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RODRIGUEZ
BREAK UP
10 VIVACITY

Weekend lockdown in Delhi

Fresh Covid cases soar to over 17,000 on Thursday

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

As the Covid-19 situation in the national Capital turned grimmer with the number of daily cases rising to staggering over 17,000, Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Thursday announced imposition of weekend curfew to break the chain of coronavirus infection.

The Chief Minister announced that weekend curfew will be implemented in Delhi along with a closure of malls, gyms, swimming pools, and auditoriums. The cinema halls will function at 50 per cent capacity and restaurants will not be allowed to cater to dining — only home delivery and takeaways will be allowed. The weekly markets will be allowed at one weekly market per day in per-zone format and the Delhi Government will also monitor crowds at weekly markets and the markets and public places will see stricter implementation of Covid norms.

Kejriwal appealed to the people of Delhi to not insist on getting admitted to a particular hospital as beds will be made available in other facilities if required as Delhi has more than 5,000 beds vacant.

Addressing the media, he said, "Corona cases are rising in Delhi but the hospital management in Delhi is under control. There is no dearth of beds in Delhi as more than

5,000 beds are available. We met with the Lieutenant Governor and have unanimously decided to put a weekend lockdown in place. Our understanding is that people need to travel during weekdays for work and other essential activities; however, weekends are usually reserved for leisure and entertainment activities — activities that in the given situation can be curtailed and restricted," he said.

Keeping in mind the essential nature of work and jobs done during weekdays, the Government has decided to issue curfew passes.



A health worker collects swab samples from a man as coronavirus cases surge across the national Capital in New Delhi on Thursday. Ranjan Dimri / Pioneer

India crosses 2-L daily count

PNS ■ NEW DELHI/LUCKNOW

The emergence of several States as new Covid-19 hotspots besides Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh, Uttar Pradesh has led to a daily count of fresh infections to newer peaks as several States imposed new lockdown like restrictions on Thursday to battle the alarming surge that saw India recording over 2 lakh cases during the last 24 hours.

While Maharashtra's tally rose marginally from the previous day, ending at 61,695 new cases and 349 deaths, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh,

Gujarat, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Haryana, and Bihar have seen alarmingly higher spikes on daily basis.

After Maharashtra and Chhattisgarh, Uttar Pradesh has emerged as the third-highest contributor of new cases on a daily count. The State reported 22,339 new cases and 104 deaths during the last 24 hours.

Uttar Pradesh was followed by Karnataka and Madhya Pradesh. While the southern States reported 14,738 new cases and 66 deaths during the last 24 hours, MP reported 10,166 cases and 53 deaths.

Gujarat recorded 8,152

new cases and 81 deaths, while Tamil Nadu clocked 7,987 cases and 29 deaths.

Meanwhile, in view of the alarming surge in the Covid-19 cases and high occupancy of patients in the Dedicated Covid Hospitals, the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) on Thursday converted fated Jaslok Hospital into a dedicated Covid-19 hospital.

Mumbai Municipal Commissioner IS Chahal said, "Additional 250 Covid beds in Jaslok Hospital will come on Saturday morning to help needy patients."

Covid-19 IN INDIA

TOTAL CASES:	1,42,72,484 (+2,01,386)
DEATHS:	1,74,200 (+1,047)
RECOVERED:	1,25,31,990 (+1,05,837)
ACTIVE:	15,60,465
MAHARASHTRA:	36,39,855
KERALA:	11,97,302
KARNATAKA:	11,09,650
TAMIL NADU:	9,62,935
DELHI:	7,84,137 (+16,669)

ASI closes monuments for visitors till May 15

New Delhi: All Centrally protected monuments, museums and sites under the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) have been closed with immediate effect till May 15 due to the surge in coronavirus cases in the country, the Union Culture Ministry said on Thursday.

An order to this effect was issued by the ASI and it was tweeted by Culture Minister Pralhad Patel on Thursday evening.

Covid curfew extended from 8pm to 7am in UP

Board exams postponed, all schools closed till May 15

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Amid the surge in corona cases and subsequent panic setting in across the State, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has ordered extension of "Covid curfew" from 8 pm to 7 am in districts with more than 2,000 active cases and also announced postponement of the UP Board Exams for Class 10 and 12. The new dates of UP Board examination will be announced later, the CM said and also ordered the closure of all Government and private schools till May 15.

The corona curfew will be effective from 8 pm to 7 am in all 10 districts with more than 2,000 active cases, including Lucknow, Prayagraj, Varanasi, Kanpur Nagar, Gautam Budh Nagar, Ghazipur, Meerut and Gorakhpur. This order should be implemented with immediate effect," Yogi said while reviewing the current situation of the State virtually with the Team-11 officials on Thursday.

At present, corona curfew is being enforced in these districts between 9 pm and 6 am. To prevent the spread of the disease among the children



People stand in queues to cast their votes during local elections in Kurapur village in Uttar Pradesh on Thursday. AP

and safeguard them from the second wave of coronavirus infection, the CM said schools up to Class 12 should be closed till May 15.

He instructed the officials to make all necessary arrangements in view of the changing situation every day in all the districts of the State. Yogi assured the State was successful in fighting the first wave of Covid-19 and similarly, this time the second wave will also be controlled soon.

"For this it is required that all citizens strictly adhere to Covid protocols such as masks, sanitizers and social distancing. Not only this, it is better that people include this protocol in their lifestyle. People should be made aware about this," he said.

In a bid to ensure an effective Covid-19 management

system, Yogi said inflow of patients from other districts in Lucknow is natural. Therefore, we need to make additional arrangements here. In such a situation, KGMU and Balmaram Hospital should be prepared as a dedicated Covid Hospital, he said.

The Chief Minister instructed the officials to conduct this work in a phased manner. Also, the non-Covid patients should also be taken care of so that no inconvenience is caused to them.

"The TS Mishra Hospital, Integral and Hind Medical Colleges in Lucknow should be converted into dedicated Covid hospitals. In the next two days additional beds should be provided in these hospitals," said the Chief Minister.

CAPSULE

HC: 50 PEOPLE CAN OFFER NAMAZ AT NIZAMUDDIN
New Delhi: The Delhi High Court on Thursday allowed 50 people to offer namaz five times a day at Nizamuddin Markaz during Ramadan, saying there is no direction in the Delhi Disaster Management Authority (DDMA) notification to close down places of worship.

CITI TO EXIT CONSUMER BANKING IN INDIA
Mumbai: American banking major Citibank on Thursday announced that it will exit from the consumer banking business in India as part of a global strategy. The business comprises credit cards, retail banking, home loans and wealth management. P9

ISRO ESPIONAGE CASE: SC ASKS FOR FURTHER PROBE
New Delhi: The Supreme Court on Thursday ordered that the report of a high-level committee on the role of espionage officials in 1994 espionage case related to ISRO scientist Nambi Narayanan be given to the CBI and directed the agency to conduct further investigation on the issue. The apex court said the CBI may treat the panel's findings as part of preliminary investigation and ask the agency to submit its report to the court within three months.

Govt postpones NEET-PG in view of rising Covid cases

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

In view of a spike in the number of Covid-19 cases, the National Eligibility-Cum-Entrance Test (postgraduate) (NEET-PG), which was scheduled to be held on April 18, has been postponed, Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan said on Thursday.

The decision was taken keeping the well-being of the young medical students in mind, he added. "In light of the surge in #Covid19 cases, Govt has decided to postpone NEETPG2021 exam which was earlier scheduled to be held on April 18. Next date to be decided later. Decision has been taken keeping well-being of our young medical students in mind," Vardhan tweeted.

Earlier on Thursday, a group of student doctors moved the Supreme Court asking for postponement of the NEET-PG medical entrance exams. A bench headed by Chief Justice of India SA Bobde was scheduled to hear the matter on Friday.

Kumbh sees 0.7% Covid positivity rate

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

Confirming the fears of the experts that the mega religious congregation of Kumbh in Haridwar would accelerate the pace Covid-19 infection, the authorities on Thursday confirmed that 1,700 people were tested positive for the disease from April 10 to 14 in the Mela area.

The Kumbh Mela which is considered as the biggest religious congregation in the world officially started on April 1. The medical workers conducted 2,36,751 tests during the five-day festival (April 10 to 14) in the Mela area. Out of these, 1,701 samples came out positive for Covid-19, that means 0.7 per cent positivity rate.

It is learnt that in the Kumbh area a number of the States belonging to different Akhadas and sects have been reported positive for the disease.

The death of Mahamandaleswar Kapil Dev Dass Naga belonging to the Akhil Bharatiya Nirvani Akhada due to Covid-19 has come as a shock among the members of the Akhadas. "On receipt of the input, a coordinated operation was



in Madhya Pradesh was in Haridwar to attend the Kumbh. The septic was admitted in a private hospital in Dehradun after he was found positive for Covid-19 in Haridwar on April 12.

Meanwhile the condition of the president of Akhil Bharatiya Akhada Parishad (ABAP), Narendra Giri admitted in All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) Rishikesh is improving. He was admitted in hospital April 12 after testing positive for Covid-19.

The Public Relations Officer (PRO) of AIIMS Rishikesh Harish Thapliyal said that the condition of Swami Narendra Giri is improving and he is on room air and he doesn't have a fever now.

No plan to club rest 4 phases in Bengal: EC

All-party meet called to discuss Covid-19 norms

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Dismissing speculation that the final four phases of the ongoing Assembly elections in West Bengal could be clubbed together due to an exponential rise in daily cases of Covid-19 across the country, the Election Commission (EC) on Thursday said there is no plan of clubbing the remaining phases.

EC officials said that the chief electoral officer (CEO) of West Bengal has called an all-party meeting in Kolkata on Friday to discuss adherence to Covid-19 guidelines issued by the poll commission. All political parties have been asked to send one representative to Friday to discuss adherence to Covid-19 guidelines issued by the poll commission. All political parties have been asked to send one representative to Friday to discuss adherence to Covid-19 guidelines issued by the poll commission.

This comes after the EC, laid Friday, sent a letter to all political parties in the fray in



West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee during a roadshow campaign in Kolkata on Thursday. PTI

the eastern State, mentioning that instances of elections campaign meetings, in which social distancing norms, wearing of masks were flouted were brought to its notice.

The letter re-emphasised Covid-19 protocols issued ahead of last October-November's Bihar Assembly elections, as well as by-elections in various States, the first electoral exercise to be conducted since the pandemic began.

The EC has come under fire for scheduling the Assembly polls in West Bengal in eight phases. Earlier in the day on Thursday, Mahua Moitra of Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's ruling Trinamool Congress (TMC) slammed the EC over the scheduling of the polls, calling it "criminal negligence bordering on manslaughter."

24-hr campaign ban imposed on Bengal BJP prez Dilip Ghosh

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Election Commission on Thursday evening imposed a 24-hour campaign ban on the BJP's West Bengal president Dilip Ghosh for his "there will be Stalkuchi in several places" remarks.

The commission "sternly" warned Ghosh and advised him to desist from using such statements while making public utterances during the period when the Model Code of Conduct is in force, the order said.

Four people were killed in a firing incident by CISF personnel in the Stalkuchi area of the West Bengal fourth phase of polls in West Bengal on Saturday. Officials had said the jawans opened fire after they came under attack from local people.

The ban on Ghosh will be in effect from 7 pm April 15 to 7 pm April 16, during which Ghosh will not be allowed to campaign.

