

OPINION 8
INDIA'S FLAMING
FORESTS PLAY HAVOC**WORLD 11**
MYANMAR COUP FOES TOUT
MINORITY-BACKED SHADOW GOVT**SPORT 14**
STOKES OUT
FOR 12 WEEKS

LUCKNOW, SATURDAY APRIL 17, 2021; PAGES 14 ₹3



the pioneer

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SAFETY OVER
COMFORT:
SUNNY LEONE
12 VIVACITY

4L daily Covid cases by Apr end likely

At current rate, deaths could go up to 200/day; Delhi sees record 20k cases in 24 hrs

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

With the current rate of the daily surge, India's Covid-19 cases could reach anywhere between 3.5 and 4 lakh by the end of April. Going by the current death rate of around 0.5 per cent, India could see a daily fatality of around 175 to 200 per day by month-end. On Friday, India recorded over 2.08 lakh new cases and 1,124 deaths, compared to 2.17 lakh cases and 1,185 deaths the previous day.

The country's average daily Covid-19 growth during the last two weeks is around 5.2 to 6 per cent, or 12,000 to 15,000 a day. Even in the case of a highly optimistic scenario where the cases stabilise around an average of 10,000 per day, the country total should go easily past 3.5 lakh in the remaining two weeks of this month.

The most worrying part is the fact that the number of new cases is rising alarmingly in States other than Maharashtra and Chhattisgarh, which bore the brunt of the onset of the second wave of the Covid-19.

On Friday, Maharashtra recorded its single-day high of 63,729 cases and 398 deaths. Delhi also recorded its single day of 19,486 cases and a

Haryana shuts schools till Apr 30

Chandigarh: The Haryana Government on Friday announced consolidated guidelines to contain the spread of Covid-19, ordering closure of schools, colleges and coaching institutes till April 30 and capping number of attendees at gatherings and passengers in vehicles.

Passengers stand in a queue outside Anand Vihar Railway Station as they arrive to board train for their native place amid rise in Covid cases in New Delhi on Friday
Ranjan Dimri | Pioneer

record 141 deaths. Chhattisgarh has seen an alarming 131 per cent rise in the number of fresh cases during the last one weeks.

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BSY +ve for 2nd time in 8 months; Javadekar too Covid positive

Bengaluru/New Delhi: Karnataka Chief Minister BS Yediyurappa on Friday tested positive for Covid-19 for the second time in eight months, and has been shifted to a private hospital. Union Minister Prakash Javadekar too tested positive for coronavirus.

CICSE defers Class X, XII Board exams

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Council for the Indian School Certificate Examinations (CICSE) on Friday deferred the board exams for Classes 10 and 12 in view of a rise in Covid-19 cases across the country.

In light of the nationwide surge in coronavirus cases, the Class 10 and 12 exams which were to be held from May 4 have been deferred. CICSE's chief executive and secretary Gerry Arathoon said.

"We will closely monitor the situation and review it in the first week of June to take a final decision on conduct of examination," he said. "While Class 12 exams will be conducted at a later stage, Class 10 students will get an option to either appear in offline exams later or get evaluated on basis of fair and unbiased criteria to be developed by board," Arathoon added.

Earlier this week, the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) had cancelled its Class 10 board exams and deferred the Class 12 board exams. Several State boards have postponed or cancelled their exams too.

Covid-19 IN INDIA

TOTAL CASES:
1,44,96,651 (+2,08,725)

DEATHS: 1,75,459 (+1,124)

RECOVERED:
1,26,50,298 (+1,06,248)

ACTIVE: 16,63,789

MAHARASHTRA: 37,03,584

KERALA: 12,07,333

KARNATAKA: 11,24,509

TAMIL NADU: 9,71,384

DELHI: 8,03,623 (+19,486)

Covaxin production to double by June, 7 fold by July-Aug

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The current production capacity of Bharat Biotech indigenously developed Covaxin vaccine will be doubled by May-June 2021

and then increased nearly 6-7 fold by July-August 2021, the Government said on Friday.

The Union Ministry of Science and Technology issued a statement in this regard, saying "the current production capacity of indigenously developed Covaxin vaccine will be doubled by May-June 2021 and then increased nearly 6-7 fold by July-August 2021 — that is increasing the production from 1 crore vaccine doses in April 2021 to 6-7 crore vaccine dose by July-August. It is expected to reach nearly 10 crore doses per month by September this year."

It said the Government will provide financial support as a grant to vaccine manufacturing facilities for enhanced production capacities.

Recently, inter-ministerial teams visited the sites of two

Sunday curfew in all UP dists till May 15

₹1,000 fine for no mask; markets to be sanitised on Sundays

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

As corona surge continues, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has ordered "Sunday curfew" across the State and also ordered setting up of 1,000-bed Covid hospitals in Lucknow to meet the demand of shortage of beds.

The State Government also stated that ₹1,000 fine will be charged for not wearing masks and ₹10,000 fine for second time violation. The Sunday curfew will continue till May 15.

In the review meeting, the CM ordered closure of markets, offices and other business establishments on Sunday so as to allow sanitisation of the markets across the State. "There will be a weekly closure in all rural and urban areas of the State on Sunday. Only sanitisation and emergency services will operate

A view of the iconic building of Lucknow, Imambada. ASI protected monuments remained shut for visitors in view of the rising Covid-19 cases in the country, in Lucknow on Friday
PTI

during this period. Necessary awareness works should also be done in this regard. He hinted that even public transport and commutation won't be allowed.

"A 1,000-bed Covid hospital will be established in Lucknow. The venue of the Defence Expo in Vrindavan Colony has been chosen for setting up of this makeshift hospital," the Chief Minister said during a review meeting with divisional commissioners, district magistrates, Chief Medical Officers and

members of the Team-11 (a core team of 11 officers).

Yogi also ordered closure of OPDs in all Government hospitals in the State to control crowds. He also announced that it is compulsory for everyone to wear a mask.

"A fine of ₹1,000 would be imposed for the first time caught without a mask. If caught without a mask a second time, a penalty of ₹10,000 would be imposed," he added.

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Covid spreads mainly via air: Lancet study

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The SARS-CoV-2 virus that causes Covid-19 is predominantly transmitted through air, according to a new assessment carried in the medical journal Lancet which said it found little to no evidence that the virus spreads easily via large droplets, which fall quickly through the air and contaminate surfaces.

The study added that public health measures that fail to treat the virus as predominantly airborne leave people unprotected and allow the virus to spread. The study observation is significant for India where mass gatherings and election rallies continue unabated even as overall Covid-19 cases are breaking records daily.

A multi-research team from the UK, the US and Canada warned that public health measures that fail to treat the virus as predominantly airborne leave people unprotected and allow the virus to spread.

Silent (asymptomatic or presymptomatic) transmission of SARS-CoV-2 from people who are not coughing or sneezing accounts for at least 40 per cent of all transmission.



This silent transmission is a key way Covid-19 has spread around the world, "supporting a predominantly airborne mode of transmission," as per the assessment.

By contrast, the researchers found little to no evidence that the virus spreads easily via large droplets, which fall quickly through the air and contaminate surfaces.

"The evidence supporting airborne transmission is overwhelming, and evidence supporting large droplet transmission is almost non-existent," said Jose-Luis Jimenez, a chemist at the Cooperative Institute for Research in Environmental Sciences (CIRES) and the University of Colorado Boulder.

Continued on Page 11

EC cuts Bengal campaign time by 3 hrs at night over Covid rise

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Against the backdrop of rising Covid-19 cases and the heavy political rhetoric in poll-bound areas, the Election Commission (EC) on Friday extended the "silence" period from 48 hours to 72 hours in each of the remaining three of the eight phases of the West Bengal polls to be held on April 22, 26, and 29.

The commission has curtailed the timing of campaigning up to 7pm from 10 pm. It has banned rallies, public meetings, nukkad sabha, and street play from 7 pm to 10 am beginning Friday.

"Commission curtails the timing of the campaign up to 7 pm. The silence period has been extended from 48 hours to 72 hours in each of the remaining three phases in West Bengal. These orders have come into effect immediately," the EC said in a letter to the president, general secretary and chairman of the national and state-level political parties.

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Ensure sufficient oxygen for emergency care: PM

Modi calls for increase in manufacturing

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

As the second wave of Covid-19 variant has led to a rapid rise in positive cases across the country and brought health facilities under increasing pressure, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday undertook a "comprehensive" review to ensure adequate medical grade oxygen supply in the country and called for stepping up its production.

Oxygen supply has been under pressure with the multiplication of coronavirus cases after it had largely ebbed out by the start of this year.

According to the Prime Minister's Office (PMO), Modi took a comprehensive review to ensure adequate medical grade oxygen supply in the country.

Inputs from Ministries like health, steel, road transport, and the Department for Promotion of Industry and



Internal Trade were also shared with the PM during the review, said the statement of the PMO.

The PM stressed that it is important to ensure synergy across Ministries and State Governments, the PMO said.

He also took a detailed review of the current situation of oxygen supply and projected use in the coming 15 days across 12 high-burden States — Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh,

Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh, Delhi, Chhattisgarh, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Punjab, Haryana and Rajasthan.

The PMO said an overview of the district-level situation in these States was presented to the PM.

He was informed that the Centre and States are in regular contact and estimates for projected demand has been shared with states as of April 20, April 25 and April 30, it said.

The PMO said, accordingly, 4,880 MT, 5,619 MT and 6,593 MT have been allocated to these 12 States for meeting their projected demand of medical oxygen as on April 20, April 25 and April 30, respectively.

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Need more research to determine spread of 'double mutant' coronavirus: Scientists

New Delhi: A global mutation tracker on Friday suggested the "double mutant" coronavirus, first identified in Maharashtra, has a cumulative

prevalence of 10 per cent in India, a finding that some scientists here said is based on insufficient data and needs more research.

Monsoon normal this year, predicts IMD

Odisha, Jharkhand, Bihar, eastern UP, Assam may not get sufficient rainfall

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Barring Odisha, Bihar, Jharkhand, north-Chhattisgarh, eastern Uttar Pradesh, Meghalaya and Assam, India will probably experience normal monsoon rainfall this year as La Nina or El Nino weather conditions, which impact rain patterns, are likely to be absent.

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) on Friday predicted overall "normal" monsoon rainfall at 98 per cent of the Long Period Average (LPA), which has a model error of plus and minus 5 per cent during the June-



September period across the country. The LPA of the monsoon is 88 centimetres.

Rainfall between 96-104 per cent of the LPA is considered normal. The IMD said the probability of the 2021 monsoon being "normal" was 40% while there was 21% chance of it being "above normal".

While releasing the first Long Range Forecast for the four-month rainfall period from June to September, M Rajeevan, secretary of the Ministry of Earth Sciences,

said, quantitatively, the monsoon seasonal rainfall is likely to be 98% of the LPA with a model error of +/- 5 per cent.

"It is really good news for the country and will help India have a good agriculture output," he said.

The news augurs well for an economy battered due to the coronavirus pandemic. Large parts of the country rely on the four-month rainfall season for agriculture and also for filling reservoirs.

The 'normal' rainfall means good acreage of Kharif crops (paddy, pulses, oilseeds, and coarse cereals), and adequate water storage in major water bodies across the countries for the next crop season. Better water storage also helps (winter sown) crops, bringing the entire crop year in bumper output phase.

This is the first time the IMD has adopted the most advanced and comprehensive system to arrive at its forecast,

keeping in view demands from different users and government authorities for forecasts of the spatial distribution of seasonal rainfall along with the regionally averaged rainfall forecasts for better regional level planning of activities.

For this specific purpose, Office of Climate Research & Services, IMD, Pune has developed a Multi-Model Ensemble (MME) forecasting system based on coupled global climate models (CGCMs) from different global climate prediction and research centres including the Monsoon Mission CFS (MMCFS) being used by IMD. According to Rajeevan, the IMD will also issue month-wise forecasts during the next four months.

The La Nina and El Nino factors major influences on the Indian monsoon. The former is associated with the cooling of the Pacific waters and brings good rainfall while

Continued on Page 11

UK Home Dept clears Nirav Modi's extradition to India

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Home Department of the United Kingdom has cleared the extradition of fugitive diamondaire Nirav Modi, wanted in India connection with a case involving over ₹13,000-crore credit fraud involving Punjab National Bank (PNB).

However, Westminster's court has granted Nirav a window of appeal in the High Court and has up to 14 days to make that application after the Home Secretary cleared the extradition.

Nirav had allegedly perpetrated the fraud in the PNB in collusion with his uncle Mehul Choksi. On February 25, a Westminster Magistrates' Court allowed his extradition. The findings of the court



were sent to the UK Home Department headed by British Home Secretary Priti which cleared the extradition, officials said, according to news agency PTI.

The UK's Westminster Magistrates' Court ruled that the diamond merchant and prime accused in the PNB credit fraud case, Nirav Modi, has a case to answer before

Indian courts.

India is a designated Part 2 country under the Extradition Act 2003 and the UK's Cabinet Minister has the authority to order the requested person's extradition after considering a number of further issues.

Under the Act, the Secretary of State must consider the possibility of imposition of the death penalty, in which case extradition cannot be ordered; the rule of specialty, which prohibits a person being dealt within the requesting state for matters other than those referenced in the extradition request; and whether or not the person was in the UK following extradition from another state, in which case that state's permission must be obtained before extraditing to a third state.

In the absence of these factors, the Minister is supposed to order extradition within two months of the day on which the District Judge referred the decision to the office of Secretary of State.

The Home Secretary's order rarely goes against the court's conclusions.

Nirav can also appeal to the UK Supreme Court but only after the High Court certifies that the appeal involves a point of law of general public importance and either the High Court or the Supreme Court gives leave for the appeal to be made.

The CBI had registered the case on January 31, 2018, against the partners of three private firms and others including then officials of PNB on a complaint from the bank.

Mad scramble for beds, crematoriums as cases surge

27,426 more infected in Uttar Pradesh; 6,598 test positive in capital

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The mad scramble for a bed in a hospital, life-saving medicines and decent cremation of their kin falling prey to Covid continued in Uttar Pradesh with 27,426 cases being reported in the last 24 hours and Lucknow accounting for one-fourth of the cases. The death toll in the last 24 hours stood at 103 during this period.

State capital Lucknow continued to be the hotspot, reporting 6,598 cases and 35 deaths in the last 24 hours, followed by Varanasi with 2,344 new cases, Prayagraj (1,758) and Kanpur (1,403).

The rate of infection in the second Covid wave has been spiking at an increasing rate. On April 9, UP had recorded 9,695 cases while Lucknow witnessed 2,934 cases but in the following week, the number spiralled by almost three times. Last week, 37 people had died across the state and the number has now gone up to 103.

Health department officials said that this time the infection was proving extremely fatal and most patients succumbed on the third day of infection. The new mutant virus has proved to be deadlier than before.

“This time the infection is spreading so fast that people are not getting time to get treatment. Many died before we could even get a test report,” said a doctor preferring anonymity. The spread of infection and increase in fatality rate has made people nervous and jittery.

“Ram Rajya laane wali sarkar, khud Ram barose hai,” shouted BJP worker Anurag Sharma, whose father tested Covid positive on Tuesday and he pulled all strings to get his ailing father admitted to a hospital but to no avail.

A desperate Sharma pleaded with the CMO, “My father’s oxygen level has dipped. Please admit him even to a private hospital. I will pay the fees by selling my land in the village. I need to save my father’s life.”

Being in BJP and working on ad hoc in the party office, he was in touch with some senior leaders. “Few leaders assured me that they will help and I believe they might have called the higher officials too, but till now, I am yet to get a bed for my father,” he said.

Sharma’s case is not an isolated case. Santosh Singh, son of a senior BJP leader Manohar Singh, wrote to the CM as to how he had been waiting for an ambulance as his family



Fire Services department personnel carrying out sanitisation in Lucknow's Bhoolnath market on Friday

Pioneer

members tested positive. He said that the person taking calls at the call centre rudely snubbed by saying: “Jaa kar mar jao”.

If BJP workers and leaders are facing the wrath of administration what is happening with common persons could be anybody’s guess.

Rajiv Tiwari of Indira Nagar tested Covid positive on April 11 and has been in home isolation. His oxygen level dropped to below 90 after which he has been waiting for an ambulance to shift him to a hospital for the last three days. “I am told a hospital has been allotted to me but there is no ambulance to take me there,” he said.

In this dire situation, even getting medicines for patients in home isolation, has proved to be a tough task. A woman, preferring anonymity, said that she purchased Remdesivir, a crucial drug for treatment of Covid-19, at Rs 12,000 per vial against the printed price of Rs 4500. “I was told that the drug is out of stock. With no option left I was forced to extra,” she said. She needs 12 vials of the injection.

A journalist’s wife tested positive, is in home isolation and has been advised administration of Covifor. “However this medicine is out of stock and a chemist said he

can arrange it for Rs 4000 while its cost is less than RS 1500,” he said.

Chandra Bhan, a chemist in Lucknow, said that basic medicines like Zinc tablets, Vit D and Vit C were in short supply. The demand for these medicines was high as the government has advised people to take it.

With the people neither getting medical care nor medicines, there has been a worrying spike in the number of deaths due to Covid.

On Wednesday, UP recorded 61 deaths while it shot up to 108 on Thursday leading to a rush in cremation grounds and graveyards.

In Kanpur, 35 new temporary platforms have been set up on Bithoor-Sidhnath Ghat stretch along river Ganga to cremate bodies.

A report from Allahabad said that in the last one week, almost 850 cremations and 135 burials had taken place.

GOVT OUTLAW ASSEMBLY DURING PANCHAYAT POLLS

Following the unabated surge in Covid cases across the state, the UP government has banned the assembly of more than five persons during the remaining three phases of Panchayat elections. Violators of the directives will be penalised under

preventive law NSA.

Additional Chief Secretary Awanish Awasthi said in Lucknow on Friday that candidates for the three-tier Panchayat bodies, their supporters and voters would have to comply with Corona protocol, like wearing mask and social distancing. He said that the government will deal with those attempting to disrupt the poll process by indulging in anti social activities, with a firm hand. He said that the violators would be booked under the NSA.

Awasthi said that the first phase of the elections on Thursday passed off peacefully. He said that polling was held at 51,000 booths and barring a few booths, polling was peaceful in all 18 districts.

Awasthi said that the government has issued directives for enforcement of Covid protocol like wearing of masks at public places, railway stations and inside trains.

QUARANTINE CENTRES SET UP FOR MIGRANTS

The Uttar Pradesh government has set up quarantine centres in 56 districts witnessing the influx of migrant workers. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath was informed about this at a high-level meeting on Friday.

Earlier the CM had directed officials to establish sufficient number of Quarantine Centres for migrants returning to the state, as soon as possible. He had also asked concerned authorities to ensure all necessary facilities to the returnees.

Acting promptly, the authorities saw to it that these Centres with all facilities for labourers returning to their home state from different parts of the country, were set up.

In the wake of the upsurge in Covid cases in the state, Yogi directed all district magistrates to conduct RT-PCR (reverse transcription-polymerase chain reaction) test of the returning migrants and provide necessary medical aid to the needy.

FIREMEN SANITISING CONTAINMENT ZONES

The Fire Service department personnel across the state have been sanitising containment zones and keeping cities clean to curb the spread of coronavirus infection. The department has started round-the-clock operations to spray disinfectants at major sites in all districts.

More than 900 fire brigade vehicles were pressed into service across the state for spraying sodium hypochlorite and disinfecting the

Rajnath deploys DRDO team to set up temporary Covid hosps in Lucknow

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Two days after Defence Minister Rajnath Singh wrote to Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath requesting him to arrange for more beds in hospitals, he ordered the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) to set up two makeshift hospitals with a combined capacity of 1,100 beds. Singh is also the MP from Lucknow.

Singh’s public representative Diwakar Tripathi told this reporter that the DRDO team has reached Lucknow and would set up two hospitals of 500 beds and 600 beds in two corners of the city to meet the demand of beds in Lucknow, which has been ravaged by the recent Covid spread.

While one of the hospitals will come up at Haj House, the other will be at Blossom’s Height.

Tripathi said that on the instructions of the Defence minister, a (DRDO) team reached Lucknow by a special aircraft on Friday and work for the hospital would start immediately.

Singh had earlier spoken to Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on rising Corona infection in Uttar Pradesh, particularly in Lucknow.

On Thursday, UP Law Minister and Lucknow MLA Brajesh Pathak had announced that he would donate Rs 1 crore from his MLA fund for the purchase of medical equipment to fight the Covid surge.



THE DRDO TEAM HAS REACHED LUCKNOW AND WOULD SET UP TWO HOSPITALS OF 500 BEDS AND 600 BEDS IN TWO CORNERS OF THE CITY TO MEET THE DEMAND OF BEDS IN LUCKNOW, WHICH HAS BEEN RAVAGED BY THE RECENT COVID SPREAD

areas. In the last 24 hours, 1,883 sites were sanitised in 10 districts including Lucknow, Meerut, Prayagraj and Varanasi.

Additional DG (Fire Services) Vijay Prakash said that Fire Service personnel were instructed to take utmost care and not sprinkle disinfectants on any individual or inside a house.

“Sodium hypochlorite” used in sanitisation is a modified salt and as it comes in contact with any surface or water, chlorine is released and converted into sodium hydroxide. The latter is a very strong base that does not allow any bacteria or virus

to flourish.

Sanitisation of 35 sites in Lucknow, 78 in Prayagraj, 66 in Kanpur, 237 in Varanasi, 85 in Agra, 483 in Gautam Budh Nagar, 95 in Mathura, 146 in Meerut, 201 in Ferozabad and 133 in Ghaziabad were being carried out daily.

Similarly, sanitisation of identified hotspots/potential hotspots, sensitive sites, market places, residential sites in other districts, were also under process. Railway and bus stations, areas near hospitals, government offices and court premises, vegetable markets etc. were also being sanitised daily.

Priority of CII will be employment generation: Munjal

Lucknow (PNS): Abhimanyu Munjal, the newly elected chairman of CII Northern Region, shared the agenda and focus areas of CII in the region for the year 2021-22 and it included his view on the prevailing pandemic situation.

