine, there is no void anymore. The ocean fills all empty spaces. Only depths remain unexplored, now that I have taken the dive. Call the mermaid with Your Flute and ask her to pull me deeper.

The writer is the author of book, *Conversations With My Love*

We are programmed

The programming of fear, or that God is not there to protect us, can be changed through faith, writes AJIT KUMAR BISHNOI

We, human beings, are programmed to fear. Why blame God for this? What do we do with our children? We instil discipline in them by scaring them. This process of scaring into submission is reinforced throughout one's life. If a growing child is not paying proper attention to his studies, his parents may paint a very dark picture of his future. Then, there is law to be afraid of for everyone. As a result, we are all insecure without exception. The thought of insecurity comes regularly, which makes us careful, cautious and fearful.

In short, we are programmed to be insecure. How else can a world with its seven billions plus population coexist? This is the cosmic design, which is to stop us from acting irresponsibly by being fearful. Unknowingly, we contribute to instil fear in others.

This is not all, we are also programmed to think that in spite of all the talk about God, if He exists at all, will not protect us. What good is God to us if He will not protect us. Is our security not a major concern for us. This feeling is a big factor in people not having faith in God. On the other hand, we are told that God will punish us if we stray, though this is factually incorrect, because giving punishment is done by divine authorities, based on our bad/sinful acts. God stays away from such administration of justice except in rare cases like that of Ravana. At that time, God chooses to perform many functions like re-establishing *dharma*. (*Bhagavad Gita* 4.7) This programming is also part of the cosmic design.

There are two kinds of people in the world — those born with predominantly divine and demonic qualities. (16.6) There is always friction between



them. The demonic try to cause harm to the world by their cruel acts. (16.9) Those with divine endowments are crucial for the proper functioning of the world. That is why God and His divine establishment favour them. There are three categories of such divine souls. The first one consists of just good people, who do mostly good acts not wanting to harm anyone.

The next or higher lot is of good people, who also do public service. For this reason, God does intervene in their cases by protecting them by extricating them from harmful situations, caused by their bad acts done earlier. Remember, these souls must have erred like the rest of us human beings. God has to help out; He does. God does much more for His devotees — the highest category He puts them in the '*yogakshemam*' group — (9.22). God helps in getting what one does not have and provides security of what one has. This is how the two higher groups of

people are assured of not ending up badly (6.40) or never perishing. (9.31)

So what did we learn? That the programming of being fearful or having the feeling that God will not protect does not have to be permanently inched into us, it can be changed. However, there are conditions, as mentioned earlier. If we have qualified, then, we need not be so fearful or anxious; we can come to the level of being cautious, careful, etc., which is necessary for our own good. This is when peace descends. One knows in his heart that he is never alone and helpless; God is with Him. (6.7) He enjoys God's protection. God is real; He is no longer a figment of imagination.

Every time a fearful thought comes in the mind then one thinks that he is not alone; God is with him; He will protect. Gradually, the earlier programming will change from negative to positive and life will be much better.

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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 adversities (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.

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PRATAP C MOHANTY



PRAGYTA 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



SUBHROJOYOTI 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 healthcare 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 Vishwarkarma 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

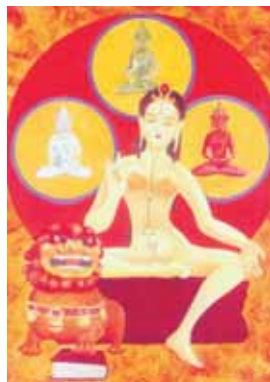
MADHU KOTIYA



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 19

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 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 easy 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/
Samaskaratadwijaucchayate/
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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