Related story on P5

Foreign vax applications to get DCGI decision within 3 days

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The country's top drug regulator, Drug Controller General of India (DCGI), will take a decision on applications seeking approval for restricted emergency use of foreign-produced Covid-19 vaccines within three working days from the date of submission, the Government said on Thursday.

The decision will facilitate quicker access to such foreign vaccines by India and would encourage imports, including that of bulk drug material, optimal utilisation of domestic ones. This will in turn provide a fillip to vaccine manufacturing capacity and total vaccine

availability within the country, said the Union Health Ministry in a statement here.

The move comes as a relief when India is battling a surge in coronavirus infections with over two lakh cases reported in a single day on Thursday. Recently, the DCGI had approved Sputnik V, a Russian-made vaccine, the third in the Indian vaccine basket which so far had Covaxin and Covishield.

However, growing demand for vaccination for all, the Government has issued the Regulatory Pathway in India for Covid-19 vac-

cines approved for restricted use by US FDA, EMA, UK MHRA, PMDA Japan or which are listed in WHO Emergency Use Listing (EUL).

As per the proposal, the DCGI shall prepare detailed guidelines specifying regulatory pathway for approval of foreign approved Covid vaccines based on NMEVAC recommendations.

"Application can be made by the foreign manufacturer through its Indian subsidiary or through its authorised agent in India (in case it does not have an Indian subsidiary). The DCGI will process such applications for restricted use in emergency situation and take a decision within three working days from date of submission of complete application by the applicant."

Coast Guard, Gujarat ATS seize Pak boat with ₹300 cr heroin

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In a joint operation, the Indian Coast Guard along with the Gujarat Anti-Terrorist Squad on Thursday apprehended a fishing boat, carrying eight Pakistani nationals and 30 kg of heroin, near Kutch district's Jakhau coast.

The operation was undertaken after an input received on Tuesday regarding suspected narcotics trafficking by a Pakistani boat off the Indo-Pak national international maritime boundary line (IMBL), the statement issued by the Indian Coast Guard said.

"On receipt of the input, a coordinated operation was

launched swiftly by the ICG in association with ATS (anti-terrorism squad) of Gujarat," it said.

The suspected Pakistani boat was sighted inside Indian waters on the intervening night of Wednesday and Thursday and it was intercepted by the ICG, the statement said.

About 30 kg of heroin, approximately ₹300 crore in value, was recovered from the boat, it said.

"Preliminary investigation revealed that the consignment being smuggled was destined for landing on a Gujarat shore. The boat and its eight-member Pakistani crew are being escorted to Jakhau for further rummaging and joint investigation," the statement mentioned.

Vacant middle seats raise fliers' protection against Covid: Study

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Leaving middle seats vacant could reduce airline passengers more protection from the coronavirus that causes Covid-19.

Based on laboratory modelling of exposure to SARS-CoV-2 on single-aisle and twin-aisle aircraft, exposures in scenarios in which the middle seat was vacant were reduced by 23 per cent to 57 per cent, compared with full aircraft occupancy, the researchers, including those from the USA Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) noted.

Lately, airlines have abandoned the pandemic practice of blocking seats to maintain physical distancing between the travellers.

"Physical distancing of airplane passengers, including



through policies such as middle seat vacancy, could provide additional reductions in risk for exposure to SARS-CoV-2 on aircraft," the researchers said.

The team of researchers from CDC and Kansas State University in the US used a bacteriophage — a virus that infects bacteria — as a surrogate for airborne SARS-CoV-2. They modelled the relationship between SARS-CoV-

2 exposure and aircraft seating proximity, including full occupancy and vacant middle seat occupancy scenarios.

"Compared with exposures in full occupancy scenarios, relative exposure in vacant middle seat scenarios was reduced by 23 per cent to 57 per cent depending upon the modelling approach," the researchers said.

A 23 per cent exposure reduction was observed for a single passenger who was in the same row and two seats away from the SARS-CoV-2 source, rather than in an adjacent middle seat, they said.

When quantifying exposure reduction to a full 120-passenger cabin rather than to a single person, the study predicted exposure reductions ranging from 35 per cent to 39.4 per cent.

COVID-19

Increasing bed capacity main focus: Delhi CM

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Amid increasing number of Covid-19 cases in Delhi, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal said that the focus of the Delhi Government is to increase the bed capacity and to ensure adequate treatment for the people who require urgent assistance.

The Chief Minister convened a review meeting on Thursday to assess the situation of Coronavirus in Delhi. Several steps taken by the Government to improve the health infrastructure were discussed along with increasing the bed capacity and several other infrastructural requirements in Delhi.

Kejriwal said that the Government and the hospitals should aim towards taking over more facilities. He suggested officials that a time-bound preparation plan should be prepared to increase the increase and availability of beds.

In the meeting, Kejriwal also said that the two MCD hospitals - Hindu Rao and Swami Dayanand Hospital should be declared as fully Covid, which will further add 900 beds for the treatment of patients.

There should be full cooperation among the agencies to tackle the pandemic effectively and no politics should be done on this matter. Delhi government will provide every possible help to the MCDs hospitals including funds," he said.

"I came across a situation recently, where an asymptomatic patient was not admitted and he created a ruckus there. This situation should never



happen. We must issue an order to allow directing the patients to our COVID Care Centres (CCCs) to make the patient feel safe and in the care of the doctors. More and more patients should be shifted to these centres to cater to very critical patients in the hospitals," he said.

Kejriwal said, "Secondly, all the helpline numbers of the hospitals which are also mentioned on our app should remain fully functional. The hospitals must be directed to be prepared to receive patients for providing assistance through the helpline numbers. Thirdly, all the hospitals must be directed to ensure an adequate flow of information on the real time availability of beds. This data should be updated every day."

In the meeting, special focus was laid on the three-tier arrangement of health infrastructure in Delhi, of which first is home isolation and second is Covid Care Centres, and third is an increase in beds and facilities in hospitals in Delhi.

Additionally, the Delhi government has requested the Centre to increase and make 2700 beds from Central government hospitals available for the treatment of Coronavirus patients. Currently, around 15048 beds have been made

"THERE SHOULD BE FULL COOPERATION AMONG THE AGENCIES TO TACKLE THE PANDEMIC EFFECTIVELY AND NO POLITICS SHOULD BE DONE ON THIS MATTER"

available as COVID beds, of which more than 5000 beds are empty. The availability of 2700 beds will further increase the COVID bed capacity in Delhi to around 20000. There has been a dearth of Remdesivir injections in Delhi. It is expected that 18000 injections will be made available in Delhi by April 18. However, realizing the gravity of the situation, Kejriwal directed the officials to prepare an order to ensure that there is no dearth and no stocking of injections at any facility in Delhi.

Along with this, the current number of ambulances available with the Delhi government is 629, and the current response time is 14 minutes, with no refusals recorded, he was informed.

All linkages to the hospitals in Delhi such as banquet halls and hotels are fully functional to provide services and treatment to Corona infected patients.

"If the labs where the tests are being conducted are facing issues, the sample size must be reduced to enable them to issue results within 24 hours," he directed the officials.

The health officials also apprised the chief minister that vaccine stock is available for the next 6-7 days.

Consider journalists frontline workers, need jobs on priority basis: Delhi Govt writes to Centre

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Government has written a letter to the Central Government on Thursday urging it to consider journalists as the frontline workers who need to be vaccinated on a priority basis.

The AAP Government noted that journalists have more risk of getting infected by Covid-19 due to fieldwork. Therefore, a vaccine for them is necessary.

In its letter, the Government noted that the mass media in all its forms is a vital bridge between the Government and the public. "A

group of workers that have been in the forefront with the health workers in the most difficult times is that of media personnel. Throughout the pandemic, the media has continued to play an active role in keeping the people informed about the disease, its consequences, prevention, efforts of the health and other concerned departments and what the people are expected to do to keep themselves safe," it said.

The Government also noted that journalists' role as an important ally cannot be denied. "Going out in the field, visiting hospitals to gather

information, interviewing patients/attendants and their treating healthcare providers exposes them to the hazard of infection same as the other frontline workers. It is requested that this personnel be placed in the category of frontline workers so that protection of the vaccination can be offered to them," it added.

On Wednesday, Kejriwal tweeted, "Journalists are reporting from most adverse situations. They should be treated as frontline workers and should be allowed vaccination on priority. Delhi govt is writing to centre in this regard."

Civic bodies to run mega sanitisation drive

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

To view of the increasing Cases of Corona, all three Municipal Corporations of Delhi announced to run a mega sanitisation campaign in Delhi.

In a joint Press conference, mayors along with Delhi Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) president Adesh Gupta on Thursday said that in view of the increasing cases of Corona, the three mayors of Delhi "wrote to the Delhi Government, saying that the Municipal Corporation is ready to set up isolation centers in their schools and community service centers."

The BJP president said that for corona patients, 20 beds in Swami Dayanand Hospital of East DMC, 200 to 400 beds in Hindu Rao Hospital and Balak Ram Hospital of North DMC and 200 beds in Tilak Nagar Hospital and Kalka Hospital of South DMC can be arranged.

"Special arrangements have been made by the corporation to lift bio-medical waste in the area where citizens are in home isolation so that they do not face any inconvenience. There are 130 corona vaccination centers in the jurisdiction of three municipal corporations that will be extended in the coming days so that the vaccination campaign can be expe-

ditioned further. The doctors of the corporation will provide counseling to the citizens during home isolation," he said.

Gupta said that North DMC has requested Delhi Government to make Hindu Rao Hospital a dedicated COVID hospital. He said that the three municipal corporations of Delhi are fully prepared for every situation.

Gupta said that to prevent corona infection, the Municipal Corporation of Delhi will conduct a campaign for sanitization in all areas during the weekend curfew. He said that during this campaign sanitization work will be done in all markets, streets and wards.

Take adequate precautions while on duty, cops directed

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Following the rise in Covid-19 cases in the national Capital, the Delhi Police Commissioner S N Shrivastava on Thursday, through a video message, asked the personnel of the force to take adequate precautions, maintain social distancing and wear N-95 or 3-ply surgical masks to protect themselves.

Shrivastava told his personnel to be extra cautious and follow the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs). In the video, the CP also said that the new wave of coronavirus was far more serious in nature than the previous one.

Stressing that the Delhi Police has played a vital role in fighting the pandemic, the CP said that in the last few days, some police personnel have been found to be coronavirus positive and this number is

increasing, which is a cause of worry. According to the data provided by the police for this year, 73 personnel tested positive for COVID-19 in January, 33 in February, 24 in March and 390 in April.

Shrivastava asked the personnel of the force to take adequate precautions while discharging their duty especially during interactions with each other, conducting verification

drive, issuing challans, at picket duty or during house visits, so that the chances of getting infected remain less.

He said if any personnel of a unit is found COVID positive, they can contact senior officers of their unit as well as those at the headquarters so that proper treatment can be ensured and beds can be made available for them in the hospital. He also told them to not be "careless" even if they have

been vaccinated.

As part of the precautionary measure, Shrivastava asked his force to avoid wearing masks made of thin fabric and instead stressed on using N-95 masks or 3-ply surgical masks. "Wear N-95 or 3-ply surgical mask. Avoid wearing a mask made of thin cloth as it may not be sufficient. Maintain social distancing while working and sanitise your workplace as well as your vehicle," he said.