“Our first priority will be employment generation by focusing on industries like manufacturing, hospitality, food & agriculture, infrastructure and tourism. Our focus will be on invest-

ment, policy advocacy and ease of doing business so that we can get more companies to invest in the region. The CII Northern Region has seven states and three UTs. Besides this, we will focus on environmental sustainability, competitiveness of micro, small and medium enterprises, promoting research & development spending, promoting technologies, startups and future businesses besides governance and digitisation, and rural-urban connect,”

Munjal said. “CII will do advocacy with the state government on digitisation of key services such as digital records of land banks, health records, PDS services etc,” he added. Munjal also said that in view of the prevailing Covid situation, CII has outlined a 5-point critical agenda for control of the rampant spread of infections which states that on no account should any type of meeting or gathering comprising more than 10 people be permitted for any purpose,

industries should encourage work from home wherever possible, ensure hygiene in industries and follow Covid protocols, all public transport including metros, trains and buses must run at one-third seating capacity and vaccination should be opened to all age groups and made available for longer time periods at the vaccination centres. “CII has represented to the state governments that there should not be a complete lockdown and CII can com-

plement the vaccination drive in India as some of our member companies have already organised medical camps for their employees and their families. Our member companies will have employees and their family members contributing 5-6% of the population of the country. Vaccination should be open to all age groups and be made available for longer times. Private sector has also come in support to ensure supply of oxygen to hospitals,” he added.

CITYBRIEFS



CMS STUDENTS CRACK UPSC EXAMS

Two meritorious students of City Montessori School — Amit Gupta (Mahanagar Campus) and Divyanshu Pandey (Rajendra Nagar Campus) — have brought laurels to their alma mater by cracking the prestigious UPSC exams. While Amit Gupta secured 35th rank and was selected for the post of SDM, Divyanshu Pandey was selected for the post of tax assessment officer. CMS founder Jagdish Gandhi expressed happiness over the success of these students and said they would contribute creatively to the structure of an ideal society with best performance in their area of work.

M/s Prem Traders LLP having registered office at 4th Floor, Gopal Dass Bhawan, 28, Barakhamba Road, New Delhi-110001 has lost its allotment letter/agreement No. 0763 dated 20/11/2012 which was issued by DLF Limited for the plot No. D-197 in DLF Garden City, Raibareilly Road, Lucknow. Contact no. 6306767944

Mr. Dipanshu Rastogi, son of Late Mr. Nand Kishore Rastogi, R/o C-403, Indra Prastha Estate, Faizabad Road, Opp. I.T. College, New Hyderabad, Lucknow-226007, have lost 8 original payment receipts of plot no. A-170, DLF Garden City, Raibareilly Road, Lucknow. Detail of 8 original payment receipts are: GDN/CRB/00217/0513, GDN/CRB/00134/0913, GDN/CRB/00305/0913, GDN/CRB/00211/1113, GDN/CRB/00304/0214, GDN/CRB/00216/0514, GDN/CRB/00151/0914, GDN/CRB/0321/00004. Contact No. 9565244313

PUBLIC NOTICE

Notice is hereby given by the undersigned for and on behalf of LIC Housing Finance Ltd. Area Office, Shahnazaf Road, Lucknow pursuant to Circular No. 422/Annexure-E of LIC HFL that the Original sale dated 05-02-2007 executed Amer Alam Khan in favour of Smt Naushaba Siddiqui. The said sale deed is registered in the Office of Sub Registrar IV Lucknow in Book No. 1, Volume 3870 pages-313/368 on Serial No. 1184 dated-05.02.2007 in respect to House No.115/1 area 1800 sq.ft. Situated at Rawindra Garden, Distt.-Lucknow. Present owner Asoka Sharan has been lost Original Sale deed dated-05.02.2007 Vikas Jain and Pratishtha Jain has applied for housing loan for which has proposed the said property to be mortgaged by depositing aforesaid Original sale deed dated-05.02.2007 with LIC HFL and as such any person claiming to be the said property covered by the said document may file claim before me within 15 days from the date of publication of notice failing which it will be presumed that the property in question is free from any encumbrance and any claim in respect thereof against the applicant as mortgagee shall be void and ineffective after the lapse of 15 days of publication of the notice.

Maranendra Mohan Mishra (Advocate)
Chamber: Shop No. 4 & 5, Ground Floor, Krishna Tower, Near CMO Office, Kaiserbagh, Lucknow.
Mob. 9415428914, 9559955554



NOTICE

I have changed my name from Manju Devi to Vandana Chhabaria. In future I shall be known as Vandana Chhabaria. Vandana Chhabaria W/o, Suresh Kumar Chhabaria, Plot No. - 6, 7/143-B, Swaroop Nagar, Kanpur.

NOTICE

I, Subhash Chandra Arya (DOB-06/03/1961) S/o Chokhey Lal Arya, R/o (SF-01), B-1/36, Sector-F, Kapoorthala Apartment, Aliganj, Lucknow-226024 have changed my old name from Subhash Chandra to Subhash Chandra Arya for all future purposes.

NOTICE

I, Kusum Lata Arya (DOB-09/05/1964) W/o Subhash Chandra Arya, R/o (SF-01), B-1/36, Sector-F, Kapoorthala Apartment, Aliganj, Lucknow-226024 have changed my old name from Kusum Lata to Kusum Lata Arya for All future purposes

Rs 3,870-cr investment at Noida to generate over 48,000 jobs: Mahana

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Pursuing the agenda of rapid industrialisation and attracting investment, major corporate groups have purchase land at Noida. The estimated investment is Rs 3,870 crore and is likely to create over 48,000 jobs.

UP Industries Minister Satish Mahana said on Friday that along with Adani Group, Dixxon Technology, around 2 lakh sq meter of land has been allotted to 13 investors in Noida, paving the way for investment of close to Rs 4,000 crore leading to creation of over 48,000 jobs.

He said Adani Group is setting up a data centre and Noida has allotted 39,146 sq meters of land to the group. He said Adani Group will invest Rs 2,500 crore for setting up the data centre. It would accelerate the process of development of Noida as a hub of data centre and an important destination for investment, the minister said. He added the data centre would create 1,160 jobs and indirect jobs for many more.

He said that Dixxon Group, a major technology firm, is in the process of setting up a mobile phone manufacturing unit at Noida. He said a plot of land measuring 21,000 sq metre has been allotted to Dixxon and the company would invest Rs 270 crore and



“Along with Adani Group, Dixxon Technology, around 2 lakh sq meter of land has been allotted to 13 investors in Noida, paving the way for investment of close to Rs 4,000 crore leading to creation of over 48,000 jobs”

likely generate 9,000 jobs.

The minister said another firm, Agarwal Associates, would invest Rs 280 crore in IT Park and a plot measuring 55,000 sq metre has been allotted to the company. This investment has the potential to generate 30,000 new jobs, he added.

Mahana said that industrial plots have been allotted to many other companies which would manufacture mobile phones, televisions, washing machines, laptop computers, air-conditioners, textiles, furniture, handicrafts, food

processing products, paper products, cattle feed and garments.

The minister said that for different categories of industries, 66 applications were received. All the applicants were invited for interview and plots were allotted as per the criterions set by the government.

“Besides Noida, the process of allotment of land to the investors is in process in several districts. Land allotment to 15 investors is in process and an investment of Rs 13,400 crore is likely to be made,” Mahana said.

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2,002 more test positive in Varanasi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

The district has recorded another biggest spike. As many as 2,002 more have tested positive on Friday evening increasing the total number to 38,434 crossing the 38K-mark. With six more deaths during the last 24 hours, the death toll increased to 416. During the last 24 hours, 637 patients have been recovered and all of them in home isolation. The total number of patients cured in the district is 24,898 including 21,886 in home isolation and 3,012 in COVID-19 hospitals. The number of active cases has jumped up to 13,114 crossing the 13K-mark.

In the first report of the day, 948 positive patients were found out of 2,967 reports received and this figure increased to 2,002 as per report provided by the Health department in the evening increasing the active cases to 13,114. Earlier, in view of finding hundreds of new positive cases, with 16 new hotspots, the number of active hotspots has increased to 490 with 10 green zones having been converted to



Police officers patrolling to ensure the protocol of COVID-19

Pioneer

red zones by a day ago. Out of total 2,900 hotspots, 2,410 are green zones and 490 are red zones.

The Health department continued the vaccination at 66 centres including government hospitals and health centres. The vaccination was also made at the municipal corporation, medical care unit in Collectorate, head post office in Visheshwarganj and Central Jail in Shivpur. The long queues of the people particularly of old aged persons were seen at government hospitals for the vac-

cination but at the same time, the carelessness was also seen and no physical distance was maintained between the corona positive and persons with negative report. Earlier, a total of 6,011 beneficiaries were vaccinated on Thursday. On the initiative of the DGM, SBI Vinod Kumar Sinha, the vaccination programme was held at bank's zonal office in Kutchery and as many as 250 staff were administered first dose under vaccination.

Meanwhile, the District Magistrate Kaushal Raj Sharma

said that there is no shortage of Remdesivir injections and it is available in government hospitals free of cost while it could be purchased at the cost of ₹899 per injection from private hospitals. But reality is opposite this as this life saving injection is not available in the government hospitals and the private hospitals are making demand much higher than the actual cost. There is also a complaint that the medical shops are selling the cough syrup and other requisite medicines at a higher price than the actual price.

The police officers came on the road to ensure the implementation of guidelines of COVID-19 as the corona situation has turned into a grimmer in the district. The police have shown strictness and made a challan of numbers of persons who were found violating the guidelines of pandemic. But it is also reality that there are some people who have no care of the deadly virus and were seen without face masks on the road even in such a situation when the corona positive cases reached to around 2500 in a day.

Shops, malls, bars & liquor shops to remain closed two days in a week

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

The business establishments, malls, bars and liquor shops of the district will remain closed on two days in a week on Saturday and Sunday in an effort to break the chain of coronavirus. The night curfew from 8 pm to 7 am will now remain in effect till May 3.

The senior administration officers and police held a series of meetings and talks with the trade associations and businessmen and both parties reached a consensus that all the business establishments, malls, bars and liquor shops should be closed on two days in a week on Saturday and Sunday. But on these both days, the shops of

essential commodities such as milk, vegetables, bread, fruit, etc will remain closed in the morning till 10 am.

This fresh guideline will not be applicable on the offices of central and state government, the DM Kaushal Raj Sharma informed adding, the night curfew between 8 pm and 7 am will remain in effect till May 3.

During the night curfew, the railway passengers could travel on the basis of tickets and the restriction will also not be applicable on the vehicles carrying goods.

The people could go for the testing and vaccination of corona on their vehicles but there will be restrictions on more

than four passengers in an auto rickshaw. The liquor shops will remain closed even during the night curfew but the medical shops will remain free from the restriction during this period.

The employees on night duty could join their offices during this period.

It is to be mentioned that the Kirana traders have already decided to close their shops for the six days from April 19 to 24 to cooperate with the administration to break the chain of deadly virus.

The transport office will also remain closed till April 19 because of the outbreak of corona and the deployment of the officers and employees for

the duty of Panchayat polls. In the surge of pandemic, the Archeological department has decided to close archeological monuments, places and museums till May 15.

The Thai Buddhist Temple situated in Sarnath has also been closed for the tourists to avoid the spread of virus.

In view of the fresh guideline of the district administration, the administration of Banaras Hindu University (BHU) has decided to close all the entrance gates during night curfew from 8 pm to 7 am till the further order.

The main entrance gate of the university will also remain closed but the small gates of its both sides will remain open.

Devotees throng Kushmanda temple

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

On the fourth day of auspicious occasion of Chaitra Navratri, the devotees thronged the temples of Goddess Kushmanda and Shringar Gauri to have darshan and perform puja on Friday.

The temple of Goddess Kushmanda is situated in Durgakund where the devotees in scores turned up and had darshan. They offered prayer to the goddess and performed puja. As per saying, the darshan and puja of Gauri form of Goddess Durga is made during this auspicious Navratri and thus, the devotees in large numbers reached the temple of Shringar Gauri situated Kashi Vishwanath Temple-Gyanvapi premises.

It is to be mentioned that the temple of Shringar Gauri is opened only one day in the year on the fourth day of Chaitra Navratri for the devotees. Thus,



Devotees worshipping at the temple of Goddess Kushmanda in Durgakund on the fourth day of Chaitra Navratri

Pioneer

the activities of Akhil Bharatiya Gyanvapi Mukti Mahaparishad led by Shiv Kumar Shukla reached the temple and offered prayer before the goddess. They said that the temple will soon be liberated and the devotees could have darshan here each and every day. Gulshan

Kapoor and others also reached the temple and performed puja. Kapoor said that the administration should allow the devotees to worship here every day. The temple management allowed entering the temple premises for the worship to only those devotees who have

used face masks. The premises of both temples were sanitised and there was also arrangement of sanitisers for the devotees to wash hands after the worship. The police personnel were deployed to ensure the implementation of pandemic guidelines.

No candidate will be allowed to bring voters in pvt vehicles to polling booths

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

The candidates and their supporters could not fetch the voters from their private vehicles during the polling to vote in their favour and in case they are found indulging in such act, the registration of the vehicles will be cancelled. Meanwhile, as just one day has left in ending the electioneering, the candidates testing their luck on the various seats of Panchayat elections, are leaving no stone unturned to woo the voters. Even, the soaring temperature and surge in corona cases seemed to be failing in diminishing their enthusiasm. The polling in Varanasi is scheduled to be conducted on April 19 under the second phase of three-tier Panchayat polls.

It is often seen that the candidate and their supporters fetch the voters from their private vehicles during the polling of any election so as to vote in their favour. But this time, the Election Commission seems to

be stricter on such acts. He has directed the local authority to ensure that no candidate could make so. In this order, the Transport department has asked the officers and employees on election duty to keep close vigil on the candidates and their supporters and make the list of such candidates to be found indulging in fetching the voters so as the registration of their vehicles could be cancelled.

In the meantime, the candidates contesting the election for the gram pradhan and members of gram panchayat, kshetra panchayat & zila panchayat are making their last ditch efforts to get the support of electorate. Even, they are not caring about the scorching Sun to contact the maximum voters to ensure their victories. But at the same time, the candidates were also seen defying the corona protocol and making election campaigns without using face masks and maintaining social distancing. The police have so far taken action

against 18 candidates who were found violating the guidelines of COVID-19.

The interesting thing seen in this election is that the close relatives are contesting the election against each other. In Tewar Gram Panchayat, Shashikant Singh is in election fray against his sister in-law Shashikala and in Puwari Kalan gram panchayat, Neelam Patel is contesting against her mother-in-law Sita Devi. Two brothers Chatur Ram and Banarasi Ram are face to face in Berama gram panchayat, while Pramod Tal is contesting against his father Ram Prasad in Bansari gram panchayat. Abhishek Yadav is in an election fray against his mother Usha Yadav in Murli gram panchayat.

It may be mentioned that there are a total of 17,53,588 voters who will exercise their franchises including the maximum 2,90,650 voters in Aarajiline Development block and the minimum 1,65,187 voters in Harahua block. Besides, 2,50,170, 2,19,550,

2,12,963, 2,08,750, 2,07,482 and 1,98,650 electorate will cast votes in Pindra, Cholahpur, Badagaon, Sevapuri, Kashi Vidyaapeeth and Chiragaon block respectively.

A total of 10,749 candidates are in election fray including 554 for the members of zila panchayat, 4,338 candidates of gram pradhan and 4,530 candidates for the members of kshetra panchayat. As many as 4,772 candidates have been elected unopposed as they were only candidates who submitted the nomination papers for the various seats.

The election is to be conducted for the 40 members of zila panchayat, 694 seats of gram pradhan in eight blocks and 1,007 seats of members of kshetra panchayat.

The election in the district is scheduled on April 19 under the second phase of three-tier Panchayat polls.

The voting will take place from 7 am to 6 pm, while the counting will be held on May 2 from 8 am onwards.

12 deaths in Prayagraj Covid hospitals

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ ALLAHABAD

The rapid spread of corona infection is now wreaking havoc. In the 24 hours on Thursday evening, the highest ever Covid report of 2,324 people has come positive. At the same time, 12 people died during treatment. CMO Dr Prabhakar Rai has confirmed 12 deaths in Covid hospitals.

According to District Surveillance Officer Dr Rishi Sahai, on Thursday, 10,960 people were tested for COVID-19, out of which 2,223 reported positive. He informed that contact tracing is being done at a rapid pace. After Wednesday, the number of infected increased to 332 within 24 hours on Thursday. On Wednesday, the number of infected was 1,891. Meanwhile, there has been a slight difference in the number of healthy people with the increase in the number of infected. On Wednesday, 622 people beat corona, while on Thursday, 629 people were free of infection.

According to Nodal Officer Dr Rishi Sahai, 83 people who became healthy were discharged from various Covid hospitals, while 546 people had completed home isolation. The figures of corona examination released by the Health department are not yet beyond 11,000 but the number of infected people has increased rapidly. On Wednesday, 10,813 people were tested and on Thursday, 10,960 people were tested for COVID-19.

Despite the CM's directive, the Health department is negligent in the RTPCR testing to



confirm the Covid infection. The department is focused on antigen testing. On the instructions of the government, at least 60 per cent of the total samples tested should be based on RTPCR test and 40 per cent of other like antigen, Trunat.

According to the data available in Prayagraj, exactly the opposite of instructions is being done. The RTPCR testing is about 30 per cent and the antigen and other Covid testing account for about 70 per cent.

The infection of corona has also left its impact on Medical College's Microbiology Lab. Here 12 technicians have been infected in three days, while six other workers are ill. RTPCR testing work is being affected due to shortage of staff.

Separate testing after pool sampling during the Covid testing has also increased work. Dr Arandim Chakraborty and 10 technicians are working in

three shifts with Dr Monica, head of Department of Microbiology, in a staff of 30 people in the department. Head of Department, Dr Monica said that the lab is being run at full capacity. Pendency is increasing as employees become infected, added Dr Monica.

SECOND WAVE OF COVID-19 PROGRESSING AT ALARMING SPEED: The second wave of COVID-19 is progressing at an alarming speed in Prayagraj district and has become a cause of serious concern for health, administration and police officials.

The cases have been multiplying so fast that over 2,200 hotspots were marked in the district within a week. There were a total 3,267 hotspots in Prayagraj district on Wednesday, registering a jump of 2,275 in a week from 992 on April 6.

Moreover, as many as 2,142 Covid cases were detected on

Tuesday, the day tally going over 2,000 cases for the first time, while 12 deaths were reported.

Health and district administration officials are monitoring all 3,267 hotspots, about 67% in urban pockets, to contain the spread. Five city localities, Chowk, Mutthiganj, Teliarganj, Bahadurganj and Allahpur have maximum hot spots in the city.

Additional CMO and COVID-19 nodal officer Dr Rishi Sahai said that the number of hotspots is rising everyday as 8,575 Covid cases were added in the last five days from April 9 to 13. Besides, there were 41 Covid-related deaths in the past five days, including 12 on April 13, eight each on April 12 and April 11, seven on April 10 and six on April 9.

There is massive rush at testing centres also and total 53,674 samples were collected in the last five days, including 11,972 on April 13, 12,049 on April 12, 9,805 on April 11, 10,270 on April 10 and 9,578 on April 9. As per official data, Prayagraj district had 44,017 cases till Tuesday. While 30,598 patients have recovered with 7,504 being discharged from hospitals and 23,094 completing home isolation. There were 12,940 active cases on Tuesday. There have been 479 Covid deaths so far.

In the past five days, the city reported 8,575 Covid cases — 2,142 on April 13, 1,704 on April 12, 1,628 on April 11, 1,682 on April 10, and 1,419 on April 9. Officials made an appeal urging people to strictly follow Covid protocols to help check the spread.

Tough stand against shopowners violating Covid guidelines

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ ALLAHABAD

The second wave of infection of the coronavirus is going to make people even more upset. This pandemic is also spreading rapidly in Prayagraj. In such a situation, strict action is being taken to follow the COVID-19 guidelines. Keep in mind if you too are the owner of a shop or establishment. Corona's guideline has to be followed. If not, the police can file a case against you and even seize the shop.

The shop will not open after it being seized, until the establishment owners completely follow the rules. Prayagraj police is now going to take such a step, which can cause trouble to all the shopkeepers. If shopowners do not want any such action against them, they will need to make a circle outside the shop, arrange for a two yard with mask essential, arrange for a hand sanitiser and motivate customers to apply the masks. In fact, the police have

now taken a tough stand against those who violate the Corona guidelines. Action has been taken to seize 30 shops, registering cases against 130 shopkeepers in the city on Thursday due to non-compliance of physical distancing and crowd gathering at the shop.

Police have also intensified action against those who do not apply masks on the rising infection of corona and on the directions of the High Court. Challans of 982 people were

also imposed in the city.

Officials said that people are constantly being made aware of the infection and instruction is being given together. Despite this, all the shopkeepers are neither making a circle outside the shop nor putting a board or poster of two yards away.

However, crowds are being gathered at the shops. SP City Dinesh Kumar Singh said that action will be continued against those who violate the guideline.

One killed in cracker factory fire

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ ALLAHABAD

In a tragic incident, a man was killed while three others were badly scorched when a fire broke out in Prayagraj's firecracker factory on Friday morning. The fire brigade personnel managed to control the fire after long hours of effort. The police admitted the scorched people to Swaroop Rani Nehru Hospital for treatment. The condition of two is said to be critical there. Police are investigating the cause of the fire.

Police and administrative officials also reached the spot after receiving information about the accident at the firecracker factory in Dhanua village on Baswar Road under the Naiini police station. Whether the firecracker factory was illegal or not is being investigated. Officials said the fire broke out most probably due to a short circuit, but it will be clear only after investigation.

There is a fireworks factory named Jai Mahabir in

Dhanua village on Baswar Road. Its owner is Laxman Prasad, a resident of Meerapur Mohalla of the Attarsuiya police station. Flames suddenly started rising from the firecracker factory at around 10 am on Friday. The workers inside the office raised an alarm. After hearing their shrieks and seeing the flames rising, the villagers reached the spot and there were four labourers scorched outside. The information was given to the police. Police and administrative officials rushed to the spot as soon as they received the news. Fire personnel also came and somehow managed to control the fire in the firecracker factory.

Those who were badly scorched by fire included Sudhir (50) son of Ataram, Raja (14) his brother Anurag (15) son of late Ashok, Vishal (14) son of late Rakesh Bhartiya were taken to Swaroop Rani Nehru Hospital. There Sudhir was declared dead. The factory is said to have been operating

here for about 15 years. The factory owner also has a fire-works shop in the square. The reason for the fire has not been cleared yet, but the short circuit is being said to be the reason, police added.