He asked the personnel to wash hands with soap constantly and take immunity boosters like Ayurvedic Kadha, Vitamin C and zinc tablets according to doctor's advice. To stay healthy, he asked his personnel to exercise and practice yoga.

"We have to take care of ourselves and our family members. Only if you are safe, you will be able to look after the safety of others," he said.

He asked the personnel to wash hands with soap constantly and take immunity boosters like Ayurvedic Kadha, Vitamin C and zinc tablets according to doctor's advice. To stay healthy, he asked his personnel to exercise and practice yoga.

"We have to take care of ourselves and our family members. Only if you are safe, you will be able to look after the safety of others," he said.

PHS ■ CHANDIGARH

Punjab Government on Thursday said it has initiated a set of reforms to further reduce regulatory burden on MSMEs through rationalisation and digitalisation, aiming to enable entrepreneurs to focus on expanding their operations amid COVID-19 pandemic.

The reforms on building flexibility and reducing oversight in the labour rules, and pursuing a data driven assessment of service delivery delays are all centered around making entrepreneurship easier in Punjab, said Chief Minister Kapur Amarinder Singh. He underlined his government's commitment to reduce time, risk, and cost associated with compliance significantly, freeing up entrepreneurs to focus on growth.

The chief minister said with these reforms, commitments had been set for future changes, including rationalising trade license under Shops and Establishments Act and removing imprisonment from non-labour related rules. Besides, he announced that the number of labour registers will be reduced, requiring an entrepreneur to maintain from 60 to less than 14, and flexibility enhanced in hiring women employees.

Reforms for MSME sector initiated in Punjab

Discretionary powers of inspectors are being removed with regard to deductions related to absence or leave. To ensure timely delivery of licenses and permits, the government has begun a monthly data driven assessment mechanism under the Chief Secretary to make sure not a single license or permit is delayed beyond the stipulated period. It is also proposed to reduce the number of pre-inspectioning licenses and NOCs to start a business by at least 30 percent, so the government never inhibits an entrepreneur to start a new shop or factory, with the possibility of doing this entirely online being explored.

In addition, changes will be made in Land Use for starting new business and mechanisms will be developed for providing free water, electricity and sewage connections. "These reforms are the start of a journey, and we hope to make Punjab a light-house state for MSME (micro, small and medium enterprises) growth support," he said, adding, "We have listened to entrepreneurs on the ground and we will continue to reduce the compliance burden to start, operate, and grow a business."

Chief Amarinder stated that Punjab offers one of the best ecosystems for entrepreneurs to thrive.

Amid surge in COVID cases, Haryana CM appeals to farmers to withdraw their agitation

PHS ■ CHANDIGARH

Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar on Thursday appealed to farmers to withdraw their ongoing agitation on humanitarian grounds.

The appeal was made as the State Government on Thursday tightened restrictions on gathering at indoor and outdoor public functions to 50 and 200, respectively in view of a huge jump in daily infections across Haryana.

Earlier, 500 people at outdoor events and 200 at indoor programmes were permitted by the State Government.

Khattar said that it is the constitutional right of every person to protest and we have no problem with those who protest. However, at this time, due to COVID-19, life may be in danger, so this is not the right time to protest.

"If they (farmers) have to hold or protest for any of their demands, they can do it when the situation improves," the Chief Minister said while presiding over a meeting called to review COVID-19 cases and vaccinations in Haryana.

Hundreds of farmers from northern states of Punjab and Haryana have been camping at Delhi border points for over four months now, demanding a repeal of the three agricultural reform laws enacted by the Centre in September last year.

The Chief Minister also directed the Deputy Commissioner to contact the agitating farmers and try to persuade them to end the protest.

He said that due to the increasing number of COVID-19 cases in the country and in the state, we have to take strict precautions. It has been decided that from now on, not more than 200 people can gather in open spaces during public functions and not more than 50 in indoor functions. Similarly, not more than 20 people will be allowed to attend funerals, he added.

He directed all the Deputy Commissioners to issue advisory in their respective districts to ensure that night-time ceremonies should be shifted to the day time and the Navratri programmes should also be held during the day.

The state has already imposed night curfew from 10 pm to 5 am to break the chain of infection.

The Chief Minister said that this time the spread of COVID-19 has started from educational institutions, so there is a need to be more vigilant, especially there. We also need to reduce crowding in public gatherings etc, he said.

Similarly, we should also include volunteers, ex-servicemen and Saksham Yuva in

the task of dealing with COVID-19, he said.

There is proper arrangement of oxygen, ventilators and masks in the state. So people need not panic, he added.

He further directed that the district administration should plan at its level to deal with the situation. All the meetings should be held online or through webinars so that the movement of people can be reduced, he said.

Last year, economic activity in the state had come to a standstill due to the lockdown, which took about six months to get back on track. Therefore, we have to keep in mind that the economic cycle should not be disrupted in the state and that no one is adversely affected as well, he added.

DEPLOY TEAMS TO CHECK BLACK MARKET-ING OF REMDESIVIR, SAYS VIJ

He directed that people living in home isolation must be checked at least once in two days at home. For this, an app will be created, he said.

Vij said that we want the situation to be dealt with strictly instead of imposing lockdown in the state. We can control the movement of people by acting strictly but cannot see people dying. This time, COVID-19 is more aggressive, he added.

Last year, the number of cases increased gradually, but this time it is a matter of serious concern that about five and a half thousand cases are reported in a single day. So we must be strict in containment and micro containment zones. The beds can also be installed in schools, Dharamshalas if needed, Vij directed. He further said that regular monitoring should be made by the Deputy Commissioner Monitoring Committee.

CLASS X EXAMS CANCELLED, CLASS XII POSTPONED BY HSE

Chandigarh: After the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) announced on Wednesday that the Board exams for class X stand cancelled and the exams for class XII will be conducted after assessing the situation on June 1, the Board of School Education Haryana (BSEH) on Thursday decided to follow the same path.

"The Haryana board class X exams have been cancelled and class XII exams have been deferred. The results of class X students will be announced based on internal assessments. If any student is not satisfied with the marks, he or she will be allowed to sit in formal exams after the situation improves," stated an order issued by Directorate School Education, Haryana.

G'gram admin notifies self paid, Govt paid isolation facilities for Covid patients

PARVESH SHARMA ■ GURUGRAM

Amid the spike in surge of Covid cases, the Gurugram District Magistrate (DM) Dr Yash Garg, on Thursday notified self paid & Government paid isolation facilities that can be used by people with "mild and very mild symptoms".

The order lists a total of 17 self establishments - 12 self paid and 5 Government.

According to the health officials, most of the corona patients are coming asymptomatic in Gurugram in which the symptoms of the virus are not visible but they are testing positive. On behalf of the Health Department, such patients are advised to stay in isolation in their home.

For home isolation, the patient needs a separate room and separate toilet but some homes do not have enough

space for this. For such patients, the district administration has provided isolation facilities at other places, for which the patient will not have to pay any charges. The government will bear the cost of their stay there.

Such isolation facilities are named government paid isolation facilities. If a patient wants more better facilities than the government facility, then he can take advantage of self-paid isolation facilities. The self-paid isolation facilities have a provision of 435 rooms in 12 establishments and their rates are fixed from Rs. 1200 to Rs. 3500 in addition to the tax, which includes three meals a day.

Similarly, there are 102 rooms in 5 government paid isolation facility and each has a fixed rate of Rs.700 to Rs.1200 with tax which will be paid by the government. It also includes 3 meals a day.

Apart from this, the num-

ber of Covid-19 cases are increasing day by day in Gurugram.

The district on Thursday recorded 1,434 fresh coronavirus cases, the highest number of positive cases in a single day. The district's COVID toll reached to 372, officials said.

The Covid-19 tally in Gurugram has now risen to 74,856 according to the official daily health bulletin.

A total of 66,743 have been cured and discharged including 722 on Thursday.

Gurugram now has 7,741 active cases, including 7,230 in home isolation.

Also, the DC on Thursday said, as per fresh directions given by the state government in light of covid surge, further restrictions have been placed on gatherings in the state - maximum 200 people allowed in outdoor weddings, 50 in indoor weddings, & 20 in funerals.

Delhi Schools of Specialised Excellence Society holds its first virtual meeting

NEW DELHI: Delhi Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia

presided over the first general body meeting of the 'Delhi Schools of Specialised Excellence Society' which was conducted virtually on Thursday.

The society, which will start its functioning from the academic year 2021-22 will establish over 100 such schools across Delhi.

"These schools will provide a thriving space to the students who are gifted in the fields of science, technology, engineering, mathematics, humanities, performing and visual arts, and high end 21st century skills. Each zone in the city will have all four types of schools having students from grade 9 to 12," he said.

The meeting witnessed the approval for constitution of a seven member executive committee composed of Director of Education, Additional Director of Education, Principal Advisor to the Director of Education

8, including 2 women held for assaulting cop

NEW DELHI: Delhi Police

has arrested eight people, including two women, for allegedly assaulting a head constable in the national Capital.

The accused have been identified as Rekha Devi (46), Binita (30), Mohan Jha (55), Vikash Jha (24), Pappu Jha (32), Manish Jha (28), Aakash Kumar Jha (20) and Dhanannder Pratap Singh (20).

According to Urvija Goel, the Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP), West district, on Wednesday, a group of agitators approached the Khyala police station, alleging that she was being harassed and assaulted by her neighbours.

Following the complaint, head constable Ramchander along with sub-inspector Chhote Lal reached the spot. The woman told the policeman that a couple - Rekha and Mohan Jha - had assaulted her," said the DCP.

Gupta's relative named Ashwani got into an argument following which the policeman was allegedly abused and beaten up by Gupta's younger brother Rinku and his accomplice Kaku. The police said two cases of extortion were registered by Sanjay Gupta in 2016 and 2018 respectively after which he was provided PSOs.

"The police takes such matters very seriously. A case was registered in the matter against Rinku Gupta, Ashwani and Kaku. The investigation is in progress and teams have been sent to arrest the absconding accused. The PSOs provided to Sanjay Gupta have been withdrawn," said Santosh Kumar Meena, the Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP), Dwarka district.

On April 1, Sushil and Sarvodaya Kanya Vidyalaya have been taken to the victims. Apart from this, legal action is being taken into the matter," said the police official.

Sushil, presently posted at the Baba Haridas Nagar police station, was earlier posted as the personnel security officer (PSO) of the police.

On April 1, Sushil and Sarvodaya Kanya Vidyalaya have been taken to the victims. Apart from this, legal action is being taken into the matter," said the police official.

Sushil, presently posted at the Baba Haridas Nagar police station, was earlier posted as the personnel security officer (PSO) of the police.

Noor Nagar blaze guts 50 shanties, nobody hurt

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A fire broke out in shanties located in southeast Delhi's Noor Nagar on Wednesday afternoon. The officials said no injuries have been reported so far in the incident.

According to the Delhi Fire Services (DFS), a call regarding the fire in Noor Nagar was received at 3.13 pm after which nine fire tenders were sent to the spot. "The fire has been brought under control," said DFS. "Local NGOs were roped in to assist the rescue process. Medical, civic agencies were duly informed regarding the incident. Apart from fire tender vehicles, staff from BSES, CAT ambulance, and concerned SDM had also reached on the spot," said a senior police official.



ware burnt completely in the fire, and in preliminary enquiry, the main cause of the fire is suspected to be a sparking in the electricity supplying

cables in the jhuggis. However, no injury has been reported in the incident," he said. "Further, food and temporary shelter in the nearby

On April 1, Sushil and Sarvodaya Kanya Vidyalaya have been taken to the victims. Apart from this, legal action is being taken into the matter," said the police official.