ABSCONDING MISCREANT IN LOOT CASE HAS FLED TO DELHI : An absconding miscreant involved in the loot of ₹ 2.26 lakh from the petrol pump manager in Khuldabad area of the district has reportedly fled to Delhi, police said. This came to light after questioning his close aides. However, the police of Khuldabad police station suspect that all this is being done to mislead the cops. The accused is being searched for.

BJP leader Diwakar Tripathi, who lives in the Civil Lines area, has a petrol pump at the Karbala intersection. Last month, petrol pump manager Rakesh Sharma was going to give cash to petrol pump owner at his house on a bike along with fellow employee Rahul Singh. On the way, the

miscreants looted money from him by heckling near the fish market.

Police arrested Shani Yadav resident of Sheikh Sarva police station Puramfti, Nanha alias Nikhil resident of Chilla Munjafata police station, Karan Bhartiya, Neeraj Bhartiya and Mohit Bhartiya resident of Bhola Ka Purva Dhoomanganj, Juju alias Ashish Singh resident of Chilla Munjafata village and recovered ₹ 1.5 lakh of looted money. But Shiva Bharti resident of Bhola Ka Purva managed to escape.

SHO, Virender Yadav said that Shiva is hiding in the district, he will be arrested soon. People with him repeatedly say that he is more likely to have fled out of town to Delhi or Mumbai. But his location is not being traced. Efforts are being made to get him caught soon.

Raids are being conducted at places to locate his whereabouts. Police team is also being sent to the close relatives of Shiva Bharti, he added.

8,000 rail tickets cancelled

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ ALLAHABAD

The number of corona infected patients increasing in all the districts including Prayagraj has started to affect the rail journey as well. If we talk about Prayagraj division of North Central Railway (NCR), the number of ticket cancellations has increased continuously in the last 8 days. During this time more than 8,000 tickets from various stations were cancelled. The most cancelled tickets from Prayagraj division were the trains running from Prayagraj Junction and Kanpur Central and passing through there. Its number is more than five thousand. In

this too, most of the tickets are for trains going towards Mumbai, Pune, Ahmedabad, Delhi route.

Most people believe that the way corona is spreading its tentacles; it is safer to travel in private vehicles than in public vehicles. On the other hand, if we talk about Prayagraj Junction, 184 trains are being run at present time.

In this, some trains are also operating from one to four days a week.

Talking about Prayagraj Junction, Chheoki railway station, more than 200 people are reaching the PRS counter for cancellation of tickets here. Apart from this, many such

travellers stayed during the last eight days who got reservations for their journey but they did not travel due to the growing corona infection in Mumbai and other cities of Maharashtra.

Rajiv Singh of Allapur, who came to Prayagraj Rambagh railway station on Friday to cancel the ticket for Pune, said that his daughter is working in a multinational company in Pune. Three months ago, he got the reservation done, but now the way corona has increased in Maharashtra and now Prayagraj, there is no courage to go there.

Similarly, on Friday, Dilip

Chaturvedi of Pritam Nagar, who came to cancel the ticket for Mumbai at the reservation counter of Prayagraj Junction, told that he had a reservation on April 14. If the ticket had been cancelled a day earlier, the refund would have been half. For this reason, the ticket was canceled on Sunday itself.

PRO Amit Singh of Prayagraj division, said that trains coming from Mumbai-Pune route are coming full. During the last eight days, more than 8,000 tickets have been canceled from all the railway stations of division.

DC asks pvt, govt hosp officials to ensure availability of ICU beds

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

The Kanpur Divisional Commissioner, Dr Raj Shekhar, while addressing a meeting late on Thursday apprised the private hospital and government hospital officials to work out a strategy to ensure the availability of ICU beds, oxygen supported beds and ventilators for the increasing COVID-19 patients. He said all the hospitals will have to look into their available resources and extend best possible help for the suffering humanity at this critical juncture.

He expressed thanks to the Indian Medical Association and Kanpur Nursing Homes Association, for the kind support and assurance of all possible help. He said because the pandemic had raised its head more menacingly for the second round and this time the fatalities were far far more there was a need for medical emergency. He said this can be successfully countered by working in a coordinated manner and sharing all what med-



Kanpur Divisional Commissioner, Dr Raj Shekhar, addressing a meeting of all private hospitals at Commissionerate. Pioneer

ical facilities the city has to bring down the fatalities of the disease.

The IMA has extended all possible help as far as manpower and diagnostics was needed. Similarly all the prominent hospitals of the city both government and private have assured all possible help in the best possible means. The DC said the critical patients need to be given priority and advised all people to ensure they go in for vaccination in a

big way. He said vaccination, social distancing and wearing face mask round-the-clock was the only way to save oneself of the onslaught of the disease.

Prominent hospitals which took part in the meeting were Kulwanti Hospital, Fortune Hospital, Kanpur Medical Centre, Mariampur Hospital, Madhuraj, Krishna Super Speciality, Grace Hospital, Apollo Hospital, Chandini Hospital, New Leelamani, JL Rohtagi General Hospital,

Lifetron, Family Hospital, Priya Hospital, Dwivedi Hospital and Medi Health. The entire officials assured of all possible support of ICU, oxygen supported beds and HDU Beds. The DC said the final decision in this regard will be taken in 24 hours. Prominent officials who also took part in the meeting were Additional Director Health, Chief Medical Officer, DD Panchayat. IMA-K officials and office-bearers of the various hospital.

cKers ties up with Altigreen

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

cKers Finance, an NBFC focused on financing sustainability and clean energy projects in India, announced a debt financing tie-up with Altigreen, an Electric Vehicle OEM with a mission of enabling a better world through carbon-free road transportation. cKers has set-up an initial line of INR Thirty Million for Altigreen. This facility will be used by Altigreen for working capital to manufacture the EV components and its cargo L5 electric three-wheeler.

Speaking about the facility, Jayant Prasad, Executive Director, cKers Finance said, ‘Within the e-mobility sector, we are partnering with companies that are able to showcase a strong business model, proven unit level economics and track record in raising institutional equity. Our understanding and research about the developments in the EV ecosystem enable us to confidently foray into the new upcoming segments. Altigreen meets all these criteria, the founding and leadership team of the company is just as passionate as us to make carbon-free transportation not just exciting and economical, but accessible to all.’

Talking about the transition of Indian EV market, Shalendra Gupta, Co-founder, Altigreen Propulsion Labs said, ‘We are excited to partner with cKers to accelerate the adoption of electric three-wheelers in India. Altigreen plans to enable the ecosystem for zero emission vehicles, through differentiated end-customer mobility experience. EV manufacturing requires significant investment of working capital by the OEM. Financing of vehicles for institutional buyers and smaller E-commerce delivery fleets is also an important enabler.

cKers helps Altigreen in bridging both these gaps without which the growth of EVs in India and the emerging markets would remain inadequate.’ Speaking about the partnership, Deepak Gupta, Business Development Head at cKers said ‘Faster adoption of EVs in India is very likely in the commercial use segment where the TCO (Total Cost of Ownership) advantage of EVs is greater due to higher number of daily kms run. The gap of indigenous OEMs developing EVs suitable for Indian commercial use case is aptly filled by Altigreen for the electric three-wheeler segment now and will help in the push towards adoption of cleaner mode of transport on Indian roads.’

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Fire breaks out in plastic goods godown

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

A plastic goods godown caught fire due to electric short circuit under the Moolganj police station on Friday morning. It is situated on Meston Road, near Beechhwa Mandir. Seeing the thick smoke, people living on the first floor came to know about the incident and informed the fire brigade. Fire fighting jawans from Latouche Road Fire Station reached the spot and after rescuing the residents, started extinguishing the fire.

According to reports, Uma Shanker Verma owns his house in Maida Bazar, near Beechhwa Mandir, Meston Road, and lives with wife and children on its first floor. The basement was given on rent to Mehboob Ilahi for use as godown to store plastic mats and doormats. On Friday morning, the godown caught fire due to electric short circuit.

Station House Officer Anjan Kumar along with force reached the spot.

Meanwhile, FSO Surendra Chaubey also reached there with the fire tender from Latouche Road Fire Station who, after rescuing Uma Shanker Verma and his family members through the neighbour’s rooftop, started extinguishing the fire in the basement. Fire tenders from Meerpur and Colonelganj Fire Stations were also summoned. FSO said residents were safe and amount of loss of goods could not be ascertained so far.

Bandra Terminus-Gkp summer special to run on April 18 & 25

CORRESPONDENT ■ GORAKHPUR

The railway administration will for the convenience of passengers run 09067/09068 Bandra Terminus (BDTS)-Gorakhpur - Bandra Terminus summer special train from Bandra Terminus on April 18 and 25 and from Gorakhpur on April 20 and 27 in two trips. All coaches in this train will be of reserved category and passengers travelling in them will have to follow the Covid-19 prevention guidelines, Chief Public Relations Officer (CPRO) PK Singh said.

BDTS-GKP SPL: The 09067 Bandra Terminus-Gorakhpur summer special train will on April 18 and 25 depart from Bandra Terminus

at 19.25 hrs, from Borivali at 20.10 hrs, from Vapi at 21.55 hrs, from Surat at 23.32 hrs, from Vadodara on second day at 01.15 hrs, from Ratlam at 05.35 hrs, from Bhawani Mandi at 07.57 hrs, from Kota at 09.30 hrs, from Sawai Madhopur at 10.50 hrs, from Bayana at 13.30 hrs, from Agra Fort at 15.40 hrs, from Tundla at 16.50 hrs, from Etawah at 17.48 hrs, from Kanpur Central at 19.40 hrs, from Lucknow City at 21.42 hrs, on the third day from Barabanki at 00.10 hrs, from Basti at 03.35 hrs and reach Gorakhpur at 06.05 hrs.

GKP-BDTS SPL: In the return journey the 09068 Gorakhpur-Bandra Terminus summer special train will on

April 20 and 27 depart from Gorakhpur at 16.10 hrs, from Basti at 18.47 hrs, from Barabanki at 21.47 hrs, from Lucknow City on second day at 00.27 hrs, from Kanpur Central at 03.20 hrs, from Etawah at 04.52 hrs, from Tundla at 06.20 hrs, from Agra Fort at 07.55 hrs, from Bayana at 09.34 hrs, from Sawai Madhopur at 11.20 hrs, from Kota at 13.05 hrs, from Bhawani Mandi at 13.12 hrs, from Ratlam at 16.55 hrs, from Vadodara at 20.40 hrs, from Surat at 23.20 hrs, from Vapi on the third day at 01.28 hrs, from Borivali at 04.27 hrs and reach Bandra Terminus at 05.10 hrs. A total of 24 coaches, including 18 of sleeper class, four of ordinary second class, two of SLRD will be attached in this special train.

Pune-Lko Jn spl on Apr 21, 28

CORRESPONDENT ■ GORAKHPUR

The railway administration will run 01441/01442 Pune-Lucknow Jn- Pune superfast summer special train from Pune on April 21 and 28 and from Lucknow Jn on April 16, 23 and 30. It will also run 05191/05192 Gorakhpur-Panvel-Gorakhpur summer special train from Gorakhpur on April 16 and 20 and from Panvel on April 18 and 22 in two trips. All coaches in these trains will be of reserved category and passengers travelling in them will have to follow the Covid-19 prevention guidelines, CPRO PK Singh said.

PUNE-LJN SPECIAL: The 01441 Pune-Lucknow Jn superfast summer special train will on April 21 and 28 depart from Pune at 21.30 hrs, from Daund Chord Line at 00.13 hrs, from Ahmednagar on second day, from Manmad at 03.15 hrs, from Bhusaval at 06.45 hrs, from Khandwa at 09.00 hrs, from Itarsi at 11.25 hrs, from Bhopal at 13.40 hrs, from Bina at 15.55 hrs, from Jhansi at 18.05 hrs, from Kanpur Central at 20.45 hrs and reach Lucknow Jn on the third day at 00.20 hrs.

LJN-PUNE SUMMER SPL: In the return journey 01442 Lucknow Jn- Pune superfast summer special train will on April 16, 23 and 30 depart from Lucknow Jn from at 04.00 hrs, from Kanpur at 05.40 hrs, from Jhansi at 10.20 hrs, from Bina at 12.35 hrs, from Bhopal at 14.50 hrs,

Itarsi at 16.05 hrs, Khandwa at 18.50 hrs, Bhusaval at 20.35 hrs, Manmad at 23.25 hrs, the second day from Ahmednagar at 02.23 hrs, from Daund Chord Line at 04.00 hrs and will reach Pune at 05.10 hrs. A total of 21 coaches, including one of sleeper class, 16 general second class, two air-conditioned third class and two of SLRD will be attached in this special train.

GKP-PANVEL SPL: The 05191 Gorakhpur-Panvel summer special train will on April 16 and 20 depart from Gorakhpur at 19.00 hrs, from Khalilabad at 19.42 hrs, from Basti at 20.11 hrs, from Gonda at 21.45 hrs, from Aishbagh on second day at 00.50 hrs, from Kanpur Central at 02.20 hrs, from Orai at 04.16 hrs, from Jhansi at 06.40 hrs, from Bina at 09.50 hrs, from Bhopal at 11.55 hrs, from Itarsi at 13.50 hrs, from Khandwa at 17.15 hrs, from Bhusaval at 19.20 hrs, from Nashik Road at 23.20 hrs, on the third day from Kalyan at 03.15 hrs and reach Panvel at 04.20 hrs.

PANVEL-GKP SPECIAL: In the return journey the 05192 Panvel-Gorakhpur summer special train will on April 18 and 22 depart from Panvel at 11.10 hrs, from Kalyan at 11.53 hrs, from Nashik Road at 14.20 hrs, from Bhusaval at 17.50 hrs, from Khandwa at 21.05 hrs, from Itarsi at 23.35 hrs, from Bhopal on the second day at 01.15 hrs, from Bina at 03.11 hrs, from Jhansi at 05.25 hrs, from Orai at 06.51 hrs, from Kanpur Central at 10.00 hrs,

from Aishbagh at 11.35 hrs, from Gonda at 14.10 hrs, from Basti at 15.30 hrs, from Khalilabad at 15.54 hrs and will arrive at Gorakhpur at 17.00 hrs. A total of 23 coaches, including 10 of sleeper class, nine of general second class, two of air-conditioned third class and two of SLRD will be attached in this special train.

LJN-PANVEL SPL: The 05189 Lucknow Jn- Panvel summer special train on April 18 and 21 depart from Lucknow Jn at 06.20 hrs, from Kanpur Central at 08.10 hrs, from Orai at 09.40 hrs, from Jhansi at 12.15 hrs, from Habibganj at 16.25 hrs, from Itarsi at 18.15 hrs, from Khandwa at 21.12 hrs, from Bhusaval at 23.15 hrs, from Nashik Road on the second day at 02.40 hrs, from Kalyan at 05.30 hrs and reach Panvel at 06.15 hrs.

PANVEL-LJN SPECIAL: In the return journey, 05190 Panvel-Lucknow Jn summer special train will on April 19 and 22 depart from Panvel at 09.15 hrs, from Kalyan at 09.45 hrs, from Nashik Road at 12.50 hrs, from Bhusaval at 16.25 hrs, from Khandwa at 17.35 hrs, from Itarsi at 20.10 hrs, from Habibganj at 21.40 hrs, Jhansi at 01.55 hrs on second day, from Orai at 04.17 hrs, from Kanpur Central at 07.10 hrs and reach Lucknow Junction at 09.10 hrs. A total of 18 coaches, including 11 of general second class, five of sleeper class and two of SLRD, will be attached in this special train.

Tribute paid to Ambedkar

CORRESPONDENT ■ GORAKHPUR

Under the presidentship of General Manager of North Eastern Railway (NER) Vinay Kumar Tripathi the 130th birth anniversary of the father of Indian Constitution, Dr Bhim Rao Ambedkar, was celebrated at GM’s conference hall on Thursday by garlanding his portrait. On the occasion General Manager, principal heads of departments, senior railway officers, general secretary of Railway Mazdoor Union KL Gupta and general secretary of Scheduled Castes and Tribes Association Chandrashekhar along with a large number of officers and employees paid tribute to Bharat Ratna Dr Bhim Rao Ambedkar.

General Manager Vinay Kumar Tripathi said that Babasaheb Ambedkar was a social reformer, educationist, jurist and the chief architect of the Indian Constitution. He said that Baba Saheb had advocated extensive economic and social rights for women. The GM said that Baba Saheb had given three slogans to the society — be edu-



cated, get organised and struggle. By educated society he meant building a sensible, aware and thoughtful society which can contribute to the progress of the nation. The General Manager said that all of us treading the path shown by Baba Saheb is a real tribute.

Wheat crop reduced to ashes

CORRESPONDENT ■ MIRZAPUR

Wheat crop reduced to ashes in Hameedpur village under Jamalpur police station on Thursday. According to a report, cutting of crop was in going on in the field through a harvester when a spark suddenly caused the fire. On getting information the fire brigade reached the spot and succeeded in extinguishing the blaze with the help of the locals. However, the crop of Janardan Singh, Jitendra Singh, Geeta Devi, Kishundev Singh, Shivaji Singh, Jangbahadur Patel and Radheshyam got burnt. In another case, the fire broke out in the jungle of Sikatahi under Madihan police station in the wee hours of Wednesday. A representative of an ashram located at that place informed the authorities and he himself came forward for the rescue work along with tankers. The flames could be controlled by the fire brigade after hard labour of hours.

MEETING: District Magistrate Praveen Kumar Laxkar on Thursday held a meeting at the Collectorate

with operators of private nursing homes, clinics and pathologies to get their cooperation in combating the pandemic. Addressing the meeting the DM made an appeal to cooperate for the cause of humanity. He said that increasing cases were a matter of anxiety and

taken if any one was found taking any additional charge. He appealed to doctors to work with safety and follow the norms. CMO Dr PD Gupta apprised the DM that corona testing facility was available at the railway stations at Chunar, Mirzapur and Vindhyachal



DM Praveen Kumar Laxkar holding a meeting at Collectorate on Thursday

support of private doctors was the need of the hour. In the meeting the doctors promised to do so free of cost. The DM appealed to nursing homes to keep beds for the patients of L-2 category equipped with all required facilities, including oxygen, ventilator etc ready. The DM made it clear that the rate of tests had been fixed by the government for private pathologies so action will be

along with district hospital and women’s hospital where it was available to all. In the meeting the doctors present made available their contact numbers and assured to provide free consultation to patients. The meeting was attended by Chief Development Officer (CDO) Avinash Singh, and ADM/ Covid control room incharge Amrendra Verma.

DM warns chemists to refrain from overcharging Home Isolation Kit

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

The District Magistrate, City, Alok Tiwari has warned the chemists and druggists to refrain from overcharging the Home Isolation Kit. He also with his team visited umpteen medicine shops around Hallet, Madhuraj and Swarup Nagar and directed that the price of the Home Isolation Kit cannot be sold above the government fixed price of Rs 1,100. He said the price of the kit was printed.

He said all the chemists and druggists should put up flax banners where they should inform patients of the availability of the Home Isolation Kits and its price had to be prominently displayed (Rs 1,100). He said in case of any report from any patient that he or she had been overcharged for the Home Isolation Kits then strict action will be taken against the shop and the owner of the shop.

The DM lost temper on coming to know that many shops claimed that they did not have the Home Isolation Kits and directed the Drug Inspector to issue notices to all the shops. He cautioned that all the shops must have Home



District Magistrate City, Alok Tiwari, issues show cause notice to a chemist for not having Home Isolation Kit nor displaying any banner for its sale. Pioneer

Isolation Kits available and they should ensure they bring in more kits before the stock ended. He said there can be no excuse that it was not available. It may be mentioned here that some shops deny on the ground that the kit was sold off but the fact was that the kits were being sold from the back door on double the price.

The DM then carried out surprise raids on medicine

shops at Hallet hospital, mainly Popular Medical Store, Mohan Chemist and Maa Chemist and directed the Drug Inspector to issues notices to all the shops for their failure to keep adequate Home Isolation Kits in their shops. He said it was mandatory for the medicine shops to have Home Isolation Kits sufficiently available at their shops failing which strict action will be taken

against them. He said the three stores have been issue show cause notice and once they give the reply then action will be taken accordingly.

He warned all druggists to ensure they had sufficient kits available in their shops and it cannot be sold above the fixed price of Rs 1100. The Additional District Magistrate and Drug officials accompanied the DM.

Fire officials felicitated by UBI Regional Head

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

The Regional Head of the Union Bank of India, Regional Office, Hrishikesh Mishra, on Friday felicitated the fire officials who had acted promptly when the fire broke out in the conference hall of the bank on April, 1, 2021. He said it was due to the quick efforts made by the Fazalganj Fire Fighting team that the fire could be brought successfully under control with the minimal loss. He said had it not been their quick and dedicated efforts the bank would have suffered major losses.

He then felicitated the Fire Officer, Fazalganj branch, Kailash Chandra along with his team members. He later handed over letter of commendation to the Fire Officer and his team members.

On the occasion the Chief Manager, Prashant Katiyar and Security Officer, Manoj Kumar Sharma were also present.

TRUSTS ENJOYING I-T RELIEF TO FILL TWO NEW FORMS: Noted Chartered Accountant, Shivam Omar addressing a webinar on Friday informed that all the trusts which enjoy relief from Income Tax will have to fill two new forms 10A and 10AB and all the trusts will have to fill these forms must latest by June 30 to avail themselves of the benefits. He further informed that the government had included 80G in this new form.

He said all the trustees which avail themselves of the IT rebate on charitable donations on the form 80G the donors were to mention their



Union Bank of India Regional Head, Hrishikesh Mishra felicitates the Fazalganj Fire fighting team on Friday. Pioneer

gross total income for any deductions. He said with effect from April, 1, 2021 the government has introduced new tax rebate and under this all the other provision like Section 12 A, 12AA, 10(23C) and Section 80 now will have to file form 10 A and all the old trustees will have to follow the new format.

He said unless this was done the trusts will not be able to avail themselves of the benefits and they will have to ensure they obtain it latest by June 30, 2021. He said the new forms were available and advised all the trusts to ensure they avail themselves of the new facility without fail.

LAUNCHED: Children’s nutrition, particularly in the times of a pandemic is a top priority for parents and they are

always trying to get children to try out foods that have the goodness of wholesome ingredients. But given the fact that children are picky eaters, this is an uphill task for parents. To study the attitudes of mothers towards kids nutrition during the on-going pandemic, a Nationwide study amongst mothers of children aged between 4-12 was set up in the latter half of 2020. The overwhelming data that emerged from the study is that 79 per cent of Indian Moms feel the wholesomeness of traditional foods like Parantha, Daliya and Doodh Roti is what they would most want included in their kids diets. The survey also revealed the contrasting attitude towards the taste of traditional foods - While Mothers

love the taste of foods like Doodh roti, their children more often than not, didn’t. As a response to these findings of the survey, Britannia Milk Bikis launched 100 per cent Atta product with Doodh Roti ki Shakti on Friday. Vice-President (Marketing) Vinay Subramanyam said “the biscuit has been launched in response to an increasing need for wholesome nutrition for children and the power of traditional Indian foods in doing so. As the new Milk Bikis is a perfect example of upholding the goodness of traditional values and infusing in the form of a modern milk biscuit, that’s why we have partnered with Pankaj Tripathi, who is a modern parent, yet is true to his roots and tradition”.

BJP says Mamata planned riots over firing, releases audio tape

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Even as Mamata Banerjee continued to attack Prime Minister Narendra Modi for importing corona in Bengal in his bid to win elections, the BJP on Friday released an audio-tape showing a conversation between the State Chief Minister and Cooch Behar district Trinamool Congress president Pratha Pratim Roy where she was allegedly instructing him to make preparations for taking out a rally with the corpse of people killed in Sitalkuchi police firing last Saturday.

This, BJP leadership claimed was planned by the Chief Minister to stoke communal riots in order to polarise the Muslim voters. A timely banning of politicians — including the Chief Minister — by the Election Commission of India from entering Cooch Behar till last Tuesday however till foiled her “criminal designs to fan riots in order

to win elections.” BJP leader Amit Malavya said.

Four persons were killed when the CPF opened fired after an alleged crowd of 300-350 men tried to attack the booth number 126 during the fourth phase of polling.

In the purported audio-tape featuring Banerjee and Roy who is also the TMC candidate from Sitalkuchi the Chief Minister also directed him to make arrangements for lodging an FIR against those who opened fire and implicating in that document the district SP and the local Circle Inspector, the BJP leader said adding Roy was asked get the FIR drawn by professional so as to frame not only the central forces but also the district SP and the local circle inspector.

At a time when she should have stood with the law-enforcing agencies the Chief Minister was seen standing by the law-breakers, Malavya said. “Imagine had this rally been allowed to take place

what would have been the situation of Bengal what kind of communal disturbance it would have ignited,” he said.

“This betrays the criminal mindset of the Chief Minister who has no problem with playing politics with the death of people... she was trying to reap political dividends with dead bodies,” Malavya said adding how Banerjee had been trying to instigate people saying the BJP would invoke National Population Register to victimize its opponents in the name of pushing out alleged infiltrators.

“There is no plans of brining NPR now and neither there is any proposal of raising detention camps,” Malavya said claiming how the Chief Minister has been spreading false stories in the election rallies to create a mass panic and reap political dividends. “This she is doing as a last resort because she knows that she is going out of power.”

Clubbing last 3 phase polls into 1 against democratic spirits: BJP

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Opposing Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee’s suggestions that the 8-phase elections be effectively reduced to six phases so to say, the BJP on Friday said it was against clubbing the last three phases of elections into a single-day polling saying the exercise would go against democratic spirit putting the voters and candidates into a position of disadvantage.

Bengal goes to the fifth phase of polling on April 17 that is Saturday. Senior BJP leader and its candidate from Tarakeshwar seat in Hooghly Swapan Dasgupta, said after emerging from the all-party meeting called by the Election Commission of India “we have said our party will abide by all protocols put in place by the Election Commission, and urged that no steps be taken that discriminates those voting in the next phases from those who have already exercised their franchise. We have not said anything about clubbing (of phases),... we feel that the elections will be held in eight phases.”

Fifth phase of polling today

PNS ■ KOLKATA

Considering the firing deaths in the fourth phase of Assembly elections in Bengal last Saturday the Election Commission of India have made massive arrangements for the fifth phase which would be held on Saturday.

More than a crore voters of 45 Assembly constituencies would exercise their franchise deciding the fate of 342 candidates on when 45 seats would go to polls in the fifth phase.

According to sources the ECI would deploy about 853 companies of central forces to ensure free and fair voting. Voting will be held at 15,789 polling stations in 16 seats in North 24 Parganas, eight each in Bardhaman East and Nadia, seven in Jalpaiguri, five in Darjeeling and one in Kalimpong district.

Rajya Sabha election: CPM fields John Brittas

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

John Brittas, the ideological consultant to Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, has been nominated as the CPI(M) representative to the Rajya Sabha from Kerala. Brittas, who is presently the managing director and chief executive officer of the CPI(M)-owned Kairali TV channel was one of the close advisors to Pinarayi Vijayan along with Raman Srivastava, the former director general of Kerala Police.

The CPI(M) has also nominated V Sivadasan, a former president of the party’s student wing SFI as its second nominee. Based on the strength of the party in the current legislature, the CPI(M) can win two seats out of the three at stake. The Muslim League has nominated NRI businessman P V Abdul Wahab as its candidate for the April 30 election.

The names of Brittas and Shivadasn were announced after

the State Committee of the party met on Friday at the imposing AKG Centre at Thiruvananthapuram. A release issued by the party head quarters after the meeting claimed that the CPI(M)-led LDF would win 80 to 100 seats in the just concluded assembly election to Kerala. “Kerala will see for the first time the demolition of the anti-government feeling and the ruling party coming back to power with more seats,” said the release.

The nomination of Brittas is being seen as the CPI(M)’s move to cobble up a grand alliance before the 2024 Lok Sabha election which the party hopes to win comfortably based on the recent farm agitation and other people movements headed by the party. “Brittas enjoys considerable clout with many opposition politicians in New Delhi, his second home turf from where he controlled Deshabhimani, the CPI(M)’s official mouth piece.

BMC to use 175 Jaslok Hospital beds for Covid patients, 52 for non-Covid critical patients

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Taking cognisance of the fact that as many as 30 critical patients were undergoing cancer treatment and another 22 critical patients were being treated for cardiac/nephro ailments, the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) on Friday made some changes in its earlier decision to convert Mumbai’s famed Jaslok Hospital in south Mumbai into a dedicated Covid-19 hospital.

A day after it announced its decision to convert Jaslok Hospital into a dedicated Covid-19 hospital, the BMC amended its earlier move and decided not to convert the private medical facility into a fully dedicated Covid-19 hospital, saying that it did “not want to risk the lives of these 52 critical non-COVID patients, presently admitted in Jaslok hospital”.

In a revised order issued on Friday, the BMC said that it had conveyed its Thursday’s decision to the Jaslok Hospital management. “However, it has been brought to the notice of MCGM by the said management that presently 30 critical patients undergoing cancer treatment and another 22 critical patients undergoing cardiac/nephro treatment are already admitted in the hospital and considering their medical condition, shifting them to other hospital at this juncture may prove fatal,” Mumbai Municipal Commissioner I S Chahal

said in his revised order.

“Hence, it is imperative on part of MCGM not to risk the lives of these 52 critical non-COVID patients, presently admitted in Jaslok hospital. Presently, 227 activated beds exist in Jaslok hospital,” Chahal said.

Making amendments in his earlier order, Chahal said “Of the total 227 beds in Jaslok Hospital, 175 beds will function as COVID beds. Of these 175 Covid beds, 29 will be ICU beds”

Chahal said that the remaining 52 beds catering to above mentioned critical patients shall continue to be non-COVID beds. “Rest of the conditions in our earlier will remain unchanged,” he said. In effect, the BMC will utilise 175 out of 227 beds to treat Covid-10 patients.

Meanwhile, the BMC has instructed the hospital management to discharge all the non-cancer and cardiac/nephro patients undergoing treatment in speciality wards, to shift all such patients requiring non-Covid tertiary care to nearby tertiary hospitals in 48 hours and to discharge all patients admitted for elective treatments by postponing their surgeries.

The BMC has also asked the Jaslok Hospital management to augment suspected/holding area for suspected Covid-19 cases, if required and follow all protocols and guidelines laid down for dedicated Covid hospitals as earlier.

NCB busts gang cultivating cannabis in Thane flat

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

In a major breakthrough in a sensational case involving international ramifications, the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) has smashed a gang engaged in the cultivation of cannabis inside a two bed room-Hall-Kitchen (BHK) flat at Dombivli in neighboring Thane district.

Announcing the busting of the cannabis growing gang that would purchase seeds from Netherland and sell the drugs in cash and crypto currencies like Bitcoins, NCB’s zonal director Sameer Wankhede said here on Friday: “This is indeed a big case. We are investigating the entire network that was involved in cultivation of Cannabis by hydroponic technique”.

Hydroponics is an effective method for growing plants that places the plants in a water solution that’s rich in nutrients. Instead of using soil to grow the plants, the roots of the plants come into direct contact with the nutrient-rich solution.

Acting on intelligence inputs, the NCB carried out the raids at a 2 BHK flat at Dombivli’s Palava City, where the investigators found Cannabis being cultivated.

The NCB identified the two arrested persons as Javed Jahangir Sheikh and Arshad Khatri. “We are trying to find out their antecedents and links,” Wankhede said.

“During our raids, we found that Cannabis was being cultivated there through Hydroponic techniques. From the site we have recovered cultivation setup, PH regulators, plant nutrients, clay pebbles, water pumps, air circulation systems, CO2 gas cylinders, photosynthesis lighting systems,” Wankhede said.

The cannabis cultivation was being done clandestinely in the flat owned by one Rehan Khan who is away in Saudi Arabia. Khan is suspected to be financing the illegal cannabis cultivation. While nArshad is an expert in hydroponic cultivation, Javed used to manage distribution of harvest.

“The two were procuring seeds from Amsterdam in the Netherlands through the dark web. The yield was sold to medium size peddlers of Mumbai and Pune at the rate of 2,500 per gram for retail,” Wankhede said.

Aligarh cops start jail bharo movement

PNS ■ ALIGARH

Aligarh Police has started ‘Jail Bharo Andolan’ with Operation Prahar to crack down on criminals. Along with this, two other special operations have also been conducted, in which more than one thousand criminals have been arrested within 15 days. On an average, 50 people are being interrogated every day.

The ‘Jail Bharo Andolan’ was started by the new SSP Kalanidhi Naithani. SSP took over the district on 27 March. Three days later, on March 30, Operation Awara started. It was a screw up on those who drink on the road. Under this, action has been taken against 987 people. After this, the operation, ‘unarmed’ in the district started on April 2. It tightened up those people who are illegally possessing weapons. So far, reports have been sent to the DM to suspend the actual license of 120 people in this operation. After this, Operation Prahar was started from 10 April. Under this, the wanted and the warrants were attacked. In five days, 177 miscreants have been arrested. In the 10 days before April 10, about a hundred criminals were caught.

Tamil Nadu’s knitwear sector hit hard amid Covid surge

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ CHENNAI

When Europe gets cold Tamil Nadu sneezes. The adage has been proved again as countries like Germany, France and Britain announced lock down due to Covid-19 pandemic leaving nearly one thousand knitwear units in Tiruppur gasping for breath.

Despite the Centre’s announcements about various financial packages as part of the Atmanirbhar schemes for the resuscitation of the gloomy industrial sector in the State, the knitwear exporters are yet to come out of the abyss to which they have fallen since the breaking out of the pandemic all over the world. The textile materials manufactured in Tiruppur stand out in the global market because of quality and craftsmanship. But that has not been successful in reviving the cash liquidity faced by the European end users of Tiruppur’s knitwear products, according to Raja M Shanmugham, president, Tiruppur Exporters’ Association (TEA).

Shanmugham, a real Raja of the knitwear industry, says the fortunes of the industry could be turned for the better by a few measures which could be ordered by Nirmala Sitaraman, the country’s finance minister. “The second lockdown promulgated in major countries like Germany, France and UK from November, has

lead us, mainly MSMEs into a liquidity crisis. In addition to this we are facing another shock in the form of ever increasing price of yarn, our important raw material due to business dynamics. These factors have eroded the competitiveness of the knitwear industry,” Shanmugham, known for his fighting spirits, told The Pioneer with uncertainty written all over his face.

He said measures like Interest Equalisation Scheme which was announced for a brief period of three months, if extended to a period of two years would help in soothing the pain being suffered by the industry. “This will help us to tide over the financial crunch we are facing due to lock down and high yarn prices and also in sustaining the global competitiveness of Brand Tiruppur,” said the TEA president.

The TEA in a memorandum to the minister has pointed out that the Remission of Duties and Taxes on Export Products (RODTEP) announced in January 2021 to replace the ROSCTL (Rebate of State and Central Taxes and Levies) has not been operationalised which has put the exporters and MSMEs between deep sea and devil.

“The MSMEs are not receiving the reimbursement of the embedded taxes including electricity tax, Mandi tax, GST on petro-products. The non-disbursement of RODTEP is causing severe liquidity crisis,” said the TEA plea.

Maha logs 63,729 new cases

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Maharashtra breached another grim Covid-19 landmark on Friday, as it recorded a staggering 63,729 infections thus crossing a total of 37 lakh infections, even as alarming 398 more people succumbed to the pandemic in various parts of the state.

A day after the pandemic claimed 349 lives and left 61,695 more infected in the state, the daily tally of infections rose by 2034 while the daily Covid-19 went up 49.

With 63729 fresh cases, the total infections climbed from 36,39,855 to 36,03,584. Similarly, with 398 new deaths, the total Covid-19 toll rose from 59,153 to 59,551.

As 45,335 patients were discharged from the hospitals across the state after full recovery, the total number of people discharged from the hospitals since the second week of March last year went up to 39,04,391. The recovery rate in the state for the first time in several days dropped from 81.3 per cent to 81.12 per cent.

The number of “active cases” total cases in the state rose from 6,20,060 to 6,38,034. The fatality rate in the state dropped from 1.63 per cent to 1.61 per cent.

With 53 fresh deaths, the Covid-19 toll in Mumbai rose from 12,197 to 12,250, while the infected cases went up by 8803 to trigger a jump in the infections from 5,53,404 to 5,62,207.

While Pune accounted for a maximum 1,16,665 “active cases” in the state, Mumbai stood second with 84,378 active cases, followed

by Thane (84038), Nagpur (71539), Nashik (49,925), Aurangabad (13,630), Ahmednagar (18,049), Nanded (13,134), Bhandara (13987), Jalgaon (11,570), Latur (14033), Solapur (11051), Satara (10551), Parbhani (10,336), Beed (7922), Nandurbar (7330), Chandrapur (10,144) and Gondia (7336).

3 MVA Mins indicate fresh curbs

Mumbai: With the continued surge in the Covid-19 cases in Maharashtra, three Ministers in the MVA Government on Friday indicated that the State Government would enforce more stringent restrictions to break the chain of fast spreading infections.

Talking separately to media persons, State Home Minister Dilip Walse-Patil, public health and family welfare minister Rajesh Tope and relief and rehabilitation minister Vijay Wadettiwar said that the state government was looking at ways to make the Covid-19 protocols more stringent in view of the increasing number of infections and deaths across the state.

“If people do not cooperate with the government in implementing the Covid-19 norms, we may have to strengthen the restrictions,” Walse-Patil said. Wadettiwar said that to save the lives of people the government might have to announce new curbs. “The state may announce curbs on supply of fuel (petrol and diesel)...people are still using local trains even though they are not in essential

10,031 new cases in Kerala, 8,449 in TN

KOCHI/CHENNAI: Kerala, once claimed as inaccessible to the pandemic by political masters, tested 10,031 new Covid-19 patients in the 12 hours that ended at 6 PM on Friday. The State also registered 21 deaths and a Test Positivity Ratio of 14.8 which has accorded the status of Covid-19 epicenter to Kerala,

according to a Department of Health physician in Ernakulam. Situation is alarming in neighboring Tamil Nadu which diagnosed 8,449 new cases and recorded 33 deaths by Friday evening. The figures in both the States are likely to see a surge for the next few weeks, according to doctors in the Government doctors. V P Joy, chief secretary of Kerala, made it clear that the impact of the restrictions announced on Thursday would be known only after ten days.

Though the Kerala Government had declared that more than 2.5 lakh persons would be tested on Friday and Saturday, as part of its test, track and isolate mission, the State has tested only 67,000 persons till Friday 5 pm.

Be transparent, honest on Covid situation: Guj HC to Govt

Gandhinagar: The Gujarat High Court, in its order on the suo moto PIL it filed regarding the current upsurge in the Covid situation, has asked the State Government to reach to the public in an honest and transparent manner so as to tackle the crisis the state is facing.

A division bench of Chief Justice Vikram Nath and Justice Bhargav D. Karia, which had held a hearing on the Covid situation with Advocate General Kamal Trivedi appearing on behalf of the state government, was dissatisfied with the “rosy picture” painted by the government as the prevailing situation was opposite its claims.

The high court, in its order, ordered the state government to increase the existing RT-PCR testing facilities and ensure the reduction of time to get the reports. It also ordered that accurate reporting of the RT-PCR results to be made public.

“The state should not feel shy of publishing the correct data.”

Regarding the public perception about remdesivir injections being a miracle drug and Trivedi’s explanation that the drug was over-prescribed, the court ordered that remdesivir’s administration and its dependency should be explained and communicated to the public through various print, electronic and social media, so that the deficit and misuse by black marketers stop.

The court also ordered the state government control the online portal providing details of availability of beds etc, and that instead of the data being updated twice a day, the data and the display of availability of beds should be made real time.

The government was also told to report to the court about the status of availability of oxygen in the state with regards to the demand.

The court order also advised the state government to make efforts to find out the actual number of Covid cases so as to remove the general perception in the public that state provided data was not accurate.

“Make necessary arrangements to be made by the responsible officer with regard to the number of positive patients, the number of deaths due to Covid, the number of deaths due to Covid with comorbidity, to restore faith and trust in the public,” the court said.

“The state should come up publicly in a transparent and fair manner with regards to availability and modalities of the required amenities, medical and related infrastructure for treatment of the patients, who require facilities of Covid-19 hospitalisation, with oxygen, ventilators, medicines etc.

“In order to achieve the objectives of removing the

public perception and restoring the faith, the state needs to have honest and transparent dialogue with the public which should be communicated with all, through print, electronic and social media,” it added.

“The state has nothing to gain by hiding the real picture and hence, suppression and concealment of accurate data would generate more serious problems, including fear, loss of trust, panic in the public. Coming out in a transparent and honest manner will also create awareness about the grave situation prevailing in the current times, to persuade the public to strictly abide by the Standard Operating Protocol regarding Covid.”

The court, noting the request from the Indian Medical Association’s Gujarat branch wishing to participate, said that it was free to do so as it scheduled the next hearing for April 20. **IANS**

Released by Maoists, CRPF commando gets heroic welcome on return

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

A CRPF CoBRA Commando Rakeshwar Singh Manhas, abducted and later released by the Maoists in Bijapur area of Chhattisgarh last week, received a hero’s welcome on his arrival here in Jammu on Friday.

Accompanied by social workers who played a key role towards ensuring his safe release from the custody of Maoists on April 8, Manhas landed at Jammu airport where his five year daughter received him along with her mother and cheerful relatives amid patriotic chants hailing ‘Mother India’.

From the airport Manhas was escorted in a cavalcade to a famous resort where he was accorded a red carpet welcome too. He was warmly hugged by his family members and close friends at the main entrance of the resort. His mother and Wife along with hundreds of close relatives and well



wishers garlanded him and performed special prayers before escorting him inside the hall.

“I am very happy today. I hugged my father and kissed him when he took me in his arms after landing at the Jammu airport”, the five year old daughter told reporters wearing a big smile on her face.

Meenu Chhib, wife of Rakeshwar Singh Manhas was jubilant after meeting her husband. “I am very happy. All our prayers were answered and every one in the government at all levels played their role at the centre and state level to ensure safe release

of my husband”. “I also thank CRPF officials and the entire media fraternity for all their support and help” she added.

Rakeshwar Singh in his brief interaction told large gathering of reporters, “I am feeling happy in the company of my family”. He said all the jawans who were part of the operation in Bijapur fought bravely before attaining martyrdom. He said, “when i was in their captivity i had no clue what was happening as i had no tools of communication available with me”. He once again thanked all those social activists and local media persons from Chhattisgarh who ensured his safe return.

Uncle of Rakeshwar Singh Manhas, on behalf of the family made a brief statement thanking all those involved and responsible for ensuring safe return of the CRPF commando. The family also paid rich tributes in the memory of CRPF jawans martyred in the Maoist attack in Bijapur area of Chhattisgarh.



Visitors stand outside the closed gate of Victoria Memorial, amid rise in coronavirus cases across the country, in Kolkata on Friday

Bumpy road ahead

To avoid having a comatose economy now, we must bear the cross of our earlier negligence

India is hunkering down again to battle the second and more virulent wave of the Coronavirus outbreak. It would have been much better for us had we sincerely stuck to the COVID-19 protocols when the numbers were down and, who knows, we might have been rid of this pesky virus by now! While the average citizen decided that it was “okay” to return to the crowded restaurants, malls, airports and bus and railway stations without masks or social distancing, our short-sighted politicians postponed the all-important Board exams but considered it imperative to hold political rallies and road shows brimming with nonchalant people ahead of the Assembly elections, because their future depended on it. The religious leaders found it exigent



for us to wash away our sins by bathing in the millions in the holy Ganga. Now, here's the result of our collective endeavours: The Coronavirus cases across the country hit a record 2,17,353 fresh infections in the last 24 hours, the eighth record daily increase in the last nine days. In the same period, 1,185 people lost their lives due to the viral disease. The numbers coming out of the Health Ministry say that India registered a steady increase in the number of active Corona cases for the 36th day in a row. Now, we are scrambling to control the damage. The Home Ministry has asked its officers up to the level of Under-Secretary to avail the WFH option while the Deputy Secretary and above-ranking officials have been asked to attend office regularly with the option to stagger timings between 9 AM and 10 AM.