Gym owner, his associates booked for assaulting on-duty cop

NEW DELHI: The Delhi Police

has registered a First Information Report (FIR) against a gym owner and his associates a day after a video surfaced online purportedly showing an on-duty policeman being assaulted by them. The policeman was assaulted on April 1 in Uttam Nagar area.

Police said that the video purportedly shows the policeman, identified as Sushil, being abused and assaulted by a man along with his accomplice. Another policeman can also seen trying to stop the gym owner in the video.

Sushil, presently posted at the Baba Haridas Nagar police station, was earlier posted as the personnel security officer (PSO) of the police.

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Check people coming from Maharashtra for Covid: C'garh Governor



STAFF REPORTER ■ RAIPUR

Chhattisgarh Governor Anusuiya Uike on Thursday called for a medical examination of people coming from Maharashtra for Covid-19 and also urged everyone to cooperate with the government to overcome a major resurgence of the virus.

Addressing a virtual all-party meeting here, the Governor said those coming to Chhattisgarh from adjoining Maharashtra, which has been badly hit by Covid, need to be investigated to prevent the spread of corona infection.

She called for arrangements including quarantine centres at the border with Maharashtra.

Appealing to heads of political parties to use their cadres to make people aware of steps to be taken to fight the disease, she said it is very difficult for the state government alone to deal with the pandemic.

"It is our collective responsibility and

duty to deal with this pandemic," she said. "Let us all unite and cooperate in recovering from this crisis."

Uike said that political parties should work with the administration in providing relief and facilities to the needy. "We should try to save human lives in this time of crisis by rising above party politics."

Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel said the government is taking all possible measures to curb the corona infection. He asked all political parties to make people realize the importance of getting themselves tested at the first signs of corona.

There is no shortage of oxygen in the state, he said. The government has decided that 80 per cent of the oxygen produced in the state's oxygen plants should be used only in Chhattisgarh.

The Chief Minister said that testing and treatment will be arranged in the border areas of the state by conducting special campaigns.

He then provided details about the numbers covered by the Covid vaccination and the facilities available in hospitals for Covid patients.

Control rooms have been set up in all the districts. Gram Panchayats have been told to set up quarantine centers for migrant labourers.

Leaders of various parties made important suggestions. Leader of Opposition Dharamlal Kaushik sought beds in hostels and social buildings at the development block level. Shivratna Sharma of the BJP suggested filling up vacant posts in the Health Department. Congress President Mohan Markam said Congress MLAs, Mayors and Councillors will give one month's salary to the Chief Minister's Relief Fund.

Neelkanth Tripathi (NCP) spoke about problems such as lack of oxygen and excessive fees charged by private hospitals. Amit Jogi of the Janata Congress wanted everyone over 18 years to be vaccinated.



People lined up outside a medical store at Chhattisgarh's biggest government hospital- Dr Bhimrao Ambedkar Medical College & Hospital, on Thursday for Remdesivir as the state has been facing an acute shortage of the antiviral drug. Pioneer Photo

Second Covid wave more deadly, we need all cooperation: Baghel

STAFF REPORTER ■ RAIPUR

Describing the second wave Covid-19 infection as more deadly, Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel on Thursday sought cooperation from social organizations to deal with the pandemic. Baghel made the remarks through a video conference at a meeting with the heads of various societies. Speaking frankly, he said the government has limited resources. The association of society with the government increases the resources manifold. Like last year, active cooperation of all the members of the society is necessary now, he said. He thanked various social organizations for the assistance provided. The Chief Minister said the second wave of Corona epidemic is more deadly. It's virus is more infectious. This time there is a need to be more vigilant. He said lockdown is necessary to check the rapidly spreading infection. He asked the community chiefs



to tell people to follow the safety measures seriously. Delay in treatment increases infection and can be fatal, Baghel warned.

Representatives of various groups said they were ready to extend help by offering their buildings, hostels, volunteers, providing food, oxygen supply and anything else needed to battle Covid-19. The video conference was attended by Manwa Kurmi Samaj, Chhattisgarh Kanwar Samaj, Rajput-Kshatriya Mahasabha, Maheshwari Samaj, Chhattisgarh Sindhi Panchayat, Maharashtra Mandal, Sahu Samaj, Christian Society, Jain Samaj and Dewangan Samaj.

Govt bans strikes in essential services

STAFF REPORTER ■ RAIPUR

The Chhattisgarh government on Thursday banned work stoppage in all essential services in view of the Covid-19 crisis. This was necessary in public interest, an official press release said. The order, under the Chhattisgarh Urgent Service Maintenance and Prevention of Discontinuance Act 1979, prohibits work stoppage in health facilities in all government and private medical institutions besides sale of medicines, transport, ambulance services, supply of water and electricity, and management of food and drinking water.

Man held for killing father, grandmother

STAFF REPORTER ■ DHAMTARI

Chhattisgarh Police on Thursday arrested a 25-year-old man who killed his father and grandmother in Dhamtari district two days ago and escaped wearing a sari belonging to his mother.

Speaking to The Pioneer, Dhamtari Superintendent of Police B.R. Rajbhanu identified him Mahesh Kumar Verma of Chandana village in the district.

On Tuesday night, he killed his father Pannala and grandmother Triveni Bai over a petty issue.

Police learnt that Mahesh escaped by wearing a sari which belonged to his mother. A sniffer dog squad found the saree on the road towards Abhanpur in Raipur district.

Acting on a tip, Mahesh was caught in Satpara village in Abhanpur area. Mahesh confessed that he attacked his father, mother and grandmother with a wooden stick after his request for a glass of water led to a row.

He told the police that his father and grandmother died instantly while his mother managed to give him the slip.

C'garh gets 8,800 Remdesivir injections



STAFF REPORTER ■ RAIPUR

The Chhattisgarh government said on Thursday that it has distributed another consignment of 8,800 Remdesivir injections to different hospitals amid reports of an acute shortage.

On Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel's instruction, Chhattisgarh State Road Development Corp Managing Director Bhoskar Vilas Sandipan and Chhattisgarh

State Industrial Development Corp Managing Director Arun Prasad went to Mumbai and Hyderabad respectively to coordinate with the companies producing Remdesivir injection.

This has helped in keeping a continuous supply of the injections, the press release said. Sun Pharma provided 5,400 injections and Hetero Pharma 3,400. The supply will continue. On Tuesday, the state got 9,100 Remdesivir injections.

Rates fixed for CT scans in pvt hospitals

STAFF REPORTER ■ RAIPUR

A high-resolution CT scan with contrast of Covid patients being treated in Chhattisgarh's private hospitals will cost up to Rs 2,354, the government announced on Thursday.

A CT scan without contrast will cost Rs 1,870, the Health Department said in a press release.

All private hospitals must only charge the rates prescribed for the treatment of Covid patients and the necessary tests must be



done under the ICMR and state government guidelines, it said.

RTPCR, Antigen and Truenat test of Covid-19 patients should be conducted from pathology centers and hospitals authorized by the ICMR and the state government, it added.

Action will be taken under the Epidemic Diseases Act, 1897, the Chhattisgarh Public Act, 1949 and the Chhattisgarh Epidemic Diseases Covid-19 Regulation Act, 2020 in the event of violations.

Two held for trying to sell leopard skin

STAFF REPORTER ■ KONDAGAON

Chhattisgarh Police on Thursday arrested two persons for trying to sell a leopard skin valued at Rs 10 lakh in Kondagaon district.

Jailaram Markam (52) and Rameshwar Markam (37) were caught from Kunharpara in Kewati village and the skin was seized from them, Kondagaon Superintendent of Police Siddharth Tiwari told The Pioneer. On learning that they were looking for customers to sell the skin of a wild animal, the police swung into action, the officer said.

कार्यालय कार्यापालन अभियंता, लोक स्वास्थ्य यांत्रिकी खंड बिलासपुर (छ.ग.)

आन लाइन निविदा संशोधन सूचना क्र. 1 : (जी क्रमांक 87955)

आन लाइन निविदा क्र. 12, 13 एवं 14 दिनांक 12.03.2021 (निविदा सिस्टम क्रमांक 73534, 73535 एवं 73979) में कोवीड-19 लॉकडाउन के कारणों से निविदा के तिथियों में संशोधन की जाती है।

Bid Due Date	Date 28.04.2021
Physical Doc Submission End Date	Date 01.05.2021
Bid Open Date for Envelope "A" & "B" (Scheduled)	Date 04.05.2021

निविदा की अन्य शर्तें पूर्ववत् रहेगी।

कार्यालय अभियंता लोक स्वास्थ्य यांत्रिकी खंड बिलासपुर (छ.ग.)

G- 60237/4 Ryp/Dtd 15.04.21

कार्यालय कार्यापालन अभियंता लोक स्वास्थ्य यांत्रिकी खण्ड, दस्नेवाड़ा

(फोन/फैक्स नं. 01-022) से. आ. 252362, ई-मेल: cedan-phe-cg@nic.in

निविदा सूचना क्र. 01-022 से. आ. 252362, ई-मेल: cedan-phe-cg@nic.in, दिनांक: 09/04/2021

इ-प्रोक्वायरमेंट प्रथम निविदा आमंत्रण सूचना

राष्ट्रीय जीवन वायुमय प्रणाली अंतर्गत सहायक श्रेणी में पंजीकृत ठेकेदारों से प्रथम "ए" प्रस्तावित दर पर निम्नलिखित कार्य हेतु (Online) निविदा आमंत्रित की जाती है।

कार्य का नाम:- जल जीवन निगम के अंतर्गत ग्राम सोयलंका एवं जयम के निधन पार्थ में सोलर सहायित योजना तहत पाईप लाइन बिछाने, जोड़ने एवं नल कनेक्शन का कार्य।

निविदा क्रमांक	सिस्टम डिजाइन क्रमांक	ग्राम/विभागाध्यक्ष	अनुमानित लागत
01/09.04.2021	76100	सोयलंका/पलेवाड़ा	67.98 लाख
02/09.04.2021	76103	जयम/पलेवाड़ा	37.14 लाख

निविदा की सामान्य शर्तें अन्य जानकारी वेबसाइट पोर्टल <http://eproc.cgstate.gov.in> पर दलित है। निविदा डाउनलोड करने की अंतिम तिथि दिनांक 05.05.2021 है।

अधीक्षण अभियंता लोक स्वास्थ्य यांत्रिकी खंड दस्नेवाड़ा

G- 60248/5 Ryp/Dtd 15.04.21

कार्यालय अधीक्षण अभियंता, लोक निर्माण विभाग, (वि./या.) मंडल, बिलासपुर (छ.ग.)

ई-प्रोक्वायरमेंट निविदा सूचना

Portal: <http://eproc.cgstate.gov.in>

खरीददार सूचना, लोक निर्माण विभाग, वि.मं., बिलासपुर में निम्नलिखित कार्य हेतु अनिवार्य निविदा आमंत्रित की जाती है:-

नि.आ.सू. दिनांक 13.04.2021 तथा डाउनलोड की अंतिम तिथि दिनांक 05.05.2021

प्रथम आवेदनित

क्र. नि.आ.सू.	अनुमानित लागत	कार्य का नाम	लागत (रु. में)
1. 01	76280	Providing Supply, Installation, Testing & Commissioning of Fire Alarm System, Public Address System for 7 No. Court Room Building at High Court Campus Bilsapur. (C.G.)	105.29
2. 02	76281	Operation & Preventive maintenance contract (AMC) of Internal & External Electrification installed at New High Court, Bilsapur (C.G.) (including Annexure A,B,C & D)	97.49

निविदा में भाग लेने की शर्तिका एवं निविदा के संबंध में विस्तृत जानकारी विभाग के उपरोक्त वेबसाइट में देखें जा सकते हैं।

अधीक्षण अभियंता लोक निर्माण विभाग (वि./या.) मंडल बिलासपुर (छ.ग.)

G- 60235/3 Ryp/Dtd 15.04.21

IANIS ■

Regular exercise or a 30-minute brisk walk in the neighbourhood park or in your society five days a week while following the social distancing norms can improve your chances of beating Covid-19, reveals a significant study that analysed 48,440 adults who were Covid positive.



On the other hand, patients who were consistently inactive had 1.73 times greater chances of ICU admission, while the risk for death was 2.49 times greater for patients who were consistently inactive. Other than being over the age of 60 or having

a history of organ transplant, being consistently inactive, being severely Covid-19, suggesting any amount of physical activity has benefit, revealed the findings published in the British Journal of Sports Medicine. "This is a wake-up call for the importance of healthy lifestyles and especially physical activity," said Robert E Sallis, physician at the Kaiser Permanente Fontana Medical Centre in the US. "People who regularly exercise had the best chance of beating Covid-19, while people who were inactive did much worse," Sallis added. For the study, the team identified 48,440 adults with a Covid-19 diagnosis from January 1, 2020, to October 21, 2020. They found 6.4 per cent were consistently active and 14.4 per cent were consistently inactive, with the remainder falling in the inconsistently active category. Among all Covid-19 patients, 8.6 per cent were hospitalised, 2.4 per cent were admitted to the ICU, and 1.6 per cent died. "What surprised me the most from this study was the strength of the association between inactivity and poor outcomes from Covid-19," said Deborah Rohm Young from the Kaiser Permanente Southern California.

"Even after we included variables such as obesity and smoking in the analysis, we still saw inactivity was strongly associated with much higher odds of hospitalisation, ICU admission, and death compared with moderate physical activity or any activity at all," Young added. The results showed that inactivity is strongly associated with poor Covid-19 outcomes, Sallis said, while suggesting walking 30 minutes a day, five days a week at a moderate pace, to prevent Covid-19. "Exercise is medicine that everyone should take -- especially in this era of Covid-19," Sallis said.

India foiled Chinese bid to change status quo at LAC: CDS Rawat

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Despite China adopting "shove and push" tactics, India foiled these bids and prevented a change in status quo at the Line of Actual Control (LAC), Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) General Bipin Rawat said here on Thursday.

Making this assertion in his lecture at the Raisina Dialogue, he also said the country proved it will not get pushed under any pressure in apparent reference to the nearly ten-month long stand-off in Eastern Ladakh. He also said China is using its military might and conveying the message it is "my way or no way".

Rawat said China felt that it will be able to compel nations to give in to its demands by doing a little bit of "shove and push" as it has superior armed forces because of technological advantage.

"But, I think India stood firm on the northern borders and we have proven that we will not get pushed," he said at the virtual conference.

He said India is able to get support of the international community by standing firm in preventing the attempt of changing the status quo in the region.

"They tried to ensure that they can change the status quo by the use of disruptive technologies without using force. They thought that India, as a nation, will succumb to the pressures that they have been putting on us because of the technological advantage that they have," he said, adding

RAISINA DIALOGUE



General Bipin Rawat, Chief of Defence Staff, India, speaking at the Raisina Dialogue.

that did not happen. The CDS said the international community came to India's support to say that "yes there is an international baseline rule order which every nation must follow. That is what we have been able to achieve".

His remarks came in the backdrop of face-offs at several friction points in Eastern Ladakh since May last year. The tension mounted after a violent brawl in June in the Galwan valley between the troops of India and China leaving 20 Indian soldiers including the commanding officer dead. More than 100 Chinese soldiers were also killed but China is yet to officially make public the number of casualties.

As a result of a series of military and diplomatic talks, India and China completed with withdrawal of troops and weapons from the North and South banks of Pangong lake in February. The two sides are now engaged in talks to extend the disengagement process to the remaining friction points.

Rawat said "They feel that they have arrived and they have a superior armed force because of the technological advantage that they have." He also said "They have been able to create disruptive technologies which

can paralyse systems of the adversary, and therefore, they feel that just by doing a little bit of shove and push, they will be able to compel nations to give in to their demands".

Referring to modernisation of the armed forces, the CDS described the F-35 fighter jets of the US as a state of the art platform but added that he was not sure whether the US will share the technology with India.

"What they have offered us is a lower version in the F-series," he said.

At the conference, Chief of Staff, Joint Staff of Japan Self Defence Forces, General Koji Yamazaki said China is attempting to unilaterally change the international order, and that it is necessary for cooperation among like-minded countries in areas of disruptive technologies and counter the "grey zone tactics".

He said China does not recognise the legitimate interests of Japan and other countries in the region and such an approach will heighten tension, adding rules-based order is necessary for stability in the Indo-Pacific region. Yamazaki also noted that any probable contingency in Taiwan directly impacts the defence of Japan.

Chief of Defence Force of Australia, General Angus Campbell said the "grey zone tactics" are a way to nibble away at territory. "We see this in the South China Sea. It is very challenging to respond without

Indo-Pacific epicentre of strategic contest: Oz PM

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

With China flexing its muscle in the Indo-Pacific region and objecting to the Quad nations presence there, Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison said here on Thursday the region has become the epicentre of strategic contest.

Making this observation in the ongoing Raisina Dialogue here, he said in this backdrop like-minded nations need to act more consistently and cohesively to protect their shared interests in the face of multiple challenges.

His remarks came as the Quad nations including India, US, Japan and Australia some months back conducted the Malabar series of naval exercises off the Indian coast. China has objected to it saying the Quad will lead to militarisation of the Indo-Pacific region.

Without mentioning any country, the Australian Prime Minister also referred to the growing tensions over territory

breaching the line that leads to open conflict," he said.

Rawat said geo-politics, coupled with geo-economics, is making the world more complex. The world order and that China is attempting to convey a message that it is "my way or no way".

"There are some nations



Scott Morrison, Prime Minister of Australia, speaking at the Raisina Dialogue.

which follow international order. There are others which depend on their own law and make their own rules and regulations, and they change the status quo. These kinds of things do lead to conflict situations and that is what we are witnessing on our northern borders," he added.

The CDS said the world is becoming "fragile" on account of threat from high-technology warfare. "Nations feel that they are being banked, power technology, and therefore, threaten other nations which probably do not have that kind of technology,"

"Unconventional means of

He said like-minded nations need to act more consistently and cohesively in protecting their shared interests. "The Indo-Pacific is the region that will shape our prosperity, our security and our destiny, individually and collectively," Morrison said. "The Indo-Pacific is the epicentre of strategic contest," he added.

Morrison also said the corona pandemic has provided a fresh perspective in creating new opportunities to build a durable strategic balance in the Indo-Pacific region.

Incidentally, on Wednesday Indian Navy Chief Admiral Karambir Singh underlined the high level of synergy amongst the navies of the Quad.

The quadrilateral countries and said these can come together in a plug and play mechanism in case of a military need in the Indo-Pacific region.

Participating in the Dialogue inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday, Admiral Philip Scott Davidson, Commander of the

US Indo-Pacific Command, identified the Quad as a strategic opportunity diplomatically, militarily and economically, as he designated China as "the greatest strategic threat" to rules-based international order.

The two Navy top commanders during the conclave held virtually discussed the potential of the Quad and agreed that there are many spheres of engagement where the grouping can come together and also make more like-minded countries.

Asked about the future of Quad military in terms of joint patrolling and others, the Indian Navy chief said the Quad started as a consultative grouping and has evolved and grown organically. "There is no dearth of issues that it can handle and we have a robust engagement with the navies of all Quad members," he said.

The Navy chief said the Quad navies already enjoy high degree of interoperability and highlighted that the Malabar exercise started with the US in 1992.

Similarly, he pointed out that India has been carrying out naval exercises with Japan since 2012 and with the Australian Navy for the last six years. "So if an opportunity arises, we have the capability and capacity to come together in almost a plug and play mechanism," he said.

The US Navy commander said the Quad has tremendous potential for cooperation, going far beyond the security sphere. "The vaccine approach is a powerful signal to the region that the Quad is working for the common good outside these four countries," he said.

Noting that the Quad has gained momentum, Davidson said, "It's a diamond of democracies in region. We should think about it in broadest possible terms."

He also said China seeks to exploit the current global pandemic to increase military presence throughout the Indo-Pacific. He added that China's intent is to undermine international law and norms.

Make plans to counter future challenges, IAF told

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Thursday urged the IAF to draw long-term plans to counter any threat and appreciate the role of the Service in prompt, timely and befitting response during the stand-off at the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in Eastern Ladakh.

Making this observation while inaugurating the first bi-annual IAF Commanders' Conference of the year here, Rajnath asked the IAF to brace to fashion strategies for capability enhancement to counter future threats. He appreciated the critical focus of IAF towards reorienting for the future.

Speaking about the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, the Minister appreciated the role played by the IAF in assisting other Government agencies in



Defence Minister Rajnath Singh speaking at the IAF Commanders' Conference.

their task. Referring to changing international geopolitics, he observed that the perceptible shift of focus from Trans-Atlantic to Trans-Pacific has become more obvious in the recent past.

Changing dimensions of war would now include advanced technologies, asymmetric capabilities and information dominance, and it was very important that the IAF's

preparations for the future must include these aspects, he said.

Reiterating Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of 'Self Reliance', Rajnath stressed on the need to promote Atmanirbharta in defence infrastructure.

He added the IAF's order for Tejas Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) would result in a substantial boost to the domestic defence industry and



IAF officers participating in the IAF Commanders' Conference.

will be a game changer from the indigenous perspective. The order for the LCA to be manufactured by the Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) is more than Rs 50,000 crores for 100 jets.

He urged the commanders to continue their efforts for achieving even greater results in the field of indigenous defence production and aircraft maintenance.

He added that national security and economic development are complementary aspects of national policy.

Rajnath stressed on the need to continue to work proactively towards the integration process currently underway, implementation of the joint logistics plan and to ensure synergy in areas of joint planning and operations.

He assured the Commanders of the wholehearted support from the Ministry of Defence in achieving the goal of being a potent Strategic Aerospace Force. The Commanders' Conference will conclude on April 16.

The status of strengthening current combat capabilities and the action plan for making IAF a future-ready combat force would be examined. Issues pertaining to reforms and restructuring for ensuring more efficient processes across all domains and optimised operational training will also be discussed.

SC asks CBI to conduct further probe into role of erring cops in ISRO espionage case

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court Thursday ordered that the report of a high-level committee on the role of erring police officials in 1991 espionage case relating to ISRO scientist Nambi Narayanan be given to the CBI and directed the agency to conduct further investigation on the issue.

The apex court said the CBI may treat the panel's findings as part of preliminary investigation and asked the agency to submit its report to the court within three months.