Various States, including the Capital, have also come up with local-level restrictions — ranging from shutting of malls, gyms, swimming pools and auditoriums, prohibiting dining at restaurants, besides imposing a weekend lockdown and night curfew. The Government has assured the citizenry that the “test, trace, treat” and vaccination drive will continue unabated and that the national drug controller will take just three days to process applications of the foreign-made vaccines once they've been approved for emergency use in India. One can only hope that this time around, the Government grits its teeth and stands by the Prime Minister's words that “we must learn to live with the virus”. No matter how many restrictions are placed on recreation and how many weekends are spent imprisoned indoors, the nation's economy must not be shut down again. The first wave gave us many lessons on how to identify hotspots, impose local lockdowns and create containment zones in order to keep the wheels of the industry churning. We have to ensure that our march towards a self-reliant, New India continues; our ailing economy that was just beginning to revive cannot be delivered another body blow in the form of a hard lockdown. Else, we risk having a comatose economy in our hands. So, the nation would do well to gird up its loins and prepare for a bumpy road ahead, but the wheels of the economy cannot stop, no matter what.

PICTALK



Smoke billows from a forest fire at the Ketti area in Shimla

PTI

Good omen

It's time for the CJI's wish for a woman judge to head the nation's top court to come true

Chief Justice of India SA Bobde deserves nothing less than the nation's applause and compliments for recently stating unequivocally that the time has come when a woman should head the top court. Hinting that the apex court was already moving along the right path on the issue, he underscored that there was “no need for a change of attitude” of the Collegium to ensure greater representation of women in the judiciary. Hearing a plea by a women lawyers' body seeking consideration of the “meritorious” lot among them for appointment as judges in the High Courts, a Bench comprising Chief Justice Bobde and Justices Sanjay Kishan Kaul and Surya Kant said: “Why only higher judiciary? We think the time has come when a woman should be the Chief Justice of India.” At this juncture, it would be pertinent to mention that currently there are only 81 female judges in the 25 High Courts across the country against 1,078 male judges. Among them, the Madras High Court tops the list with 13 female judges, followed by Punjab and Haryana with



11, and the Delhi and Bombay High Courts have eight women judges each.

Interestingly, while the Supreme Court's emphasis on gender issues is to be lauded, it would truly have credibility and value if its own actions were consistent on this subject. Consider this: There is only one female judge among the 34 positions that currently constitute the Supreme Court. With Justice Indu Malhotra's retirement last month, the Collegium is considering a few women judges for elevation. The nation's top court has had only eight women judges since it came into existence on January 26, 1950. The first one, Fathima Beevi, made it to the elite club only as late as in October 1989. Not a single woman judge has figured in the list of 48 CJs since its inception. It would perhaps not be out of the context here to mention that the Supreme Court had recently pointed to the delay in giving women permanent commission in the military, blaming it on the “systemic bias” within the Ministry of Defence. While there certainly seems to be some truth in what it said, it is a complicated issue, especially the impact of women in combat roles. That said, in either case, there's no denying that women are up to performing any professional job with panache while balancing with finesse their roles as mother, daughter, sister, wife and homemaker.

India's flaming forests play havoc

Natural causes and human intervention are to blame for the rising number of conflagrations not only in India, but the world over



HIRANMAY KARLEKAR



The surge of forest fires in Uttarakhand once again underlines the growing incidence of the phenomenon in India. There has been a series of these this year in Himachal Pradesh, the Nagaland-Manipur border, Odisha, Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat. According to the *India State of Forest Report 2019* (ISFR) — the latest in the line of such reports — released by the Forest Survey of India (FSI), Dehradun, over 30,000 forest fires were reported in the country in 2019. The report identified nearly 21.67 per cent (7,12,249 sq km) of the country's land area as forested. Another 2.89 per cent (95,027 sq km) was under tree cover.

The report identified 2,77,758 forest fire points across the country, and stated that about 21.40 per cent of India's forests are prone to fires. Of this, 3.89 per cent belonged to the category of extremely fire-prone, 6.01 per cent very highly fire-prone and 11.50 per cent highly fire-prone.

The forests in Assam, Mizoram and Tripura are “extremely prone” to conflagrations. According to the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) annual report for 2020-21, the States with large forest areas and falling under the “very highly fire-prone” category — including Andhra Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Odisha, Maharashtra, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh — were turning into “extremely fire-prone” hotspots; so were regions like western Maharashtra, southern Chhattisgarh and areas of Telangana and Andhra Pradesh, along with central Odisha. Areas under the “highly prone” and “moderately prone” categories make up about 26.2 per cent of the total forest cover — a staggering 1,72,374 sq km.

A State prone to forest fires is Haryana which suffered at least 540 of these from 2016 to 2020. Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh are witness to the most frequent forest fires annually. According to the National Forest Inventory under the MoEFCC, the fires severely affect almost 10

per cent of the country's forest area while mildly affecting about 54 per cent, which makes about two-third of India's forests vulnerable to fires.

The question is: Why is it so? Lightning is the most important natural cause. Another is the spontaneous combustion of dried-up leaves and sticks. The one that has been an increasingly potent factor, and is set to become even more so, is global warming. It dries up the leaves and shrubbery on the ground, making them highly inflammable. It also dries up the soil. Thus, the lack of soil moisture as a result of rainfall deficiency during monsoons — less than 18 per cent and 20 per cent in 2019 and 2020, respectively — has been an important factor in this year's Uttarakhand fires. In fact, it has been a cause not only in many other parts of India but the entire world — the blazes bedeviling Australia, California in the US and the Amazon rainforests in Brazil are examples.

Human activity, however, is responsible for the overwhelming majority of forest fires the world over. In India, these blazes are mainly caused by the slash-and-burn method of shifting agriculture, known

FOREST FIRES ARE AS OLD AS FORESTS AND WILL CONTINUE TO OCCUR AS LONG AS FORESTS EXIST. ONE, HOWEVER, CAN LIMIT THEIR INCIDENCE AND ADVERSE CONSEQUENCES BY FIRMLY DEALING WITH THE TIMBER, BUILDER AND MINING MAFIA, AND THE POACHERS

as *jhum* in Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram, Meghalaya, Tripura and Assam, where it is practised over about 15,000 sq km of forest land. The blazes are also set off to clear the ground for mining, timber felling and the construction of human settlements and industrial units, besides warding off the wild animals.

People burn dry leaves and shrubbery on forest grounds, believing that it would lead to the sprouting of new and healthier grass. Poachers light fires on three sides to corner fleeing wild animals in one area as their concentrated presence helps killing. People visiting forests are often careless and leave behind lighted butts of cigarettes or *bidis*, besides inflammable material.

Things are made worse by the fact that it is difficult to extinguish forest fires. The absence of roads prevents fire tenders from reaching the sites and high winds carry the sparks to new areas. Helicopters are pressed into service — as in Uttarakhand recently where two Indian Air Force helicopters, each with a 5,000-litre water tank, were deployed. There are, however, limits to the number of helicopters that can be used

and the availability of large lakes or rivers from which these can draw water.

Forest fires wreak havoc in India every year. They destroy forests, cause pollution, turn streams dry or adversely affect their water quality, damage soil nutrients and increase the risk of soil erosion. They kill wildlife and insects, including endangered species, and destroy their habitats, damage national parks and sanctuaries, driving the wild animals like tigers, leopards and elephants towards human settlements, thus aggravating the human-animal conflict. And, of course, they kill humans and destroy their property.

The question is: What is to be done? Forest fires are as old as forests and will continue to occur as long as forests exist. One, however, can limit their incidence by firmly dealing with the timber, builder and mining mafia, and the poachers, and simultaneously enlightening people not to carelessly leave incendiary material in forests. The Central and State Governments will have to launch sustained campaigns to this end. The consequences of not doing so will be severe.

(The author is Consulting Editor, The Pioneer. The views expressed are personal.)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

NEGLECTANCE RESPONSIBLE FOR SITUATION

Sir — Instead of getting stunned by the rising number of COVID cases in the country, we must admit the fact that we are not moving towards a second wave but are actually in its grip. As the demand for Remdesivir surges, the Centre has fast-tracked applications from companies to manufacture the critical anti-viral drug in order to ensure its smooth availability. Night curfews and partial lockdowns are being imposed in many parts of the country as a measure to control the deadly virus. Amid the rising cases, the Centre has announced the cancellation of the CBSE Board exams for Class 10 and has deferred Class 12 exams.

On the other hand, lakhs of devotees have been taking a holy dip in the Ganga on the occasion of the Kumbh Mela in Haridwar, flouting the COVID norms. It is however ironic that while the Government has no compunction about cancelling the Board examinations, elections in the country are continuing as if nothing has happened. These fears have been magnified all the more with the dismal disregard shown by various State Governments to clamping down on mass public events and gatherings. While a proactive approach to control and manage the crowds when it comes to stonewalling the widely contagious virus, is a remedy to the problem, the complete disregard shown towards the basic safety precautions is indeed perplexing!

Pachu Menon | Goa

TROOP WITHDRAWAL WILL CREATE VACUUM

Sir — The US' decision to withdraw troops from Afghanistan is not good at the present moment as the situation on the ground is far from satisfactory. The Taliban is still controlling parts of Afghanistan and there is considerable influence of Pakistan and support from China, too. The chances of disintegration of Afghanistan are quite high. The withdrawal of the US troops might create a vacuum which, if acquired by the disruptive forces, will push the country into turmoil. President Joe Biden has said the US troops will be withdrawn from

Politicisation of vaccines



Politics over the anti-Coronavirus vaccine started the day Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced free jabs to the people of Bihar in the run-up to the Assembly elections in October-November last year. The vaccine policy suffered from the play of politics and one-upmanship. Besides, appalling naivety in assessing the demand during the second wave, differing norms for affording authorisation for use, inertia in augmenting in-house capacity, exports as a policy and imports in fetters together impacted the availability of vaccines in the country. After the

Afghanistan beginning May 1 and the process will be completed by September 11. For his part, Afghan President Ashraf Ghani said he spoke to Biden and that his country respects the US decision.

Maybe the US troops might be shifted to some other regions of the world. The US is also facing domestic problems and is ravaged by the COVID pandemic. Washington needs a war to run its economy. The weapons industry needs insecurity among the countries to sell weapons and make profits. In my opinion, the US troops will be shifted to another war. Let's wait and watch till the withdrawal in September.

Sunil Pradhan | Odisha

BAN SUPER-SPREADER EVENTS

Sir — It refers to the editorial 'Matters of faith' (April 16). At a time when the Government has done away with bridging trials for foreign-made vaccines for

authorisation of the Oxford-assisted Covishield and the indigenously-developed Covaxin for emergency use, the authorities soft-pedalled on giving authorisation and import/production licence(s) to other popular vaccine candidates in the world. According to the *Lancet*, Russia's vaccine Sputnik V had the efficacy of 91.6 per cent. While the chronic shortage was being felt, the Government allowed the exports to showcase India as a powerhouse of vaccines. To draw an analogy, the US has accumulated stocks which could vaccinate its entire population.

In fact, the possibility of a furious second wave was overlooked. India's daily COVID count has crossed 2 lakh now. This surge must be viewed against the overloaded hospitals, shortage in oxygen supply, inadequacy in life-saving ventilators and shortfalls in vaccines and medicines. There is an urgent need to reassess the situation carefully and honestly to mount a multipronged action to crush the climbing curve and augment treatment facilities.

Haridasan Rajan | Kozhikode

COVID-19 to facilitate acceleration in vaccination, it should seriously think about banning religious events like the Kumbh Mela which has become a super-spreader. In just five days, 1,701 people have tested positive for COVID-19 in the Kumbh Mela area. The Uttarakhand Police was unable to impose the standard operating procedures (SOPs) on the seers of *akhadas* and the ash-smearing ascetics crowding the Har Ki Pauri on the two *shahi snans* because of time constraints. Now Niranjani *Akhada*, one of the 13 *akhadas* of seers participating in the Kumbh, has decided to return from the event in the wake of the deteriorating COVID-19 situation. But it is too late as the damage has already been done.

Bal Govind | Noida

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

SOUNDBITE

Being a tourist State, if we impose night curfew, it will create a spin-off effect. People should remain alert. We have issued an advisory. We are continuing to create awareness.



Goa Chief Minister — Pramod Sawant



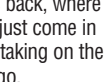
Australian Prime Minister — Scott Morrison

I would love to sing in films that I am going to be a part of, as well as for others, as a playback singer.



Actor — Adarsh Gourav

He is not the MS Dhoni which he used to be probably four or five years back, where he could just come in and start taking on the bowlers from the word go.



Former cricketer — Gautam Gambhir

There is no shortage of Remdesivir drug but if anyone is trying to misuse the pandemic situation by black-marketing, then all those will be punished severely.



Karnataka Home Minister — Basavaraj Bommai

FIRST COLUMN

THE NEW REALTY FOR INDIANS

People are acquiring slices of rent-yielding properties in a way that is comparable to investing in a firm's stocks



SONAM CHANDWANI

The pall of gloom over the real estate industry on account of the COVID-19 pandemic has brought to light several unconventional methods being applied to keep the dreams of property buyers alive, while developers strive to stay afloat. A growing number of Indians are acquiring slices of rent-yielding residential and commercial properties in a way that is comparable to investing in the stocks of a company. Fractional real estate, as the concept is known, allows investors to buy, say, one per cent of a vacation home for a minimum amount and use it whenever they want, while earning rental income, too. While weekend properties are neither essential nor urgent, the outbreak has changed this perception. Such a realty ownership concept has arisen predominantly from the Work-From-Home (WFH) culture and the work-vacation culture, attracting NRIs and domestic buyers alike. Such a property acts like an asset, attracting a plethora of investors, in the end becoming a potential Special Purpose Vehicle-related investment. From the taxation standpoint, the fractional ownership of a property opens up such owners to a plethora of taxable liabilities, when comparing the yearly taxation related costs of such interests, prospective buyers or their counsel/advisors need to be sure of the usage arrangement, location, ownership size, basic amenities and other items.



A unicorn investment refers to a startup avenue/venture, occupying less than \$1 billion of the industry share. Considering the fact that this sort of timeshare arrangement is a novel arena of investment for Indians, the value of such investment could possibly render the whole idea as a potential cash cow for real estate developers adapting to such forms of investment. With the pandemic having rendered the traditional and conventional real estate an under-yielding area of investment in the markets currently, fractional ownership might just pave way for a steady boom in the real estate sector. While fractional ownership may appear to be an inexpensive mode of investment to potential investors, it has its pros and cons. Procedures involving the investment in such ventures could involve detailed due diligences and legal red-tapism. Not paying attention to such procedures could end up putting stressed properties in the hands of lesser advised investors.

Moreover, expenses considering maintenance and management of the property and any such costs could essentially tip the scales against the owners should they not be able to actually utilise the property within their arrangements. Having said that, the benefits accruing out of part ownership of vacation properties, while not accounting monumentally in financial terms, are manifold where it comes to utilisation. Such a property allows the investors to change their work-space surroundings and choose rather inexpensive modes of vacation and even earn some money out of renting it out to other vacationers. Though fractional ownership could lead to a real estate investment boom the sector so greatly yearns for, the legal procedures involved might turn off a certain class of investors. Moreover, a relatively-new arena of investment always ends up taking a lot more time in yielding benefits, even if the time-value of money is rather unaccountable, since the property provides more leisurely than commercial benefits. Timeshare investments, while popular in the West, are considered to be a nascent area of investment, particularly while fractional ownership is considered. However, given the correct legal framework and taxation incentives, the current status of such investment could be elevated to providing the work-vacation culture the stability that the recent short-lived boom is testament to.

(The writer is Managing Partner KS Legal and Associates. The views expressed are personal.)

Time to turn Nocebo to Placebo in India

We must widely propagate the positives of getting inoculated, underplay the negatives and whole-heartedly support the Govt's initiatives towards massive vaccination drives



DEEPIKA BHASKAR

The pandemic and its prevalence have taught us many lessons in perseverance and patience. We have raced from one decision to the next, hoping that the latest one will make everything normal again. While the scientists have been working relentlessly to understand the virus and come up with increasingly promising vaccine candidates, the virus has been playing truant and evolving in new forms to ditch human efforts and survive as more robust variants. In the wake of the ever-changing variants, efficacy statistics and reported side effects, the so-called ultimate solution to end the pandemic, the anti-Corona vaccine, doesn't appear to be so attractive anymore. People are hesitant to take the shot, confirming the 'Nocebo Effect' to the perceived solution of the pandemic that doesn't seem to be getting anywhere close to its end. The hesitancy is spread across the globe. Some think they will never get the disease while others believe the virus is on its way out. Social media has been most instrumental in spreading the hesitancy due to varied opinions of people who have wide social media presence and have contributed to turning the solution from placebo to nocebo.

Understanding and addressing vaccine hesitancy has become very important in the drive towards normalising life, avoiding deaths and allowing the economy to run to its full capacity. These were the very reasons why a COVID-19 vaccine was needed in the first place. What made the long wait for a solution turn into vaccine hesitancy needs serious thought. As per the World Health Organisation (WHO), vaccine hesitancy is the delay in acceptance or refusal of vaccines despite their availability. Medical practitioners and scientists have been making all out efforts to discuss and address the common causes of concern. Fear and hesitancy come from the unknown, hence the awareness needs to rise. This has led to a negative mindset against the vaccine. The hesitancy has also been triggered by the side effects reported in some cases as a result of administering the vaccine. The directions to continue with the safety measures and stay with COVID-appropriate behaviour along with reporting of positive cases in some vaccinated individuals have amplified the vaccine hesitancy.

With many cases of blood clotting reported as a side effect of the AstraZeneca jab and discontinuation of the vaccine thereafter in at least a dozen European countries before resuming them again, doubts have grown more than ever. The latest news that Denmark has totally stopped the use of the AstraZeneca jab in its inoculation drive is not helping the cause and instilling confidence in people.

While Governments across the globe have rolled out the vaccine and invited people to get vaccinated at the earliest, the vaccination centres report a different story. Dealing with vaccine hesitancy has become the next big challenge, even in a country like India, which is now the second-most badly hit nation in the world after the US.

In order to build trust and confidence in the jab, a multi-pronged strategy is required with transparent communication as the key. With the second wave already in full swing and numerous variants of the original virus here, the danger is far from over. Herd immunity, as it was being perceived, is nowhere in sight as there are people who have reported a second infection. The diversity of the disease is unfathomable.



WHILE THE RUSSIAN VACCINE SPUTNIK V HAS BEEN GIVEN THE GO AHEAD AND WILL HIT THE MARKET SOON AFTER SHORT TRIALS HERE, THE CENTRE IS ALSO LOOKING AT FAST APPROVALS FOR VACCINES FROM OTHER NATIONS THAT HAVE BEEN APPROVED BY THE WHO FOR EMERGENCY USE. IT IS ONLY A MATTER OF TIME AND THE SHORTAGE WILL BE A THING OF THE PAST. BUT THE BIG QUESTION IS WILL VACCINE HESITANCY, TOO, BE GONE SOON?

The writer is Registrar, IIT Delhi. The views expressed are personal.



Attitudes towards the COVID-19 vaccines have changed overtime and varied greatly. The theory of developing antibodies on being infected has also led to a decrease in the relevance of the vaccine. Infected individuals feel they have developed antibodies and are immunised against the disease, so they do not need a shot. However, the protective abilities of antibodies in sero-surveys is unknown and their effectiveness in preventing reinfection is still to be studied. The belief that the vaccine is rushed and has not been tested properly is another setback.

That some of the scientists have been supporting this belief has also given boost to hesitancy. It is also assumed that the efficacy of the vaccine is being underplayed so that people do not become lax in observing COVID-appropriate behaviour. Another view being expressed is that the immunity after vaccination lasts for only six months, which wrongly implies that the shot is not effective. People also think that if the survival and recovery rate is 99.6 per cent, why even bother getting a jab.

All these supposed opinions and views have stopped people from getting vaccinated. Giving compensation for getting vaccinated has always backfired as people think that they are being paid because there is something to hide. The only groups that have justifiable concerns are the elderly, people with co-morbidities, pregnant women and those with high allergic reactions to vaccines. Also,

there is no vaccine to protect our children, as of now. Though getting vaccinated is a personal choice, the most successful inoculation drives have been built on knowledge exchange, accessibility and successful stories of those getting vaccinated.

Sherita Hill Golden, vice-president, chief diversity officer and a Professor of Medicine at Johns Hopkins Medicine talks of 12 things you need to know in the wake of the current vaccine hesitancy. The facts and insights into making a personal choice to get inoculated include the following: Getting vaccinated can protect you from getting COVID as your body will be ready to fight the Coronavirus if you are exposed to it; the people of colour are especially vulnerable to severe COVID-19 and its risk factors; getting inoculated helps others in the community, more so when people have chronic medical conditions; more vaccinations mean a chance to return to normal after having to experience closures, cancellations and postponements; though the vaccine development was fast, no steps were skipped while testing for safety and efficacy; diversity in vaccine testing helped assess safety and effectiveness; side effects of the COVID-19 vaccine are sparse and temporary, mainly limited to a sore arm, mild fever or body aches; it is possible to get the shot despite allergies except if you have severe allergic reactions to vaccines; the vaccine is safe for breastfeeding mothers, though pregnant women

should discuss it with their doctors as the vaccine have not been tested in pregnant women; the jab can give you extra protection, if you already had COVID-19; waiting too long allows the virus to spread in the community, hence, time is of the essence for the vaccine; the pandemic can only be shortened if the vaccine is well-received.

Hence, people have been advised to do their own research from reliable sources and take an informed decision regarding getting vaccinated. Where the issue of the shortage of the vaccine in the country is concerned, the Government is doing all it can to ensure that the needs of the people are met at the earliest. While the Russian vaccine Sputnik V has been given the go ahead and will hit the market soon after short trials here, the Centre is also looking at fast approvals for vaccines from other nations that have been approved by the WHO for emergency use. It is only a matter of time and the shortage will be a thing of the past. But the big question is will vaccine hesitancy, too, be gone soon?

It is time to put resolve into widely propagating the positives of getting vaccinated, underplaying the sparse negatives and whole-heartedly supporting the Government's initiatives towards massive vaccination drives so that the pandemic situation can be controlled, the economic downturn can be lifted and normalcy restored. Its time we turned this nocebo to a placebo and support humanity.