A bench headed by Justice A M Khanwilkar said the report of the three-member panel, headed by former top court judge Justice K J Somaya, kept in a sealed cover and it should not be published.

The top court rejected the submission of former DGP Shiv Mathew, who was then heading the SIT probe team, that he was not heard by the committee while Narayanan was heard.

The bench, also comprising Justices Dinesh Maheshwari and Krishna Murari, said the committee was not to adjudicate the matter but it had to go through circumstantial evidence and form a prima facie case on the acts of omission and commission of erring officials.

The apex court was hearing the Centre's plea seeking con-

sideration of the report filed by the committee regarding the role of erring police officials in espionage case relating to Narayanan, who had been acquitted and was eventually awarded Rs 50 lakh compensation by the top court.

On April 5, the Centre had moved the top court seeking order hearing and consideration of the panel's report, terming it as a "national issue".

The apex court had appointed the panel on September 14, 2018 while it was ordered to issue an order to cough up Rs 50 lakh compensation for compelling Narayanan to undergo "immense humiliation".

It had ordered setting up of the committee to take appropriate steps against the erring officials for causing "tremendous harassment" and "immeasurable anguish" to Narayanan and had directed the Centre and state government to nominate one officer each in the panel.

Terming the police action against the erstwhile officer of the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) as a "psycho-pathological treatment", the apex court had in September 2018 said that his "liberty and dignity", basic to his human rights, were jeopardised as he was taken into custody and, eventually, despite all the glory of the past, was compelled to face "cynical abhorrence".

Govt relaxes rules for renewal of OCI cards

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Centre on Thursday eased out many conditions related to the re-issue of OCI (Overseas Citizen of India) cards. Union Home Minister Narendra Modi announced the mandatory renewal of OCI card along with the issue of new passport renewal of other countries. The government also relaxed the norms of renewal of OCI card to a person who attained the age of 20 years also.

Presently, the OCI card is required to be re-issued each time a new passport is issued up to 20 years of age and once after completing 50 years of age, in view of biological changes in the face of the applicant. With a view to facilitating the OCI cardholders, it has now been decided by the Government of India to dispense with this requirement.

A person who has got registration as an OCI cardholder prior to attaining the age of 20 years will have to get the OCI card re-issued each time when a new passport is issued after his/her completing 20 years of age, so as to capture his/her facial features and retaining adulthood. If a person has obtained registration as an OCI cardholder after attaining the age of 20 years, there will be no requirement of re-issue of an OCI card.

Exposure to higher levels of air pollution likely to increase severity of Covid

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Exposure to higher levels of air pollution is likely to increase the severity of Covid-19 among people suffering from respiratory conditions such as asthma or chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), a study has warned.

Researchers from the University of Cincinnati in the US found that a one-unit increase in particulate matter 2.5 was associated with a 60 per cent higher chance of hospitalisation for Covid-19 patients with pre-existing respiratory disease.

Particulate matter less or equal to 2.5 micrometers refers to a mixture of tiny particles and gases in the air that are two-and-one-half microns or less in width.

For patients without respiratory disease, no association was found between the findings published online in the scholarly journal Respiratory Medicine.

Particulate matter is very small, small enough to be inhaled deep into the lungs, they cross into the blood and also affect other organs. Air pollution as a result of emissions from factories, power plants and other sources is a generator of particulate matter, Angelico Mendi, MD, Assistant Professor of environmental and public health sciences, at the varsity's College of Medicine.

Some allegations against judges are shockingly false, says SC

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Thursday said some of the allegations made against judges are so "shockingly false" that if there had been no security of tenure, they could have been easily "knocked out".

The top court favoured fixed tenure of two or more years for ad-hoc judges if they are appointed in high courts to reduce the backlog of pending cases.

A special bench headed by Chief Justice S A Bobde said, "Position of judge has to be made secure. I tell you, we have seen allegations against judges which are shockingly false. Yes, some of them are shockingly false. You can easily knock out a judge if there is no security. There has to be security of tenure for ad-hoc judges".

A bench, also comprising Justices Sanjay Kishan Kaul and Surya Kant, which was hearing arguments on the modalities of appointments of ad-hoc judges, reserved verdict on a plea filed by NGO Lok Prahari seeking appointment of additional judges in the high courts under Article 224A of the Constitution in order to reduce the pendency of cases.

Article 224-A of the Constitution says that "the Chief Justice of a High Court



Justices of the Supreme Court during a session.

for any State may at any time, with the previous consent of the President, request any person who has held the office of a Judge of that Court or of any other High Court to sit and act as a Judge of the High Court for that State".

Justice Kaul said he concurs with the views of the CJ as every time a judge is appointed, frivolous complaints are made and the court cannot put the entire system of appointment of ad-hoc judges in question. "Ad-hoc judges cannot be made vulnerable," the bench said, adding that too much fine-tuning may lead to losing the objective behind the appointment process.

The top court also rejected the submission of senior advocate Vikas Singh and

some of other lawyers appearing in the matter that many of the former judges may not be interested in taking the job as they may be more interested in other lucrative fields like arbitration.

"We think this decision should be left to the former judges. We cannot decide for them. The chief justice will definitely discuss with the retired judge which is proposed to be appointed as ad-hoc judge. If the retired judge thinks that he has something better to do, then he can very well say no to the appointment," the bench said.

The CJ also brushed aside the argument that high court chief justices may not be able to hear important matters if ad-hoc judges are appointed.

NGT prepones 2021 summer vacation due to exponential surge in Covid-19

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The National Green Tribunal on Thursday preponed its summer vacation for 2021 in the light of exponential surge in Covid-19 cases.

An office order issued by the NGT authorities said that the earlier notified summer vacation from June 1, 2021, to June 30, 2021 stands cancelled and shall be working for the tribunal.

In lieu of the same, the period from April 19, 2021, to May 18, 2021 (both days inclusive) shall be observed as summer vacation for all the benches, it said.

"In the light of the sudden and exponential surge in COVID-19 cases, the competent authority has pleased to modify the calendar with respect to summer vacations to be observed by all the benches of the National Green Tribunal."

India, France sign agreement for cooperation on Gaganyaan mission

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Space agencies of India and France on Thursday signed an agreement for cooperation for the former's first human space mission, Gaganyaan, a move that will enable Indian flight physicists to train at French facilities.

French space agency CNES said under the agreement, equipment developed by it, tested and still operating aboard the International Space Station (ISS) will be made available to Indian crews.

The CNES will also be supplying fireproof carry bags made in France to shield equipment from shocks and radiation.

The agreement was announced during French Foreign Affairs Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian's visit to the Indian Space Research Organisation's (ISRO) headquarters in Bengaluru.

Centre urged to restart distribution of free food grains

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Following the second wave of Covid-19, a few State Governments including Rajasthan, Kerala and Uttarakhand as well as MPs from NCP, TMC, CPI and CPI-M have urged the Centre to restart distribution of free food grains to 810 million poor people under the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Ann Yojana (PMGKAY), which was launched last year during the first wave of the pandemic.

Under the scheme, the Centre distributes 5 kg rice or wheat per person and one kg of pulses per family covered under the National Food Security Act from April-November 2020.

Ample stock of oxygen available in country to tackle Covid: Centre

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Amid growing demands for medical oxygen in the country, the Centre on Thursday assured that sufficient stocks of oxygen are available in the country even as it has started the mapping of sources for supply of medical oxygen to the affected States to ensure its uninterrupted supply.

The States with greater needs of oxygen are Maharashtra, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Delhi and Chhattisgarh. Besides, there is more consumption of medical oxygen in Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Punjab, and Rajasthan.

The Union Health Ministry said that the present oxygen stocks are more than 50 thousand metric tonnes in the country. In a statement here, it said that the country's daily

production capacity of oxygen is more than seven thousand metric tonnes and the production capacity has further scaled up.

The Central Government has asked the States to make rational use of medical oxygen and avoid wastage to fulfill the growing demands.

An Empowered Group in this regard has also initiated action to ensure the sufficient availability of medical oxygen. The Government assured that the surplus oxygen available with the steel plants is also being utilised as per the need. States have also been asked to set up Control Rooms to ensure a smooth supply of oxygen to the districts.

The Government has initiated several measures to ensure the supply of medical oxygen to various affected States.

TMC men urinate in BJP leader's mouth: Sources

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

With reports of electoral violence breaking records with each passing day, the latest came from East Midnapore where alleged Trinamool Congress cadres urinated in the mouth of a block BJP leader Shyamundar Das, BJP sources said adding the victim was beaten up too.

Das has been hospitalised at Medcheta town, sources in the saffron party said. The TMC, however denied the involvement of its party men. Elsewhere at violence-Torn Nanpur constituency in Birbhum district local Trinamool leader Nurman Sheikh on Wednesday evening openly threatened CPI(M) candidate Shyamali Pradhan with chopping of the hands of Left voters. Pradhan is a sitting MLA too.

Nurman accused Pradhan at Agartar village in Agartar village in Nanpur constituency when she went there campaigning. "Why have come here... you cannot campaign here... there is no CPI(M) here, we will not allow them (Left voters) to go and vote... and if they do their hands will be chopped off," he was heard telling

the Left candidate.

Incidentally barely a day before a similar threat came from Birbhum TMC president Anubrata Mondal who referred to earlier incidents of violence and murder saying "You are trying to stop me but there is no point doing so... murders had taken place in 2011, 2014, 2019... murders will take place this time also."

He was referring to a showcase notice issued to him by the Election Commission to explain his conduct regarding an earlier threat issued to BJP saying "they will be beaten away from this area."

Meanwhile, hours after coming out of a 48-hour ban from campaigning on using violent language BJP candidate from Bongaon Rahul Sinha seemed to return to his elements on Thursday referring once again to the Cooch Behar police firing and threatening there will be more such firing to ensure peaceful voting.

Quoting Police Observer Vivek Dubey he said, "I will once again say that the central forces should resort to firing if there are any more such threats... in the firing death is not a big question... the point is you have to ensure free and fair election.

Political differences make friends foes in Bengal

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ BAGULA/NADIA

Jehanaara Khatoun and Alpana Biswas are two great friends. Their husbands are not. While Jehanaara's husband Kamran is a committed Trinamool Congress worker, Biswas' husband Aroop is a "corrade-turned-pracharak."

Such is the intensity of their hatred that one suspects that Kamran had a hand in Biswas' tank being poisoned last December, killing fishes worth about a lakh of rupees. All for political rivalry.

Whereas till a few years ago the two families had great deals. Both belonged to the Left and both were happy... After Mamata Banerjee came to power her men bought over the minority people here with posts and other facilities... Kamran joined the TMC.

As the rivalry began the organizational base of CPI(M) shrank "not because we were disliked by the people but because they would not work politically."

At Hatishala village Naresht Mandal and I saw... the first time's marriage I had to take loan of Rs 2 lakh from a bank at Bagula

ter... or even kill you... gradually the Left workers were immobilized as the TMC had a field day... Still we gave a fight in 2013

... but they would not let our men vote... we would sit back home and they would cast our votes... as the CPI(M) did the vacuum that was filled by the BJP which came with leaders like Dilip Ghosh who prescribed eye-for-an-eye... that the people lapped up and the whole village became BJP' Biswas

was a member of the Matua community says, adding the TMC has filled the area with corruption, cut money and crime.

Curiously "both the TMC and the BJP are vying for Matua votes but when it comes to the ground level minorities are preferred to the Matuas because they vote in block," says Swapan Bhunia, a local social worker adding how "communalization of Bengal has taken place in the past 5-10 years."

At Hatishala village Naresht Mandal and I saw... the first time's marriage I had to take loan of Rs 2 lakh from a bank at Bagula

(a nearby panchayat). The local TMC leader managed it for me and took a whopping Rs 75,000 out of that."

Ishtaha a school teacher from Mayurhat says how she had to shell out Rs 5 lakh for the job because her sister a nurse had to give Rs 2 lakh for a temporary job at a hospital at Bagula.

At Hatishala and Ghosh Para there are numerous such families that have shifted allegiance from the Red to BJP. "I am a born Leftist within, I joined the Brigade (Parade Ground) rally in Kolkata but I am working for the BJP locally because CPI(M) cannot handle the TMC's money and muscle power... the BJP matches them in every respect... besides they are in power here. Centre and can put their big leaders in jail for numerous cases if they cross their limits which the CPI(M) cannot do," says Tapash Ghosh from Ghosh Para in Ranghat North-East constituency.

Anima a 75-year-old widow from Shapurpur says how she had to give Rs 10,000 for a room and a bathroom to be made under Indira Awas scheme. "When I refused to give that money they threatened to burn down my house... on the one hand they had to show the list of constructed houses on

TN logs 7,987 fresh corona cases

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ CHENNAI

Covid-19 situation turned to a record in Tamil Nadu on Thursday as the State diagnosed 7,987 new patients and registered 29 deaths, which experts like Dr C V Krishnaswamy describing as a 'tidal wave of pandemic'.

Chennai topped the table of districts with the highest number of new cases on a single day. The Metropolis tested 2,558 new cases of Covid-19 till 6 pm on Thursday. Chengalpatt, the neighbouring district that hosts institutions like SRM University and automobile giant Ford tested the most new cases.

Though the University is silent about the number of cases in its campus as well as in residential areas, there is total silence from the staff quarters as many faculty members were tested positive.

Kerala takes fresh measures to control Covid

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

With the Centre terming Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan as a troublemaker because of his alleged violation of pandemic protocols and the number of new persons tested positive for Covid-19 nearing 8,300 on Thursday, the State administration tightened the rules to prevent further spreading of the pandemic.

Earlier in the day Union Minister of State for Parliamentary Affairs and External Affairs said Vijayan should be addressed as COVID-IOT because of his reckless behaviour on the day of polling (April 6) and in the subsequent days when he threw to the winds all norms specified by medical experts.

Vijayan had been admitted to the Medical College Hospital from where he was discharged on Wednesday. He is back in his palatial residence at Pinarayi where he would be recuperating for the next ten days.

The Chief Minister reportedly held a virtual meeting with other ministers and bureaucrats on Thursday where it was decided to take drastic steps to prevent the spread of the pandemic but without causing any inconvenience to the general public.

A Government Order issued after the meeting said that crowding during public and private functions would be brought under strict control. Marriages, house warming func-

tions and other private ceremonies should be intimated to the local authorities well in advance, said the order.

Addressing the media later in the day, V.P. Joy, chief secretary, said all front line workers and people above the age of 45 would be checked on Friday and Saturday as part of the massive testing ordered for the next two days.

He said there is no shortage of vaccines in the State as alleged by certain people. "We have stock of more than 7 lakh doses of vaccine and the Centre has assured us that we will be given more than two lakh doses in the next two days," said the Chief Secretary.

He ruled out the possibilities of total lockdown and pointed out that malls and hotels have been instructed to down the shutters by 9 pm.

Joy also disclosed that there were 1.15 crore persons in the State who are of in the age group of 45 and above. "We will vaccinate this entire category of people and also vaccinate those below the age of 45. It has been found that persons below the age of 45 are the main carriers of the pandemic," he said.

The chief secretary said that the top priority of the Government was to hold the public examinations for students and he requested the general public to postpone unimportant meetings and gatherings to later dates considering the gravity of the situation.

Govt only indulging in sham of Covid 'vaccine festival': RaGa

New Delhi: Former Congress

leader Rahul Gandhi on Thursday attacked the Government over the handling of the Covid-19 situation and alleged that it is only indulging in a "sham of a vaccine festival."

He also alleged that there is no testing, no beds in hospitals, neither ventilators nor oxygen and vaccine is not available. His sister and party's general secretary Priyanka Gandhi asked the Uttar Pradesh government to take concrete steps to prevent the spread of coronavirus and asserted that it is "futile" to invest time and resources in "hiding" this tragedy.

Rahul Gandhi also took a jibe asking what PM CARES is doing. He said huge donations were given to the fund for handling COVID-19 situation. "There are no tests or beds in hospitals. There are no ventilators or oxygen. The vaccine is also not there. But there is a sham of a festival. PM CARES? He asked. His age after the Government celebrated the 'Tika Utsav' (vaccine festival) from April 11 to 14.

Taking to Twitter, Priyanka Gandhi said she was reportedly showing Balaiah Dham crematorium in Lucknow being covered by opaque screens. "There is a request to the government of Uttar Pradesh: It is futile to invest time, resources and energy into hiding, suppressing this tragedy," Priyanka Gandhi said in a tweet in Hindi.

"Take concrete steps to stop the pandemic, save lives, and prevent the spread of infection. This is the need of the hour," she said. The Congress leader said the Government accused the Uttar Pradesh government of hiding coronavirus numbers and said had they been cautious from day one, people would not have witnessed such times.

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It was emphasised that it is only through expedient international cooperation and seamless sharing of intelligence, limited to the extent of what we can create a safer and secure environment for citizens of

Alarmed by Covid surge, J&K admin defers summer Darbar

Jammu: Taking note of the

alarm surge in Covid-19 cases, the Union Territory Government on Thursday decided to defer the summer Darbar move for long-distance travel of the public.

It was also decided that the civil secretariat will continue to function through its e-office in both the capital cities of Jammu and Srinagar so that the public at large is not inconvenienced at either capital.

As part of the biannual darbar move and the civil secretariat's shift, other move offices were scheduled to close in Jammu on April 30 to May 1 and Srinagar from 30th April to May 10.

Last year also the government had delayed the shifting of Darbar move offices to Srinagar till June 15 in the wake

of Covid-19 pandemic.

The functioning of the dual-secretariat will ensure uninterrupted functioning of the UT administration while reducing the official record is available on the web cloud which can be easily accessed and retrieved by the authenticated employees' accounts anywhere, anytime.

It was also decided that GAD will issue orders regarding 'move' HoDs, all of whom will also need to shift to e-office. This will apply to all HoDs, barring a few.

Meanwhile, the UT government also decided to postpone the class XII J&K board exams till further orders and cancelled ongoing class X exams.

The Union Territory recorded 1141 fresh cases of coronavirus with Jammu division accounting for 434 and Kashmir 707 cases.

Covid-19 surge: ASI monuments closed for visitors till May 15



PTI photo

New Delhi: All centrally protected monuments and sites under the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) have been closed with immediate effect till May 15 due to the surge in coronavirus cases in the country, the Union culture ministry said on Thursday. An order to this effect was issued by the ASI and was tweeted by Culture Minister Prahlaad Patel this evening. "Due to the prevailing COVID situation, it has been decided to close all centrally protected monuments, sites and museums under the ASI with immediate effect and till May 15 or until further orders," the ASI said. These include 3,693 monuments and 50 museums. In live monuments like Puri Jagannath Temple and

Somnath Temple, daily 'puja' will be conducted but no public gathering will be allowed, said Nitin Tripathi, the ministry's media advisor. Last year, too, all monuments and sites maintained by the ASI were closed due to the coronavirus pandemic on March 17. They reopened in July with strict restrictions like mandatory wearing of masks, cap on the number of visitors and social distancing. The curbs were relaxed later in the year. India's daily COVID-19 cases surged to a record high of 1,73,123 on Thursday, taking the country's cumulative tally to 1,40,74,564, according to Union health ministry data. The death toll climbed to 1,73,123 with 1,038 new fatalities, the highest since October 3, the data stated.

NIA organises BRICS seminar on 'misuse of internet by terrorists'

New Delhi: The immense challenges

posed by the misuse of the internet by terrorists can be effectively tackled by international cooperation and sharing of good practices, delegates underscored at a BRICS seminar hosted by India.

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) organised the two-day online event here of the BRICS nations that includes Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa on April 13-14.

The seminar on the theme 'Misuse of Internet for Terrorist Purposes and Role of Digital Forensics in Terrorist Investigations' was inaugurated by Union Home Secretary Ajay Bhalla on Tuesday. The NIA organised the BRICS chair for the year 2021.

The delegates at the seminar appreciated the fact that in the current milieu of breakthrough technological innovations and ever-evolving digital landscape, the challenges pertaining to prevention, control and prosecution of the terrorist misuse of Internet are multifaceted. The NIA organised the BRICS chair for the year 2021.

It was emphasised that it is only through expedient international cooperation and seamless sharing of intelligence, limited to the extent of what we can create a safer and secure environment for citizens of

BRICS member states as well as the

whole world," it said. A number of technical sessions were held during the seminar like 'exploitation of social media as an arsenal', 'dark web and anonymisers', 'emerging technologies and artificial intelligence', 'crypto currency and virtual assets', 'vulnerability of private and online stealth', equipping law enforcement agencies: counter-terrorist investigations and digital forensics.

In the seminar, as many as 40 delegates from the five member countries deliberated upon these technical sessions.

Two panel discussions on engaging multiple stakeholders from both public and private sectors to tackle the misuse of the Internet and enhancing international cooperation to effectively tackle the exploitation of the Internet by terrorists for their nefarious activities were also held, the statement said.

BRICS member states in 3rd Counter Terrorism Working Group (CTWG) at White River, South Africa had agreed to establish a sub-working group on "Misuse of the Internet and enhancing international cooperation to effectively tackle the exploitation of the Internet by terrorists for their nefarious activities were also held, the statement said.

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BMC debunks perception that it purchased Remdesivir vials 'at very high rates'

TN RAGHUNATHAN ■ MUMBAI

Aid news reports that it purchased Remdesivir injections at rates 2.5 times more than their actual cost, the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) on Thursday debunked the 'perception' created by a section of the media that it had purchased Remdesivir vials 'at very high rates', by saying that it "is not correct at all."

There is a perception created by a section of the media that BMC has purchased Injection Remdesivir at very high rates which is not correct at all. We reiterate that BMC shall always strive to give the best services to Mumbaiers. Team Media must support BMC in these extremely critical times to decisively and effectively defeat the Covid pandemic," the BMC said in a statement issued here.

Explaining the circumstances leading to BMC purchasing 2,00,000 at Rs 1,568 per vial Remdesivir injections, the BMC said: There is an acute shortage of Remdesivir vaccine in the entire country. On 1st April 2021, Bio-Pharmaceutical Corporation Ltd. placed orders for 57,100 vials of Remdesivir at the rate of Rs. 665/- per vial. However, it is a fact that till today the said order has not been entertained by the supplier."

On April 5, the BMC floated a bid for purchase of 2,00,000 vials of Remdesivir which was due on April 7. Only one bid was received from Mylan till April 7 at 4:00 pm. The BMC's stock position on April 7 happened to be 10,471 vials which would have been sufficient for 3 to 4 days only.