POINT COUNTERPOINT

IF CENTRAL ARMED FORCES ARE ATTACKED THEN SHOTS SHOULD BE FIRED. IT DOES NOT MATTER WHO DIES OR LIVES. —BJP LEADER RAHUL SINHA



HE HAS UNMASKED THE TRUE FACE OF THE BJP. PEOPLE WILL GIVE THEM A BEFITTING REPLY. —TMC SPOKESPERSON KUNAL GHOSH

The Maha Kumbh of COVID and environmental risks

The Govt is not ignorant of the health costs of these events during the ongoing second wave of the outbreak but populist measures are the top priority during elections

The Kumbh Mela was first mentioned in the accounts of Hiuen Tsang, the famous Chinese traveller who visited India in the seventh century. The grand event, with a 2,000-year-old history, commenced this year in January and will continue till the end of April. Currently, at over two lakh new cases, India accounts for one in six of all new COVID infections globally. But these rather grim facts did not deter nearly 13.5 lakh devotees, including the members of the 13 Akharas from taking the holy dip or the *Shahi Snan* on April 13.

The consequences of the ongoing Maha Kumbh upon public health have been devastating, to say the least. In the last 24 hours, Haridwar has reported over 1,000 fresh Corona positive cases. With the Indian Railways running



KOTA SRIRAJ

The writer is an environmental journalist. The views expressed are personal.

25 special trains to ferry the pilgrims across the country, the Maha Kumbh is all set to become a "Maha COVID-19 super-spreader." The situation looks hopeless unless either the event is immediately terminated or social distancing norms are strictly adhered to. But nothing significant seems to have been done by the Government regarding it.

Health risks aside, the Kumbh Mela is also not something that is known for environment friendliness. The Maha Kumbh is held at four locations — Nashik, Haridwar, Prayagraj and Ujjain — on a rotational basis after an interval of 12 years.

While the Kumbh, in general, is celebrated four times over the course of 12 years, with the site of the observance rotating between

four pilgrimage places on the four sacred rivers, namely, at Haridwar on the Ganga, at Ujjain on the Shipra, at Nashik on the Godavari and at Prayagraj at the confluence of the Ganga, the Jamuna, and the mythical Sarasvati.

The Nashik Kumbh Mela held in 2015 resulted in 25,000 tonnes of solid waste and faecal sludge that crept into the groundwater table from 33,000 hastily set-up mobile toilets without any effective waste disposal mechanism. It took an international outcry triggered by media coverage and the eventual intervention of the Bombay High Court to clean up the Nashik Kumbh Mela mess and rescue the environment. The event also caused a spike in river pollution making it unfit for bathing and other purposes. The



maximum permissible Biochemical Oxygen Demand (BOD) for safe bathing is 3.0 milligrams (mg) per litre but it ranged between 3.4-8.5 mg per litre during the event. Meanwhile bacterial coliform ranged between 3,300 and 39,000 Most Probable Number (MPN) per 100 ml while the permissible limit is 500 MNP per 100 ml for human

bathing. The Maha Kumbh at Haridwar, too, is no different either in terms of the colossal health risk it poses or the ecological collateral damage it brings.

In the run-up to the Haridwar Maha Kumbh, the National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG) has been working tirelessly to prevent ecological damage and as a part of its efforts, the NMCG has diverted one of the biggest local sewage drains — the Kassawan nullah — to a sewage treatment plant. But it should have been done a year ago. This nullah has emptied its effluents into the Ganga for years.

A recent study by the Doon University on the pollution levels in the Ganga establishes that in the stretch from Rishikesh to Haridwar the river was high on pollutants due to the pilgrim

bathing load and urban waste effluent flow.

The study also revealed that the overall concentration of Polypropylene Copolymer (PPCP), a form of plastic pollutant in the Ganga was found to be up to 1,104.84 nanograms per litre. Further, the presence of chemicals was also found to be high in the river water samples.

The election season, too, symbolised by huge political rallies, coupled with unrestrained religious gatherings are in total defiance of COVID-appropriate behaviour and protocol. Surely the Government is not ignorant of the health costs of these unabated events during the ongoing second wave of the Coronavirus pandemic, but populist measures and appeasement tactics are the top priorities during elections and they seem to score over

environmental and health concerns.

This is not surprising, but what is unfortunately startling is the inaction on the behalf of the judiciary which could have taken a *suo motu* initiative to shorten the duration of the Kumbh Mela, thereby, saving lives and the environment. In the absence of this, the Non-Government Organisations working in the field of environment protection and other individuals could have filed a Public Interest Litigation to this effect, but unfortunately, that also did not happen yet.

It is a classic case of who will bell the cat? Sadly, the reluctance of people to take on what is obviously a communally-sensitive issue will cost the environment and the health and economy of the country dearly. Where are the true nationalists now?

Residential realty get \$234 mn PE investments in Jan-March

IAN S ■ MUMBAI

Amid revival in housing demand, the residential segment witnessed private equity (PE) investments worth \$234 million in Q1 2021 which was 64 per cent of that witnessed during the entire 2020, said a Knight Frank India report.

It noted that in terms of the number of deals, the investment activity touched 100 per cent of 2020 levels and 39 per cent of 2019 levels in the first three months of 2021.

The report titled 'Investments in Real Estate - Trends in PE Investment (Q1 2021 update)' said that Indian real estate attracted private equity (debt and equity) investments (\$3.24 billion) across 19 deals in Q1 2021 (January - March) period.

In the first quarter of 2021, the investment in the sector has grown by 16 times compared to \$199 million in Q1 2020.

The investments in Q1 2021 in value terms were 80 per

cent of that witnessed in full year 2020 and 48 per cent of full year 2019. The strong momentum in Q1 2021 was predominantly driven by two major factors, spillover of certain deals from 2020 and the rise in investor confidence due to the drop in Covid-19 infections during early parts of Q1 2021, which had created some ripples of positivity in the economy, it said.

The sustainability of this momentum in investors' sentiments will therefore depend on how soon the second wave of infection subsides and also the pace of vaccination, as per the Knight Frank India.

Out of the total PE investments in real estate, the office segment attracted 71 per cent share, followed by retail at 15 per cent, residential and warehousing with 7 per cent each respectively.

Shishir Bajjal, Chairman and Managing Director, Knight Frank India said: "The deal street market of Indian real estate witnessed an impressive

surge in both value and volume of private equity investments in the first quarter of 2021, when compared to the entire year of 2020."

He said that office assets continue to be the preferred segment attracting over 70 per cent of PE investments Q1 2021 as the segment moves towards maturity which includes sustained demand, stability in rental income and change in ownership profile over long -term. Investors are expecting demand to recuperate faster as the pace of vaccination increases.

"While Q1 2021 has been an encouraging quarter for PE investments, however, the upward trajectory can be impacted by the rising second wave of Covid-19 infections in India which started in the month of April 2021. The sustainability of revival in investor sentiments will therefore depend on how soon the second wave of infection subsides and the pace of vaccination," Bajjal said.

Forex reserves surge by USD 4.34 bn to USD 581.21 bn

PTI ■ MUMBAI

After declining for two consecutive quarters, the country's foreign exchange (forex) reserves surged by USD 4.34 billion to USD 581.21 billion in the week ended April 9, according to the latest RBI data.

In the previous week ended April 2, the reserves had dipped by USD 2.42 billion to USD 576.28 billion. It had dropped by USD 2.99 billion to USD 579.28 billion in the week ended March 26, 2021.

The reserves had touched a lifetime high of USD 590.18 billion in the week ended January 29, 2021.

In the reporting week ended April 9, 2021, the increase in forex reserves was on account of a rise in foreign currency assets (FCA), a major component of the overall reserves.

FCA rose USD 3.02 billion to USD 539.45 billion, the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) weekly data showed.

Expressed in dollar terms, the foreign currency assets include the effect of appreciation or depreciation of non-US units like euro, pound and yen held in the forex reserves.

The gold reserves increased by USD 1.30 billion to USD 35.32 billion in the reporting week, the RBI data showed.

The special drawing rights (SDRs) with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) rose USD 6 million to USD 1.49 billion in the reporting week.

The country's reserve position with the IMF rose USD 24 million to USD 4.95 billion in the reporting week, the data showed.

Jet fuel price cut by 1 pc

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Jet fuel price on Friday was cut by 1 per cent, the second reduction in rates this month following softening international crude oil prices.

Aviation turbine fuel (ATF) price was reduced by Rs 568.88 per kilolitre, or 0.9 per cent, to Rs 57,805.28 per kl in the national capital, according to a price notification of state-owned fuel retailers. This is the second reduction in rates this month.

Earlier, prices were cut by 3 per cent on April 1.

These price cuts were the first in six months.

Meanwhile, petrol and diesel prices remained unchanged after the fourth reduction in three weeks on Thursday.

Petrol price on Thursday was cut by 16 paise per litre and diesel by 14 paise.

Petrol now costs Rs 90.40 per litre in Delhi, while a litre of diesel comes for Rs 80.73.

Benchmarks eke out slim gains; close lower for the week

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The Sensex and Nifty ticked higher for the third session on the trot on Friday but could not wipe off weekly losses amid a resurgence in Covid-19 cases. A strong recovery in the rupee, which zoomed 58 paise, and a bullish trend in global equities supported the bourses on Friday, traders said.

After a choppy session, the 30-share BSE Sensex closed 28.35 points or 0.06 per cent higher at 48,832.03.

Similarly, the broader NSE Nifty rose 36.40 points or 0.25 per cent to 14,617.85.

Asian Paints was the top performer among the Sensex components, spurring 3.07 per cent, followed by UltraTech

Cement, ONGC, M&M, Sun Pharma, HCL Tech, Tech Mahindra and Nestle India.

On the other hand, ICICI Bank, L&T, Bajaj Finance, TCS, SBI, Infosys and Reliance Industries were among the losers, declining up to 1.55 per cent.

During the holiday-truncated week, the Sensex sank 759.29 points or 1.53 per cent, while the Nifty tumbled 217 points or 1.46 per cent.

A continued surge in second wave of COVID-19 cases in the country, which already crossed 2 lakh daily cases, has certainly posed a risk to sustainability of rebound of earnings momentum, said Binod Modi, Head-Strategy at Reliance Securities.

SII CEO urges US to lift raw material export ban to ramp up vaccine production

Mumbai:Serum Institute of India (SII) CEO Adar Poonawalla on Friday said the US needs to lift its embargo on raw material exports to help ramp up vaccine production.

SII is currently manufacturing anti-coronavirus vaccine Covishield, developed by AstraZeneca and Oxford University. The vaccine is not only being used in India, but exported to a number of countries. Poonawalla had earlier admitted that SII has been facing problems in sending out required number of batches of vaccines due to the bureaucratic and government-related hurdles.

IAN S ■ NEW DELHI

As government plans to come up with a Cryptocurrency Bill, sector stakeholders have said that the government should regulate the cryptocurrency ecosystem, rather than banning

them. Experts are of the view that India should formulate regulations in the lines of the development countries which regulate these currencies including the US, UK, Japan, Australia among others.

Nischal Shetty, Founder &

CEO, WazirX said: "India's crypto policy should be geared towards fostering innovation, and customer safety. We should be able to prevent bad activities but keep the door to innovation open by allowing everything else to be built."

He said that so far there is no single regulator in a position to regulate the entire crypto sector.

"It's like trying to regulate the Internet with one regulator. We can start breaking down crypto based on its classification

as currency, asset, utility, security and let regulators handle the respective crypto. Eventually, it will become necessary to have a dedicated crypto markets regulator," Shetty said.

He also recommended that the government should ensure

that all crypto businesses catering to Indian customers are registered in India and follow KYC and AML policies. "There should also be guidelines for crypto businesses to ensure safety of customer funds," the WazirX CEO said.

NIFTY 50						
SCRIP	OPEN	High	LOW	LTP	CHANGE	
NIFTY 50	14599.60	14697.70	14559.00	14617.85	36.40	
WIPRO	441.70	473.65	436.00	469.45	38.75	
HINDALCO	356.75	376.50	352.70	368.25	14.70	
CIPLA	919.75	944.25	910.00	940.10	25.90	
ASIANPAINT	2387.60	2693.50	2581.70	2654.00	66.30	
ULTRACEMCO	6510.00	6786.45	6510.00	6704.00	164.70	
HCLTECH	1000.00	1016.80	994.50	1016.00	24.10	
BKCL	405.00	422.95	404.30	413.60	8.75	
ONGC	104.60	107.85	104.20	110.20	2.10	
SUNPHARMA	63.25	65.00	62.65	64.50	11.75	
NESTLEIND	16699.00	17335.00	16662.80	17189.00	313.35	
M&M	805.10	837.85	803.20	819.80	14.70	
TATAMOTORS	302.00	315.00	300.15	308.75	5.25	
TATACONSUM	662.80	676.55	660.30	668.95	9.65	
TECHM	99.80	101.50	99.00	100.50	11.85	
SHRECEM	30440.00	30988.80	30056.15	30612.20	306.80	
POWERGRID	207.50	214.80	207.25	209.85	2.05	
EICHERMOT	2415.00	2469.90	2415.00	2435.00	22.40	
HEROMOTOCO	2838.25	2924.95	2838.25	2889.00	26.45	
HDPC	2550.00	2589.00	2546.85	2590.00	21.85	
NTPC	101.90	102.90	100.50	102.15	0.80	
DRREDDY	4863.80	4940.00	4851.20	4883.00	27.45	
BAIJ-AUTO	380.00	367.50	359.95	362.50	27.50	
DIVISLAB	3790.00	3845.00	3733.40	3812.00	28.60	
BAJAJFINSV	976.00	988.00	976.00	980.10	61.30	
ITC	208.00	209.25	206.50	208.00	1.30	
UPL	610.00	618.80	602.00	610.80	3.45	
SRLIFE	917.00	919.55	905.60	913.30	4.60	
INDUSINDBK	864.10	869.95	853.05	862.10	3.75	
TITAN	1529.80	1559.80	1529.80	1545.60	6.45	
IOC	89.15	91.15	89.15	90.40	0.30	
BRITANNIA	3695.50	3733.95	3676.55	3704.90	12.20	
HDPCBANK	1434.95	1445.00	1432.10	1430.90	0.80	
BHARTIARTL	540.05	544.15	538.00	539.00	-0.35	
AXISBANK	668.65	672.25	662.35	667.80	-1.05	
ADANIAPORTS	750.90	794.85	743.00	749.15	-1.20	
GRASIM	1343.00	1380.00	1341.00	1347.05	-2.20	
MARUTI	6675.00	6784.85	6663.05	6633.00	-11.25	
HINDALINVR	2469.90	2478.95	2440.00	2453.95	-6.70	
COALINDIA	128.85	129.95	127.10	127.90	-0.35	
KOTAKBANK	1774.00	1788.15	1760.00	1763.20	-10.05	
HDCLIFE	694.50	701.30	689.10	690.00	-4.45	
RELIANCE	1936.60	1949.90	1926.45	1929.00	-15.30	
SRLN	34.00	34.50	33.65	33.95	-3.15	
INFY	1365.00	1370.85	1346.60	1348.10	-12.65	
TCS	3229.00	3247.00	3182.60	3186.10	-32.85	
TATASTEEL	903.80	914.00	886.25	887.25	-10.95	
IT	1360.50	1393.30	1355.30	1357.50	-17.15	
BAJFINANCE	4661.00	4690.00	4599.00	4599.00	-61.30	
ICICIBANK	574.60	577.75	564.10	565.05	-10.15	
JSWSTEEL	631.90	635.90	616.95	617.45	-11.65	

NIFTY NEXT 50						
SCRIP	OPEN	High	LOW	LTP	CHANGE	
NIFTY NEXT 50	34385.50	34810.75	34347.75	34640.70	367.45	
SBCARD	915.80	981.40	915.00	966.00	60.45	
ADANITRANS	960.00	991.35	954.50	991.35	47.20	
CADILAHG	507.95	530.00	500.35	525.65	20.95	
AUROPHARMA	916.10	959.00	910.50	951.50	35.75	
PGH	13612.00	14122.00	13580.15	14022.75	410.45	
VEDL	226.20	235.25	224.15	232.00	6.65	
INDUSTOWER	254.00	263.50	252.05	258.60	7.10	
ICIGCI	1375.00	1428.00	1375.00	1423.00	36.40	
ACC	1842.10	1845.00	1840.20	1884.00	47.35	
ADANIET	1130.00	1192.00	1112.00	1156.40	64.50	
APOLLOHOSP	2999.75	3073.00	2994.00	3057.00	26.30	
AMBUJACEM	296.95	305.45	295.40	301.20	6.00	
TORNTPHARM	2570.00	2635.00	2552.10	2613.00	48.00	
BIOCON	403.00	418.00	399.35	411.80	7.20	
JUBLFOOD	2784.80	2840.00	2764.00	2819.95	48.65	
BOSCHLTD	13700.00	13899.40	13647.60	13884.55	236.95	
ALKEM	2750.00	2815.00	2738.95	2791.00	40.55	
NAUKRI	4591.00	4740.00	4565.00	4647.00	66.50	
MOTHERSUNI	209.45	213.00	207.00	210.90	3.00	
DIEM	249.40	254.85	246.45	251.50	3.50	
SIEMENS	1815.55	1873.20	1806.20	1841.05	24.40	
MUTHOOTFIN	1160.00	1180.00	1142.00	1166.30	13.25	
BAJAJHLONG	3281.50	3400.00	3281.50	3371.50	30.40	
COPAL	1559.95	1576.50	1555.55	1569.00	13.55	
BERGEPAINT	732.00	749.90	731.80	732.90	5.45	
NMDC	142.60	145.30	142.10	142.25	0.95	
ITI	4095.00	4175.00	4052.30	4071.55	26.35	
DABUR	581.90	581.90	571.00	575.20	2.95	
LUPIN	1054.00	1069.15	1043.50	1050.75	2.65	
ABBOTINDIA	15040.00	15029.75	14821.25	14956.30	36.55	
MRF	8410.00	81981.05	80980.50	81100.00	119.50	
PEL	1716.00	1751.70	1703.85	1717.80	1.30	
MARICO	426.70	427.60	422.50	427.40	0.10	
YESBANK	14.55	14.80	14.45	14.55	0.00	
PIDILITIND	1835.40	1848.00	1808.35	1823.80	0.05	
HAVELLS	1014.55	1032.00	1012.35	1011.55	-0.05	
UBL	1091.00	1100.10	1090.15	1101.55	-0.20	
PNCB	35.00	35.40	34.50	34.70	-0.05	
ICICIPRULI	45.85	46.50	44.60	45.80	-3.20	
MCDOWELL-N	522.10	527.00	518.00	518.45	-3.75	
HDPCAMC	2945.00	2977.00	2929.00	2928.00	-21.50	
HINDPETRO	237.00	240.00	234.75	235.40	-1.75	
DMART	2947.00	2980.00	2902.00	2906.95	-21.95	
GODREJCP	735.10	737.90	728.00	730.40	-6.15	
GAIL	140.95	142.40	139.25	139.35	-1.25	
PETRONET	224.75	224.75	219.00	219.90	-2.20	
ADANIGREEN	1122.70	1148.00	1099.00	1104.95	-17.75	
BANDHANBNK	338.00	339.30	330.00	321.00	-5.20	
INDIGO	1604.00	1616.45	1576.40	1582.00	-27.85	
IGL	524.00	532.35	513.05	513.65	-11.30	

BSE 500

Script	Open	High	Low	LTP
RELIANCE	1944.00	1949.50	1926.60	1934.00
WIPRO	442.00	473.50	437.00	469.25
INFY	1366.65	1371.00	1347.00	1352.55
ADANIAPORTS	751.00	794.80	742.40	755.35
TATAMOTORS	302.40	315.00	300.30	309.90
SBIN	343.70	345.45	338.70	339.90
TATASTEEL	904.00	914.10	886.50	889.60
ADANIET	1129.70	1192.00	1120.85	1160.70
HINDALCO	355.00	376.45	353.00	370.15
HDPC	2558.80	2590.00	2546.15	2573.55
BHARTIARTL	540.00	544.30	538.30	540.55
MARUTI	6675.00	6782.00	6611.00	6649.65
SBCARD	882.65	982.00	882.65	973.60
AUBANK	1065.00	1098.85	1063.10	1077.45
HDPCBANK	1435.00	1444.95	1423.40	1428.45
CIPLA	920.00	944.50	910.20	938.10
M&M	806.00	837.50	802.60	822.70
ICICIBANK	575.00	577.50	564.00	566.60
BAJAJFINANCE	4669.95	4690.75	4581.05	4616.55
CADILAHC	508.80	530.00	500.25	527.00
ATGL	1143.00	1166.90	1120.00	1134.35
TCS	3228.95	3246.25	3182.00	3193.30
JSSTEEL	632.40	636.00	616.10	619.00
KOTAKBANK	1785.00	1786.00	1760.10	1765.55
GLENNMARK	543.00	577.95	525.70	571.90
IBREALEST	79.00	82.40	78.00	79.40
ASIANPAINT	2580.00	2692.40	2580.00	2665.80
DRREDDY	4874.00	4939.00	4818.50	4933.00
TATAPOWER	95.20	97.95	94.05	97.15
PNB	35.15	35.40	34.50	34.85
SUNPHARMA	635.00	650.00	626.90	646.05
IDEA	8.81	8.95	8.80	8.83
SAIL	94.00	94.50	91.00	91.40
TATACHEM	754.80	773.00	745.80	753.70
INDUSINDBK	860.00	882.30	851.50	865.35
ACSTRAL	1010.00	1016.80	991.75	1012.55
ASTRAL	1542.00	1698.00	1532.20	1679.75
HSCI	42.75	43.65	42.60	43.10
NAUKRI	4614.00	4729.20	4566.85	4669.05
ANANDTRANS	958.00	991.60	957.00	991.60
BPCCL	406.00	422.90	404.70	413.95
MOTHERSUMI	209.80	214.75	207.10	211.90
BAJAJFINSV	9760.00	9876.90	9760.00	9822.40
ULTRACEMCO	6537.00	6782.00	6525.00	6716.85
BANKBARODA	68.40	69.50	67.05	67.30
VEDL	226.50	235.10	224.40	231.80
AXISBANK	668.00	674.90	662.55	669.35
DMART	2938.00	2981.95	2893.70	2919.40
DLF	248.10	254.80	246.45	252.50
BL	1373.40	1392.35	1356.00	1359.70
BHEL	46.50	47.10	45.75	46.15

Myanmar coup foes tout minority-backed shadow Govt



Police security forces stand by inside a police vehicle and on the sidewalk of Hledan Road in Kamayut township in Yangon, Myanmar on Friday

AP ■ YANGON

Opponents of Myanmar's ruling junta went on the political offensive on Friday, declaring they have formed an interim national unity Government with members of Aung San Suu Kyi's ousted Cabinet and major ethnic minority groups.

The move comes on the eve of a diplomatic initiative to solve Myanmar's crisis by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, which is expected to hold a summit next week.

A violent crackdown by the junta has failed to stem Opposition to the coup, and as the Army has spread the fight to ethnic minorities in border areas, some ASEAN members believe the crisis threatens regional stability.

Opponents of the coup have been seeking an alliance with ethnic minority groups as a way of strengthening their resistance. The minorities for decades have kept up on-again, off-again armed struggles for



A woman lights a candle while others flash the three-fingered sign of resistance during a candlelight vigil to remember those who died in the military junta's violent response to anti-coup demonstrations in Yangon, Myanmar on Friday

AP

greater autonomy in the borderlands.

While it was not clear if the minority political organisations had formally joined an alliance, the appointment of prominent personalities from their ranks showed a commitment to a joint struggle against the military, which is certain to boost morale to the anti-coup

cause.

Security forces have killed at least 726 protesters and bystanders since the Feb. 1 military takeover, according to the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners, which monitors casualties and arrests. The protests and the killings have been continuing on a daily basis.

The National Unity Government is nominally an upgrade from what had been called the Committee Representing Pyidaungsu Hluttaw, which was formed shortly after the coup by elected lawmakers who were barred by the army from taking their seats.

The CRPH sought international recognition as Myanmar's sole legitimate government body, but won only popular support from those opposed to military rule.

The junta declared the CRPH an illegal organisation, and issued arrest warrants for its leading members.

A video posted Friday on social media showed veteran activist Min Ko Naing announcing the formation of the new body. He was a leader of the failed 1988 uprising against a previous military dictatorship and is one of the country's most respected political figures aside from Suu Kyi. He went quickly underground after the coup and

apparently has been active in political organizing against the junta since then.

"Please support the National Unity Government for the future of our citizens and our younger generation," he said. "The people are the decision makers and the people will fight the final battle. Victory is coming. We must win our revolution."

More details were provided in a statement on social media by Dr. Sasa, a physician and philanthropist who though in hiding has been the online public face of the CRPH.

"Today, at the end of Thingyan on the eve of Myanmar's new year, we are proud to announce the formation of a new National Unity Government and the dawn of a new era for the people of Myanmar," said Sasa.

"For the first time in our history, Myanmar has a unity government that will reflect one of our nation's greatest strengths — the diversity of our people."

AFTER SLAPPING SANCTIONS Joe Biden proposes strategic stability dialogue with Russia

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

Hours after expelling 10 Russian diplomats in connection with interference in last year's US presidential elections, President Joe Biden has proposed a strategic stability dialogue with Moscow, as officials of the two countries discussed the possibility of a summit meeting in Europe this summer.

The US on Thursday announced the expulsion of 10 Russian diplomats and slapped sanctions on over 30 individuals and key financial institutions as it held Kremlin accountable for interference in last year's presidential election and the hacking of American federal agencies.

Hours after signing the executive order imposing sanctions on its erstwhile cold war rival, Biden told reporters at the White House that during a telephonic conversation with his Russian counterpart, Vladimir Putin, he had proposed that they meet in person this summer in Europe for a summit to address a range of issues facing both the countries.



"Our teams are discussing that possibility right now. And if that summit were to occur, and I believe it will, the United States and Russia could launch a strategic stability dialogue to pursue cooperation in arms control and security," Biden said.

"We can address critical global challenges that require Russia and the United States to work together, including reining in nuclear threats from Iran and North Korea, ending this pandemic globally, and meeting the existential crisis of climate change," he said.

During the phone call, Biden said he expressed concern on Russia's military build up on the Ukraine border and in Crimea.

Russia to expel 10 US diplomats in response to Washington

Moscow: Russia on Friday responded in kind to a barrage of new US sanctions, saying it would expel 10 US diplomats and take other retaliatory moves in a tense showdown with Washington.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov also said Moscow will add eight US officials to its sanctions list and move to restrict and stop the activities of US nongovernment organizations from interfering in Russia's politics.

He said the Kremlin suggested that U.S. Ambassador John Sullivan follow the example of his Russian counterpart and head home for consultations. Russia will also move to deny the U.S. Embassy the possibility to hire personnel from Russia and third countries as support staff.

The moves follow the sanctions on Russia announced this week by the Biden administration. While the U.S. Wields the power to cripple the Russian economy, Moscow lacks levers to respond in kind, although it potentially could hurt American interests in many other ways around the globe.

Lavrov noted that while Russia could take "painful measures" against American business

interests in Russia, it wouldn't immediately move to do that.

Russia has denied interfering in the 2020 U.S. Presidential election and involvement in the SolarWind hack of federal agencies — the activities punished by the latest U.S. Sanctions. The Russian Foreign Ministry warned of an "inevitable" retaliation, charging that "Washington should realize that it will have to pay a price for the degradation of bilateral ties."

The U.S. On Thursday ordered 10 Russian diplomats expelled, targeted dozens of companies and people, and imposed new curbs on Russia's ability to borrow money. Pundits had predicted that while Moscow would respond in kind to the expulsions, it would refrain from any other significant moves to avoid a further escalation.

Russia's economic potential and its global reach are limited compared with the Soviet Union that competed with the U.S. for international influence during the Cold War. Still, Russia's nuclear arsenal and its leverage in many parts of the world make it a power that Washington needs to reckon with.

US says Russia was given Trump campaign polling data in 2016

Washington: It was one of the more tantalizing, yet unresolved, questions of the investigation into possible connections between Russia and Donald Trump's 2016 presidential campaign: Why was a business associate of campaign chairman Paul Manafort given internal polling data — and what did he do with it?

A Treasury Department statement Thursday offered a potentially significant clue, asserting that Konstantin Kilimnik, a Russian and Ukrainian political consultant, had shared sensitive campaign and polling information with Russian intelligence services.

Kilimnik has long been alleged by U.S. officials to have ties to Russian intelligence. But the statement in a broader Treasury Department sanctions announcement was the first time the U.S. government had so directly drawn a connection from the Trump campaign to the Kremlin's intelligence services. The revelation was all the more startling because it went beyond any allegation made in either special counsel Robert Mueller's 2019 report or in an even more damning and detailed document released last year by the Senate Intelligence Committee.

Pak suspends services of social media platforms

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

Pakistan on Friday temporarily suspended the services of social media platforms like Twitter, Facebook and WhatsApp to stop their use to organise demonstrations following violent protests by a radical religious group that has now been banned by the Government.

The Government banned Tehreek-i-Labaik Pakistan (TLP) on Thursday following three days of violent protest by it to force the government to expel the French ambassador over a blasphemous caricature published in France last year.

The TLP had launched the country-wide protest on Monday after the arrest of its chief Saad Hussain Rizvi.

The TLP supporters clashed with the law enforcement agencies in several towns and cities earlier this week, leaving seven persons dead and over 300 policemen injured.

To stop the protests after Friday prayers, the Interior Ministry directed the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) to suspend social media services for four hours from 11 am to 3 pm.

The PTA said in a notification that "complete access to social media platforms (Twitter, Facebook, WhatsApp, YouTube and Telegram) may be blocked".

The reason for the suspension of the services was not stated by the PTA but official sources said that it was feared that protesters could use social media to organise demonstrations.

Suspension of internet and mobile phone services is a common practice in Pakistan to forestall protests and acts of terrorism.



Supporters of Tehreek-e-Labiak Pakistan, a radical Islamist political party, chant slogans during a sit-in protest against the arrest of their party leader Saad Rizvi and demanding to expel the French envoy from the country, in Lahore on Friday

AP

But this time only social media has been particularly targeted as the TLP was reportedly using it effectively against the government action.

On Thursday, Interior Minister Sheikh Rashid Ahmed warned the TLP against using YouTube to upload propaganda videos. The TLP came to prominence in November 2017 when it staged a sit-in at the Faizabad interchange near Islamabad and cut off the capital from the old international airport.

FROM PAGE 1

4L DAILY COVID CASES BY APR END LIKELY

Now, Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh, and Uttar Pradesh have more than one lakh active cases each.

Along with the number of cases, the death count is also rising steadily amid reports of a glaring mismatch in the number of fatalities reported by several States and figures collected from crematoriums there.

The failure of the authorities on placing any curb on mahakumbh and complete violation of Covid-19 norms in election rallies are seen as the primary reason for such a huge spike in the number of cases.

For example, West Bengal has crossed the national coronavirus average of 5.2 per cent by registering a Covid positive growth of 6.5 per cent. The cases in the State have doubled over the last week. The State has seen massive crowd at election rallies and roadshows with hardly anyone wearing face masks.

Coming back to the worst-hit Maharashtra, on Friday, the State breached another grim Covid-19 landmark crossing a total of 37 lakh infections. A day after the pandemic claimed 349 lives and left 61,695 more infected in the State, the daily tally of infections rose by 2,034 while the daily Covid-19 went up 49.

With 63,729 fresh cases, the total infections climbed from 36,39,855 to 36,03,584. Similarly, with 398 new deaths, the total Covid-19 toll rose from 59,153 to 59,551.

As 45,335 patients were discharged from the hospitals across the State after full recovery, the total number of people discharged from the hospitals since the second week of March last year went up to 39,04,391. The recovery rate in the State for the first time in several days dropped from 81.3 per cent to 81.12 per cent.

After Maharashtra, UP has emerged as the biggest hot spot in the country. The State's daily Covid-19 cases surged to a record high of 27,426 on Friday, taking the State's cumulative tally to 7,93,720, an official said.

The death toll climbed to 9,583 with 103 more fatalities, Additional Chief Secretary (Health) Amit Mohan Prasad told reporters here. This is the third consecutive day when the State has reported

SUNDAY CURFEW IN ALL UP DISTRICTS TILL MAY 15

The DRDO will set up two hospitals of 500 beds and 600 beds in Haj House and Blossoms Height under the direction of Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, thus giving a hope to the patients and their relatives who are running helter-skelter for beds.

A Government spokesman said within next three to four days, Lucknow will have 2,100 additional beds besides King Georges' Medical University and Balrampur Hospital will be transformed into fully Covid hospital.

DM tests positive
Lucknow (PNS): DM Abhishek Prakash tested positive for corona in a late night development. Among other officials State Vaccination Officer Dr Ajay Ghai tested positive for corona.

Yogi added continuous supply of oxygen to Covid hospitals should be maintained. The control room has been set up to monitor smooth supply of medical oxygen and should remain 24x7 active. Adequate availability of medical personnel, Covid beds, medicines, medical equipment and oxygen should always be maintained in every district. Ensure smooth operation of ambulance services. Make the Government aware of any kind of need, he said.

"The Department of Food Safety and Drug Administration should ensure adequate availability of Remdesivir. The availability should be monitored from the Chief Secretary's office. Additional Remdesivir should be purchased while assessing the situation," CM said.

The CM maintained that there is no shortage of funds for the work related to Covid management. Quarantine centres should be opened in all districts and these should have proper medical facilities as well as proper arrangements for food. With a view to keeping the spread of infection

to a minimum, it is extremely important that the provisions of the containment zone be strictly implemented.

"UP has excellent experience of Covid management. Our policies have received global acclaim. Our victory in this battle is certain. Every citizen of the State has an important role to play in defeating Covid. Compliance of Covid protocol is in everyone's interest. Masks, sanitisation and physical distance have to be included in our lifestyle," he said.

COVAXIN PRODUCTION TO BE DOUBLE BY JUNE

Three public sectors companies are also being supported to increase the capacity of vaccine production.

These are Haffkine Biopharmaceutical Corporation Ltd., Mumbai - a State PSE under Maharashtra Government is being provided financial support as a grant for this facility to be made ready for manufacturing.

"The Haffkine Biopharmaceuticals Ltd had asked for around 12 months to complete this task. However, the Central Government has asked them to expedite and complete the task urgently within 6 months. The facility will have a capacity of 20 millions doses per month, once functional," as per the statement.

Similarly, Indian Immunologicals Limited (IIL), Hyderabad - a facility under National Dairy Development Board, and Bharat Immunologicals and Biologicals Limited (BIBCOL), Bulandshahr a CPSE under Department of Biotechnology will also be supported to prepare their facility to provide 10-15 million doses per month by August - September 2021.

COVID SPREADS MAINLY VIA AIR: LANCET STUDY

"It is urgent that the World Health Organisation and other public health agencies adapt their description of transmission to the scientific evidence so that the focus of mitigation is put on reducing airborne transmission," Jimenez said.

Further, the researchers emphasise that

while it is necessary to wash hand and clean surfaces, they should be given less emphasis than airborne measures.

If an infectious virus is primarily airborne, someone can potentially be infected when they inhale aerosols produced when an infected person exhales, speaks, shouts, sings, or sneezes.

The airborne control measures include ventilation, air filtration, reducing crowding and the amount of time people spend indoors, wearing masks whenever indoors (even if not within 6 feet or two metres of others), attention to mask quality and fit, and higher-grade PPE for healthcare and other staff when working in contact with potentially infectious people.

The team reviewed published research and identified 10 lines of evidence to support the predominance of the airborne route.

Moreover, transmission rates of SARS-CoV-2 are much higher indoors than outdoors, and transmission is greatly reduced by indoor ventilation. The researchers also cited work demonstrating long-range transmission of the virus between people in adjacent rooms in hotels; people who were never in each other's presence.

EC CUTS BENGAL CAMPAIGN TIME BY 3 HRS AT NIGHT OVER COVID RISE

The poll body has also directed the political parties/candidates to provide masks, sanitizers, etc., to the participants and account for the cost in expenditure limits. If Covid 19 norms are flouted at any public meetings and rallies, the district election officers and returning officers can cancel the public meetings and rallies and invoke penal actions.

"It shall be the responsibility of the organisers of public meetings, rallies, etc to provide masks and sanitisers to every person attending these meetings, rallies, etc at their cost which shall be added and counted within limits of prescribed expenditure. Organisers shall also ensure proper usage of masks, sanitisers and also be responsible for maintaining minimum social distance by everyone. District

Election Officers and Returning Officers shall take strict measures to enforce Covid guidelines during the campaign. They shall cancel public meetings, rallies, etc. if any violations are observed, in addition to invoking penal sections," the EC said.

Due to spike in Covid 19 cases, the EC has reduced the maximum number of electors per booth from 1500 to 1000 and marking of six feet distance for the queue outside the polling station to maintain social distancing.

ENSURE SUFFICIENT OXYGEN FOR EMERGENCY CARE: PM

The PM was briefed about production capacity in the country to meet the rising demand, it said. He suggested increasing oxygen production as per the capacity of each plant. It was discussed that surplus stocks of oxygen supply in steel plants are being offered for medical use, the PMO said.

The PM also asked officials to ensure seamless and free movement of tankers carrying oxygen throughout the country.

The Government has exempted all inter-State movement of oxygen tankers from registration of permits to enable easier movement, the PMO's statement said.

Modi was informed that States and transporters have been asked to ensure tankers move round the clock with drivers working in shifts to ensure faster turnaround and adequate capacity to meet the surge in demand.

Cylinder filling plants will also be permitted to work for 24 hours with necessary safeguards, the PMO said.

The Government is allowing industrial cylinders to be used for medical oxygen after due purging, it said.

Similarly, nitrogen and argon tankers will be automatically allowed to be converted to oxygen tankers to overcome the potential shortage of tankers.

During the review, officials also briefed the PM about the efforts being made to import medical grade oxygen, the PMO said.

It was reported that a Covid patient in a Delhi Hospital died as a ward boy "switched off" and moved an oxygen

cylinder to another patient in the hospital.

India added a record 2,17,353 new coronavirus infections in a day taking the total tally of Covid-19 cases to 1,42,91,917, while active cases surpassed the 15-lakh mark, according to the Union Health Ministry data updated on Friday.

The West Bengal which has witnessed numerous political rallies over the last two months (with thousands of people in attendance) has crossed the national coronavirus average of 5.2 per cent by registering a Covid positive growth of 6.5 per cent. The cases in the State have doubled over the last week.

MONSOON NORMAL THIS YEAR, PREDICTS IMD

the latter is linked to the heating of Pacific waters and could lead to deficient precipitation. "There are less chances of formation of an El Nino," Rajeevan said. He said in the recent years, the year after La Nina has usually seen a normal rainfall season. The Indian Dipole is another major influence on the outcome of the monsoon. A negative IOD is associated with the heating of the Indian Ocean waters and a positive IOD is linked to the cooling of Indian Ocean waters.

The latest global model forecast indicates that neutral ENSO (El Nino Southern Oscillation) conditions are likely to continue over the equatorial Pacific and negative IOD conditions are likely to develop over the Indian Ocean during the ensuing monsoon season, IMD Director General M Mohapatra said. "La-Nina is favoured through March-May with 80 per cent chances of a transition to ENSO-neutral in April-June 2021, and continuing through the fall of 2021," Rajeevan said, implying these conditions are favourable for a good rainfall season.

The IMD's forecast shows that the 2021 monsoon will be the third consecutive year (2019-2021) of good rainfall. India had earlier three consecutive years of rainfall in 1996,1997 and 1998.

However, several experts say that 'below-normal rains in East and North-East India are not always harmful as the quantum of rains in these parts and also the daily average is higher than other regions of the country.

SHORTCIRCUITS

SUNNY LEONE

‘I don’t always post workout videos but I thought this was fun. A technique used by fighters who are hit in the head and get dizzy. I’m no fighter but was fun to try this. Thanks Arif. Oh and by the way, it’s more difficult to box with a mask on! But safety over comfort at this moment.

GUL PANAG

I think a lot of us are aware of what kind of an existential crisis the environment faces but we have other fires to fight. And even though we may be willing and maybe interested and wanting to do our best to contribute towards conserving the environment, other emergencies in life take over.

ARJUN BIJLANI

I don’t want to use anything as an excuse to not follow my workout routine even when on a vacation. It is just a medium to rejuvenate myself. I am very particular about my schedule especially when I am in the middle of training for an intense reality show.

NATASHA RASTOGI

Acting for me will always be a constant journey of learning. To talk about my recent projects, *Pagglait* gave me an opportunity to play a very nuanced character. But I tried to see it as a woman torn between her daughter’s well-being and rigid societal norms that she must follow, given the situation.

AMY WALSH

I loved Michael Praed, who played Tracy’s dad Frank in *Emmerdale*. He’s a ball of crazy energy. Once he came to the garage with me and pumped my tyres up because I was poorly. Michael is such a caring man, and I was devastated when he left the show. But we’re still in touch and he’s a friend for life.

ART & CULTURE

CONFLUENCE OF ART AND FILM

Art is inaccessible. It is high brow. It’s for the classes. How often have we heard these words thrown around without giving a thought to everyday lived aesthetics? The film, *Contemporary Art within the Visual Cultures of Italy & India*, looks at chipping away many of these assertions by exploring contemporary art in both countries. The curators of the panoramic project, DAVIDE QUADRIO and MYNA MUKHERJEE, brought National Award-Winning filmmaker ONIR as the Director of Photography to ensure that it could take the viewers on a visual journey that is both layered and simplified. In a discussion with SAIMI SATTAR, the trio talk about the project, its reach and the conversations that it can ignite

How was the project conceptualised?

Myna: I had worked with Davide on an exchange programme of ideas and art between Italy and India at the India Art Fair two years back. We enjoyed this cross-cultural exchange tremendously where there were women artists, three each, from Italy and India. What was surprising was the resonance among them. It was a universal and hybrid moment. While the contours of work were specific to the location, there was a shared universality as women artists.

From there came the germ of an idea. As the resonance was big, we wanted to share it with a wider audience. Things quickly fell in place as Davide was invited as a curator to Aartissima, Italy’s most pivotal art fairs, for India. As a larger narrative formed, we got more ambitious and wanted to communicate the idea behind the curation. We wanted to share this and a film, because of a wider and diverse audience as well as those who are new to art conversation or aren’t art enthusiasts but have an inclination towards it, was considered the best way to do it.

For me, talking about India and its aesthetics can’t be separated from the specificity of location. Instead of explaining this to the audience, they get to peek into the aesthetics philosophies, history and the contemporariness of everyday living, landscape, crafts, arts and political situation.

There is poetic resonance in both countries in terms of themes, materiality, form and more. There are several intersections in the intellectual thought process, the time, the duration and the way artists work and the way nature interacts.

Davide: We were at a stage where we could truly have an exchange. There were questions, about our roles as cultural mitiga-

tors and that of culture in the contemporary world, especially in the pandemic. Human beings aren’t just consumers or survivors but are cultural beings. This isn’t just a journey but also critically thinking about the role of culture and art. There’s a strong idea of presenting what it means to be in a cross-cultural environment and presenting your own culture through a contemporary spectacle. The idea isn’t to simplify but to make it more layered.

How much does the ruling dispensation and their outlook affect arts?

Onir: For independent filmmakers, censorship has been there for years and we’ve negotiated different kinds of dos-don’ts. When OTT came, we thought it had more possibilities but now there are new laws. You’re always being told to be sensitive about religion and more but somewhere the artiste has disappeared in the scheme of things. However, art is a compulsion that doesn’t let you stay quiet as is evident from Iranian cinema. It’s about finding a new narrative to tell a story.

D: I think, radicality is happening globally. This situation is conducive to art and culture not being secondary. There’s a strong will to find solutions and ways to do things as well as support creativity in people.

M: One of the most interesting things about art, when you’re looking at radicality, is the origin of the word. The etymology of radicality is roots. So you’re essentially going back to the roots philosophically and symbolically.

I spent 20 years in New York and the burden of representation there was very frustrating. For example, if you were a dancer, suddenly everybody would say this is South Asian dance but we know that there are so many dances in India alone. This



means that if you’re leading someone into an exposition of culture, its multiplicity is so enormous, that unless the viewer willingly embraces its complexity, nothing can be understood about culture.

Going from Kashmir to Gujarat, there were so many surprising stories and encounters that there’s no fixed way to think about them. The documentary looks into the multiple truths at this particular moment in time. The wonderful thing is that it looks at both references as well as departures from these historical and material references. It hopes to glimpse at multiplicity in all its glory.

So, do you think these multiple locations add to the storytelling?

M: Yes, of course. There are similarities and differences between — Gujarat’s Maharaja Sayajirao University and Shanti Niketan,

Bengal — the two best-known academic institutions of art. Then there are many smaller ones besides folk and craft traditions, weaving traditions or patterns or references, philosophy, spirituality... there is so much. Even when you’re referring to a simple landscape, it is varied across different parts of India.

D: The overlapping of feelings or relationships is communicated by putting together extreme things or differences. This explodes into an emotional reaction rather than a historical or intellectualised analysis. Onir is extremely important in this as the world he comes from and his way of thinking is very different. It’s a journey through feelings, ideas, sketches of ideas, doubts and that is actually what will make the film very appealing as it’s not about a linear idea but a complex journey through references and aesthetics of actual-

ly connecting or disconnecting India and Italy.

So you would say that multiple locations and multiple artists are adding to these voices of diversity?

M and D: Yes sure. D: This is of course a point of view and a rhetorical decision. It isn’t always about absolute. It’s about tentatives, absorbing things and getting back. The idea is to bring all those images and edit them to the minimum and maximum possible.

M: The reason for bringing Onir is that we wanted to bring in an outsider who would also see it from the audience’s perspective with fresh eyes. So if it made sense to Onir, it would make sense to the audience. He’s an outsider to the process while being a part of the

journey.

Is this an attempt to bridge the gap as art is considered high-brow and inaccessible?

O: When Myna approached me the idea to make it more “accessible” was exciting. This wasn’t a technical documentary from the point of view of someone superior talking about things you don’t understand but it was the journey of experiencing and understanding the long history of art and contemporary art in the context of nature, culture, tradition and everything else. For me, starting from Kashmir and going to Gujarat changed the way I started seeing form, design and will affect the way I shoot films. To make art accessible needs a small step. This journey helped me take that step and I hope that it does so for other people too.

What were the challenges in bringing everything — the journey from Kashmir to Gujarat and the Italian as well as Indian influences — to one platform?

O: For me, the beauty is in finding threads that are diverse while having a commonality because that is what humanity is all about. It is like poetry, where you are using different languages to convey the same emotion. You see nature, tradition, patterns, forms and colours of Kashmir resonate in Gujarat while being different.

Is the focus more on contemporary artists in the documentary?

O: It is contemporary but comes with thousands of years of history. What’s beautiful is that we are talking about the works of contemporary artists and showing the milieu that brought about their art.

D: What’s interesting isn’t the conflict between past and present but how the present is coming

from history. When you’re talking about how tradition is preserved, you also see professionals who build on that tradition. We’re going to alphabets of creativity and showing that art is a discourse and a practise which isn’t in conflict but a natural consequence even though it might go against tradition.

M: I don’t think of history as a progression in a linear way but much more as a continuum. Everything in South Asia is elliptical. What’s new today is old tomorrow and what’s old tomorrow is also suddenly new. Whether it is the materials, colour, the way it is constructed and used by artists on tempura and frescoes. Similarly, while references to metaphor and myths happen in ancient cultures but are also made by very young contemporary artists today.

What is the audience you are targeting and what should they be looking at?

M: We hope that the film serves as an entry point for someone who is interested in art but never has had an exposure to different conversations or some of the different histories of art. At the same time we want artists to find a resonance with other artists either from their part of the world or other parts of the world. It isn’t a historical text but more of symbols and signs that give an entry point into aesthetics. It’s a plural history.

D: We want to have a film that goes beyond the intellectual language that contemporary art had in-built globally and to try to create a narrative that talks to people.

O: It provides an experience to someone navigating art but not so familiar with it but at the same time it has layers and subtexts woven in silently which will give a much more refined narrative to artists who are familiar with the discourse.

IMMERSIVE 30 MINUTES

‘Dream hard, work harder’ Gil Green directs Divine’s *Rider*

Choreographer and educator ASHLEY LOBO says nothing can stop a dancer who is motivated, disciplined and hungry for success



IDENTIFY A FAVOURITE DANCE STYLE

When a dancer is serious about pursuing his or her passion as a vocation and a lifelong career, it is important to identify the style they want to specialise in. Ashley cites the example of many young Indian dancers

whose dedication to ballet has won them scholarships and taken them abroad to master the form. He says, “When you clarify just what creative zone you want to specialise, work or teach in, it distills your choices to the essentials and you are able to find options that are suited to you.”

GET THE FUNDAMENTALS OF THEORY RIGHT

According to him, to revise, repeat and imbibe the basic theories of a chosen dance form is important. He suggests, “Learn online with a teacher, join an academy remotely if you cannot learn in person and tune your body and mind. Do your own research on how great dancers built their technique, watch acclaimed performances, check what international studios are working on. All this information is out there. Be hungry and relentless. Build your foundation and never stop working on yourself and your craft.”

FOCUS ON THE POSITIVES

It is hard to find motivation in tough times but as Ashley says, “One of my favourite quotes that I use repeatedly to inspire myself and my students is, ‘My next move must be motivated by dance itself. This is what it is all about. When you let dance lead you to your next step, the future reveals itself and believe me, it will be beautiful. The world over, dance is getting the respect it deserves through performance-based shows and films. Dancers are beginning to represent India at the global level as performers, teachers and choreographers. And we are all set to make an even bigger splash in the years to come. So dream hard, work harder and you will go places.”

Rapper Divine has teamed up with American music video and film director Gil Green for the music video of his new track *Rider*.

The story of the song is inspired by Divine’s rags-to-riches tale. It is a love saga between a deprived dreamer, played by Divine, and an affluent boss woman, played by singer Lisa Mishra.

Green has directed over 200 music videos and has collaborated with the likes of Adam Levine, John Legend, Pitbull, Chris Brown, Akon, Lil Wayne, Kanye West, Nicki Minaj, Drake, DJ Khaled, Camila Cabello, Usher, P-Diddy, J Balvin, 50 Cent, Snoop Dogg and Sean Paul.

“I want to send a big shout out to Divine and the Gully Gang for collaborating with me on this video. Being a part of Divine’s massive influence in India’s hip hop movement is something special to me. The art form is truly universal, and Divine continues to push the hip hop boundaries with his music, lyrics, style and presence,” says Green.

The video features Dubai’s tourist attractions such as Dubai Opera, Burj Khalifa, Sheikh Zayed Road, Dubai World Trade Centre to City Walk, Burj al Arab, Madinat Jumeirah, Palm Jumeirah and features the iconic desert safari.

Divine adds, “*Rider* is a song that is very close to my heart and I feel blessed to have worked with



a legend like Gil and his entire team that fulfilled the vision I had for this music video. Lisa has been an amazing and a fun collaborator to work with, easy to see that her voice and personality together in the video shines right through.”

“Last summer, Divine made an Instagram post asking his fans who he should work with on his album. I thought I’d shoot my shot

in the comments and see if I got lucky. And just like that, he messaged me that he had an idea and was going to send it over. When I got the scratch, his verse and the hook had been written and he left the second half empty for me. I loved the message of the song, about an independent woman who he’s so comfortable with, it goes beyond just a relationship,” says Lisa.

ASIAN WRESTLING CHAMPIONSHIP

Maiden gold medals for Vinesh, Anshu

PTI ■ ALMATY

Dominating the proceedings in a depleted field, Olympic-bound wrestlers Vinesh Phogat and Anshu Malik won their maiden Asian Championship titles after comfortable triumphs in their respective summit clashes here on Friday.

There was no stopping Vinesh in the absence of the Chinese and Japanese rivals as she cruised to the title without losing a point in the 53kg category.

Vinesh has notched up seven podium finishes at the Asian meet over the years, including three silver medals before this edition.

Also standing on top of the podium was Divya Kakran (72kg) while Sakshi Malik (65kg) settled for a silver medal, a performance which should boost her confidence after enduring a long wretched run.

India has a rich haul of seven medals from the women's event as the country won four gold, a silver and two bronze medals in this edition.

Sarita Mor (59kg) had won gold while Seema Bisla (50kg)



and Pooja (76kg) settled for bronze medals on Thursday.

Young Sonam Malik (62kg) unfortunately could not compete due to an injury. She also bagged Olympic quota along with Anshu recently.

The 19-year old Anshu was yet again impressive as she underlined her progress in the senior circuit with yet another confident performance in 57kg.

She won her final 3-0 and was never really troubled by Mongolia's Battsetseg Altantsetseg, except for a double-leg attack initially in the bout.

The Mongolian was mostly busy defending and Anshu kept her lead intact for gold.

Earlier in the day, Vinesh won by technical superiority against Mongolia's Otgonjargal Ganbaatar and Taipei's Meng Hsuan Hsieh while an injured Hyunyoung Oh from Korea did not turn up for the semifinal.

Vinesh, who had won a bronze in the Delhi edition of the Continental championship last year, moved 6-0 up in the final and finished the bout in style by pinning her rival in the first period itself.

Anshu won her first two bouts by technical superiority against Uzbekistan's Sevara Eshmuratova and Kyrgyzstan's Nazira Marsbek Kyzy to reach the semifinal.

Her quick moves and

tremendous energy had her rivals gasping for breath.

Up against Altantsetseg, she was leading 9-1 when the referee awarded a 'victory by caution' to the Indian. The Mongolian was cautioned thrice.

Competing much better than she was in the recent trials and competitions, the Rio Games bronze medallist Sakshi won her first two bouts by technical superiority and was leading 3-0 against Hanbit Lee when the Korean suffered a knee injury and opted out of the contest.

She began aggressively in the final against Mongolia's Bolortungalag Zorigt but was pinned on a counter move.

Also doing well was Divya, who competed in the 72kg category. She stunned reigning Asian Champion Zhamila Bakbergenova from Kazakhstan 8-5 en route the final.

She won the final by pinning Korea's Sujin Park to be only the second Indian after Sarita Mor to win two gold medals at this meet. She had won gold in 68kg in the 2020 edition.

Sonam, Anshu included in TOPS

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Sports Ministry has included six athletes, including Tokyo Olympic-bound wrestlers Sonam Malik and Anshu Malik, besides four sailors in its Target Olympic Podium Scheme (TOPS) core group.

The decision was taken at the 56th meeting of the Mission Olympic Cell held on April 7, when it was decided that all Olympic-qualified athletes will be supported through TOPS.

Anshu (57kg) and Sonam (62kg) were included in the TOPS core group after they secured their Olympic berths by ensuring silver medals at the Asian Olympic Qualifiers in Almaty, Kazakhstan.

The 19-year old Anshu didn't stop there as she went on to win the gold medal on Friday defeating Mongolia's Battsetseg Altantsetseg 3-0 in the title clash.

Both the wrestlers were

previously a part of the TOPS development group and are among six wrestlers to win quotas for the Tokyo Olympics.

Joining them in TOPS programme would be four Tokyo-bound sailors, who created historic first for the country by qualifying for the Olympics.

After Nethra Kumanan became the first Indian woman sailor to qualify for the Olympics in the laser radial event in the Mussanah Open Championship, Vishnu Saravanan and the pair of Ganapathy Chengappa and Varun Thakkar also made the cut for Tokyo in the Asian Qualifiers in Oman recently.

While Vishnu qualified in the laser standard class event, the team of Ganapathy and Varun made the cut in the men's 49er class event.

Currently, there are 113 individual athletes who are supported through the TOPS scheme in the core group.

Arundhati, Babyrojisana Chanu in quarters

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Khelo India Games gold-medallist Arundhati Choudhary (69kg) and Babyrojisana Chanu (51kg) advanced to the quarterfinals, while three others from the country also notched up opening-round wins at the youth world championships for men and women in Kielce, Poland.

However, it was curtains for Vikas (52kg) and Arshi Khanam (54kg), who lost their

that the bout had to be halted in the second round itself in her favour.

Among the men, Akash defeated Germany's Enrico Kliesch in a unanimous 5-0 decision, while Sumit out-punched Venezuela's Rafael Antonio Perdomo in less than five minutes before the referee stepped in to stop the bout in the second round.

Next up for Akash is Mongolia's Gan-Erdene Ganbaatar in the last-16 stage.

YOUTH WORLD BOXING C'SHIP

second-round contests on Thursday.

The winners, apart from Arundhati and Chanu, were Akash Gorkha (60kg), Sumit (69kg) and Gitika (48kg).

Arundhati, a three-time gold winner at Khelo India Games, got the better of Colombia's Deyaneira Casas Jerez, winning 5-0 to set up a last-eight stage clash against Ukraine's Anna Sezko, who got a first-round bye.

Chanu, a product of the legendary M C Mary Kom's academy in Imphal, defeated Estonia's Diana Gorisnaja to make the last-eight stage. Such was the Manipuri's dominance

while Sumit will square off against Slovakia's Ladislav Horvath.

Gitika, on the other hand, comprehensively defeated Russia's Diana Ermakova. She will face Kazakhstan's Arailym Marat in the second round.

However, Vikas went down to Mongolia's Sukhbat Enkhzorigt in a 1-4 verdict. Arshi was also beaten by a similar margin in her clash against Uzbekistan's Nigina Uktamova.

India have fielded a 20-member team -- 10 men and as many women -- in the competition, which features 414 boxers from 52 countries.

Seville could fill in for Bilbao to host Euro 2020 games

AP ■ BARCELONA

The Spanish soccer federation has offered Seville as an alternative host city for this year's European Championship if UEFA rules out using Bilbao as planned.

Federation president Luis Rubiales said Friday he has put forward La Cartuja Stadium in the southern Andalusia region as an alternative to San Mam s Stadium.

Last week, the federation announced that the current pandemic situation in Bilbao made it impossible for fans to be allowed into matches based on the regulations established by health authorities in the northern Basque Country region.

With all my respect for what Bilbao has done, it is facing many difficulties and it would be terrible for another country to get the host city, Rubiales said.

La Cartuja would be a magnificent site ... and the first option if Bilbao is finally discarded.

The federation told The Associated Press that it would be up to regional authorities in Andalusia to decide whether

fans could potentially be allowed into games in Seville.

Currently, there are no fans allowed into league or national team matches anywhere in Spain.

A Basque Country region spokesman said Friday that the local government has not received any direct notification from UEFA of a change of plans.

If they changed their opinion, and we have to see if they do, then they would inform us. And if they did, they would have to give us an explanation, regional official Bingen Zupiria said.

Other host cities for the tournament to be held around Europe between June 11 and July 11 have given assurances to UEFA that spectators will be allowed into stadiums.

A UEFA decision on Bilbao is expected soon.

La Cartuja Stadium is a publicly owned stadium run by Andalusia's regional government. The stadium, which has a running track around the field, can hold 60,000 fans. Seville's biggest soccer clubs, Sevilla and Real Betis, each have their own stadiums in the same city.

The stadium is set to host a second Copa del Rey final this month when Barcelona plays Athletic Bilbao on Saturday. It also hosted the delayed 2020 final two weeks ago, when Real Sociedad beat Athletic Bilbao. No fans have been allowed to attend either final.

UEFA has used another stadium in Seville, Sevilla's Sanchez Pizju n, as a replacement venue after the home team was eliminated from the Champions League. It hosted both legs of the Chelsea-Porto quarterfinal matchup because of travel restrictions between England and Portugal.

San Mam s Stadium in Bilbao is scheduled to host Spain's Group E games against Sweden, Poland and Slovakia as well as one match in the round of 16.

The Basque Country region around Bilbao has been one of the hardest hit by the pandemic in Spain. On Thursday, the region reported 358 cases per 100,000 inhabitants over 14 days, compared to 225 cases per 100,000 inhabitants in Seville's Andalusia region. Above 200 cases per 100,000 is considered high risk by authorities.

Spurs visit Everton in battle for CL qualification

AP ■ LONDON

A look at what's happening in European soccer on Friday: **ENGLAND:** Everton and Tottenham are on the fringes of the race for Champions League qualification ahead of their meeting at Goodison Park in the Premier League. Tottenham is in seventh place, six points behind fourth-place Chelsea. Everton is a point and a place further back, but has a game in hand. When the two teams met at Goodison in an FA Cup fifth-round match in February, it proved to be a wild shootout that finished with Everton going through as a 5-4 winner after extra time. That match marked a shift to a more attacking approach by Tottenham manager Jose Mourinho, which in turn is helping striker Harry Kane put up some great numbers. Kane is tied with Mohamed Salah as the league's top scorer on 19 goals and also has 13 assists, two more than anyone else.

GERMANY: It's the perfect time for Julian Nagelsmann and second-place Leipzig to play Hoffenheim in the Bundesliga. Winless in four games, Hoffenheim is lacking any creative spark and didn't record a single shot on target in Monday's 0-0 draw with Bayer



Leverkusen. Leipzig's faint hopes of dethroning Bayern Munich rest on winning as many of its remaining six games as possible and hoping Bayern continues to slip up. The defending champion did just that in last week's 1-1 draw with Union Berlin. A win for Leipzig over Hoffenheim would cut the gap to Bayern to two points before Bayern visits third-place Wolfsburg on Saturday. Hoffenheim is 12th, five points clear of the relegation battle.

FRANCE: In a hard-fought French title race that has six games to go, Lille can keep the pressure on defending champion Paris Saint-Germain with a home win against Montpellier to move six points ahead. Christophe Galtier is astutely coaching Lille this season, combining a rock-solid defense with two solid midfield anchors and fleet-footed forwards down the flanks to support the powerful Burak Yilmaz through the middle. But Montpellier strikers Andy Delort and Gaetan Laborde form one of the best partnerships in the league with 23 goals. Their combination of physique, aerial prowess and technique, allied to midfielder Teji Savanier's shrewd passing, could make it a difficult night for Lille's defense.

Argentina wins gave us right kind of boost before Olympics: Pathak

PTI ■ BUENOS AIRES

One of the architects of India's superb show against Argentina, young goalkeeper Krishan Pathak said he wants to be in top form for the Tokyo Olympics and is eyeing another superlative performance against Great Britain in the FIH Pro League games next month.

The 23-year-old, who earned his 50th international cap during India's tour of Argentina, played a big role in his side registering back-to-back wins against the reigning Olympic champions in the FIH Pro League this month.

"I am very happy to have completed fifty international caps. So much has happened in such a short space of time. I have had the opportunity to

play in big tournaments and learnt a lot from my seniors," said Pathak in a release issued by Hockey India.

"The coaches have always believed in my talent. I want to continue working hard and win games for India. Reaching this milestone makes me proud," he added.

In the Argentina tour that conclude on Wednesday, India defeated the hosts in a two-leg FIH Pro League away tie.

While fellow custodian PR Sreejesh was brilliant when the visitors won the first match via a penalty shoot-out, Pathak was equally impressive during India's 3-0 win over the hosts in the second game.

"I got to learn a lot from the Argentina tour. I know I have to prove my worth as a goalkeeper every time I am



playing," said Pathak, who had earned the Player of the Match award after pulling off some

great saves to maintain a clean sheet in the 2nd game.

"I feel we showed a lot of

fight and character there. Over the past year, we've had good games against the top sides in the world and I feel that gives us the right kind of boost going into a tournament like the Olympics."

India will next play Great Britain in the FIH Pro League on May 8 and 9.

"We have to be focussed on the job at hand right now. Hope our good form continues against Great Britain..." Pathak said.

With 15 points from eight games, India climbed to the fourth place in the FIH Hockey Pro League standings following their wins over Argentina.

India, Argentina and Australia will play each other at the forthcoming Olympic Games, where they have been drawn in Pool A alongside

Spain, New Zealand and home favourites Japan.

"We have to make sure we're ready for every challenge. The environment in the camp is good and we want to use this momentum going into a big summer," Pathak said.

For much of his young career, Pathak has been Sreejesh's understudy at goal and thinks the competition for places has only made him a better goalkeeper.

"There's so much one can learn from Sreejesh bhai. He's been playing at the highest level for so many years," he said.

"I have improved as a keeper in the last four years and that is because of what I have gathered and learnt watching people like Sreejesh and others play and train on a daily basis."

Aditi Ashok cards second straight 69, lies T-35 at Lotte Championship

KAPOLEI: Indian golfer Aditi Ashok found each of the 14 fairways but missed a few greens in regulation for a second successive 69 to lie tied-35th after the second round of the Lotte Championship here.

Aditi, who shot a 3-under 69 in the first round, is now 6-under 138 for 36 holes at the halfway stage.

The 23-year-old had a solid front nine at the Kapolei Golf Club as she birdied the first, third, sixth and ninth but dropped a shot on the fourth to turn in 3-under.

A bogey on 10th followed by a birdie on 14th saw her finish at 69, her second straight sub-70 card this year.

The Indian has made the cut in three of her four previ-



ous starts this year.

Yuka Saso, who is playing on a sponsor's invitation, added a second successive 8-under 64 to get to 16-under. The 19-year-

old had nine birdies against one bogey in the second round on the front nine.

Saso, who turned pro in November, is playing only her sixth LPGA event. She had seven birdies in her first 10 holes and leads Lydia Ko (63) by one.

Ko, the former No. 1 and two-time major champion, hasn't won since 2018 but she has been getting into good form. She shot a final-round 62 last week at the year's first major, the ANA Inspiration, to finish second.

Nelly Korda (65-68) was five shots back along with So Yeon Ryu, Hyo Joo Kim and Luna Sobron Galmes (64), who plays primarily on the Ladies European Tour.

Coleman to miss Olympics despite reduced ban

AP ■ GENEVA

American sprinter Christian Coleman will miss the Tokyo Olympics after failing Friday in an appeal to overturn his ban for missed doping tests.

The Court of Arbitration for Sport cut the 100-meter world champion's ban from two years to 18 months, but it won't expire until November, three months after the Olympics.

The panel of three judges said 18 months "was the appropriate sanction in the circumstances" because Coleman was not entirely at fault for one of his three missed tests in a one-year period.

They said it was "reasonable for the athlete to expect" a telephone call from a sample

collection official to return to his apartment during the 60-minute period he said he would be available on Dec. 9, 2019.

A call such as that is not required within the anti-doping rules, the judges acknowledged. One of the three CAS judges, German law professor Ulrich Haas, helped write the updated World Anti-Doping Code. The court also noted Coleman "should have been on 'high-alert' on that day, given the two existing 'whereabout' failures against him."

Coleman had challenged the two-year ban imposed last October by the Athletics Integrity Unit. Athletes can be banned for two years if they have three failures missed tests or contact details not updated where officials can find them each day within one year.



The 25-year-old Coleman will be clear to compete in the 2022 season, which includes the world championships in Eugene, Oregon.

Coleman won the 2019 world title in Doha, Qatar, after being cleared on a technicality to run because of missed tests.

"I'm just really blessed the situation was resolved," Coleman said in September 2019 ahead of the worlds.

"I'm just a regular guy who had talent and the wherewithal to be able to hone that into something I can make money doing."

He ran the three fastest 100 times in the world in 2019, topped by his gold medal-winning 9.76 seconds in Doha. That was the fastest 100-meter time in more than four years.