"On April 7 morning BMC spoke to Cipla and explored the possibilities of getting supplies of around 10,000 vials. However, Cipla expressed its inability to supply any vial immediately. Due to supply constraints, no BMC had any interest in this bid," the statement said. "The only bidder, namely Mylan refused to reduce the bid price of Rs. 1,568/- inclusive of GST. The scarcity is not only in Maharashtra but all over the country. It was vital to make available Remdesivir to critical patients in MCGM without fail. As seen from different media reports on April 7 various States and cities were trying to procure Remdesivir to protect their citizens," the statement said. "It was imperative to act fast and decisively to procure Remdesivir on April 7 or BMC would have faced a huge crisis to treat patients. Any delay would have resulted in Remdesivir going out to other cities/States of India in this scarcity time bringing bad name to BMC specially when Mumbai is the financial capital of India. Between the BMC and human lives, BMC opted to save all

possible human lives even if it meant

spending an extra amount of money for securing 2,00,000 vials of Remdesivir," the BMC said. On April 7, more than 17,431 beds were occupied by covid patients under MCGM. Therefore, BMC had to bite the bullet and order was placed on April 7, 2021 itself to procure 2,00,000 Remdesivir out of which 25,000 vials were received immediately," the BMC said. "In sharp contrast to this prompt delivery of Remdesivir vaccine to BMC by the vendor, Haffkine Bio-Pharmaceutical Corporation Ltd's order of 57,100 vials of Remdesivir at the rate of Rs.665/-, is still not entertained with no supplies made till date," the BMC said.

The BMC also said that around the time it placed an order on Mylan for purchase of Remdesivir injections, organisations like the Surat Municipal Corporation, District Hospital, Satara, Mission of Medical Education, MP, Mission Director, NHM, Assam, Navi Mumbai Municipal Corporation (NMC) and Gujarat Medical Services Corporations had placed similar orders on Mylan.

"BMC has taken the lead in placing the order at the earliest keeping in view the interest of Mumbaikars and at prices comparable with various other cities of India," the civic body said in its statement

young man. A lot. But could not find him. Farmers going to the fields early in the morning on Thursday morning noticed that Gulab Singh's body is hanging on a Babool tree near the village.

Whose information was given by the farmers to the police along with their relatives. After receiving the information, the police team reached the spot and collected the evidence and sent the body to the district headquarters for post-mortem. There was chaos in the family with the death of the young man.

Gulab Singh (26) son of Pransukh, resident of village Suratgarh, was missing from home late Wednesday evening. Late in the night, when the young man did not reach home, the relatives searched the

Youth found hanging from tree, family cries murder

PRADEEP SAXENA ■ ALIGARH

The body of a youth from

Suratgarh village was found hanging on a tree near the village. The relatives who reached the spot have accused for murder of the youth and hanging him on tree. The police, who reached the same spot, took the body hanging on the tree and called the police team to the spot and collected the evidence and sent the body to the district headquarters for post-mortem. There was chaos in the family with the death of the young man.

Gulab Singh (26) son of Pransukh, resident of village Suratgarh, was missing from home late Wednesday evening. Late in the night, when the young man did not reach home, the relatives searched the

young man. A lot. But could not find him. Farmers going to the fields early in the morning on Thursday morning noticed that Gulab Singh's body is hanging on a Babool tree near the village.

Whose information was given by the farmers to the police along with their relatives. After receiving the information, the police team reached the spot and collected the evidence and sent the body to the district headquarters for post-mortem. There was chaos in the family with the death of the young man.

Gulab Singh (26) son of Pransukh, resident of village Suratgarh, was missing from home late Wednesday evening. Late in the night, when the young man did not reach home, the relatives searched the

BMC converts Mumbai's Jaslok hospital into dedicated Covid-19 hospital

TN RAGHUNATHAN ■ MUMBAI

In a view of the alarming surge in the Covid-19 cases and high occupancy of patients in the Dedicated Covid Hospitals (DCHs), the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) on Thursday converted Mumbai's famed Jaslok Hospital in south Mumbai into a dedicated Covid-19 hospital.

Announcing this here, Mumbai Municipal Commissioner IS Chahal said: "Additional 250 Covid beds in JASLOK Hospital will come on BMC's online dashboard by Saturday morning under the need-based orders. Of the 250 beds, 40 will be ICU beds."

In two more major announcements aimed at increasing Covid-19 beds across the metropolis, the Mumbai civic chief said that

1500 additional beds (mostly oxygenated) will be added to NESCO Jumbo Covid-19 facility in seven days, while 30 more ICU beds were being added to Seven Hills Hospital At Andheri (East) in north Mumbai on Thursday.

"Given that the current surge in the pandemic cases and high occupancy of beds in DCHs - especially in private hospitals is very high, it is necessary to increase the number of beds with advance critical care in Mumbai," Chahal said. "Jaslok has served as a DCH hospital with advanced critical care since the beginning of the pandemic and has been treating the Covid19 excellently. In view of the current need, we have decided to convert the Jaslok Hospital into a dedicated Covid-19 hospital. It will no longer admit non-

Covid patients," the Mumbai civic chief said.

Following his decision to convert Jaslok Hospital into a dedicated Covid hospital, the BMC has instructed the hospital management to discharge all the existing 'stable' under-going treatment in special wards, to shift all 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.

Centre - better known as Jaslok Hospital - is private hospital founded by philanthropist Seth Lokoomal

Channai along with surgeon Shantilal Jamnadas Mehta. It came up in 1973, Jaslok Hospital shot to fame in late 1970s when Jayaprakash Narayan was admitted for treatment of kidney failure by the nephrologist M. K. Mani

BMC to SET UP 'STEP-DOWN' FACILITIES IN 4-5 STAR HOTELS TO ACCOMMODATE PATIENTS WHO NEED MINIMAL MEDICAL INTERVENTION

Mumbai: In its effort to make available Covid-19 beds to patients without much of a time lag, the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) and major hospitals in the metropolis have decided to set up step-down facilities in their neighbourhood to set up step-down facilities to accommodate patients who need minimal medical intervention.

Announcing the setting up of step-down facilities at four-five star hotels located in the vicinity of major hospitals in the metropolis, Mumbai Municipal Commissioner IS Chahal said: "We have observed that many beds in private hospitals are occupied by patients who do not require emergency medical intervention and can be effectively managed at isolation facilities such as CCC-2 or step-down facilities."

"If such patients are shifted to a step down

facility where minimum medical intervention is required, more number of oxygenated/ICU Ventilator beds can be made available to patients in need of such beds. These beds will be used to isolate and time and reduce the fatality rate," he said.

The Mumbai civic chief said that the BMC intended to set up step-down facilities with active participation of major private hospitals as an integral part of these hospitals.

Among the guidelines that the BMC has issued to facilitate linkages between the major hospitals and four star/live star hotels include identification of hotels, need for a proper understanding between private hospitals and hotels, hotels should be able spare at least 20 of its rooms and that the step-down facilities shall be an extension of private hospitals



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Walk the talk

Only lip service won't do, the *netas* must follow COVID-appropriate behaviour at all times

The pandemic has upended all the notions of life, as we knew it, from personal hygiene to societal behaviour to health to economy, but the one bulwark it has failed to burst through is the way our politicians think and act. There should be no double standards in dealing with the raging contagion but unfortunately this duality is a trait quintessential to our politicians. Though the Government is fastidiously dealing with the rising COVID-19 cases, it has literally turned a blind eye to the situation in the States currently undergoing polls, where the COVID-appropriate behaviour is a disregarded casualty. During their public rallies, road shows and campaigns, almost all political leaders and their minions overlook measures like wear-



ing masks, maintaining social distance and other protocols. For these power-hungry politicians, the vote of any individual is more important than his/her life — hence, they have scant concerns if the COVID protocols stand in the way of their votes. Despite repeated warnings by the Election Commission, the ground condition hasn't ameliorated. But there are good examples to be had from most of the politicians abroad who — discounting the likes of ousted US President Donald Trump and Brazil's strongman President Jair Bolsonaro — aren't dyed in the same wool. For instance, British Prime Minister Boris Johnson earlier this year

put off his India visit, where he was to be the chief guest at this year's Republic Day parade, because the number of COVID-19 infections in his home country shot up exponentially and he chose to stay with his constituents to alleviate their fears. Now, again, Johnson has decided to curtail his India trip later this month because of the virus situation in England.

Johnson said the rapid drop in the COVID-19 deaths in the UK was because of the three-month lockdown and not so much because of the vaccination. We don't know whether he has any empirical evidence to back his claim, but the fact remains that the condition in his country has steadily improved while India has consistently been climbing the chart of the worst-hit countries, lagging behind only the US at the number two position, for now. Our leaders, therefore, should be ashamed of facing the electorate, for whatever it is worth, rather than milling with them to garner votes. God forbid, but if they do contract the virus — as has become the lot of a host of them — they immediately quarantine themselves in the best of medical institutes and access the best of medical care, of course at the cost of the taxpayers' money. But what about the fate of the poor masses that they leave behind, afflicted? It is for several similar reasons that after almost winning the war against COVID, we are again pinned down on the mat; thanks partly to our insouciance and largely to our political leaders. All the festivals, including the celebration of democracy, can be cherished in the real sense only when the nation's people remain healthy and enjoy their basic right to life.



Preparations to showcase a heritage engine, on the eve of the 168th anniversary of the first train run in India, in Thane

Matters of faith

Can devotion alone, in the absence of precautions, protect one from deadly contagions like COVID-19?

Even as lakhs of devotees throng the Kumbh Mela venue every day in Haridwar, with practically non-existent observation of the COVID-appropriate behaviour including face masks and social distancing, Uttarakhand Chief Minister Tirath Singh Rawat kicked up another controversy by saying that the Coronavirus won't infect the pilgrims. The corollary to his logic: The devotees are "our own people" (read Indians) spread over a "vast open area" and "Ma Ganga's blessings will ensure the devotees' well-being". His reasoning flies in the face of all expert warnings and empirical evidence — the authorities detected 1,701 COVID-19 cases between April 10 and 14 at the congregation. Rawat's pearls of wisdom sprang forth when some sceptics dared to compare the largest human gathering in India to the Jamaat at the Nizamuddin Markaz, which was tainted in April last year as the "hotspot" and "epicentre" of the COVID-19 cases in Delhi and across India. He said the Kumbh was different because the Tablighi event was organised in a small enclosure, with several overseas attendees and when the Markaz was held, neither was there much awareness about Corona nor were any guidelines.

Coming from a Chief Minister who had tested positive for the viral infection on March 22 before winning the battle against it in early April, it seems that some people, and unsurprisingly the politicians, have so thick a skin that they don't learn any lessons from even personal experiences. India is currently being battered by a rapidly spreading second wave of the pernicious virus and here we are, throwing all sense and caution to the winds amid a sea of humans. One shudders to think of what may happen at the Kumbh if the virus spreads like wildfire and when these lakhs of asymptomatic devotees head back to their homes all across India and unknowingly become the delivery agents of the contagion. Experts have already warned that such a large gathering in the midst of a raging pandemic can prove to be catastrophic and severely impede India's fight against the deadly disease that has claimed millions of lives globally. Yes, Mr Chief Minister, the matters of faith can't and shouldn't be ignored but can these be subservient to the right to life and the joys of good health? That really is the question.

Socio-economic 2021

As a nation, we must tear down all the obstacles that impede the participation of women in the economy, even those of the mind

Along expected lines, the post-COVID economic data point to a widening of three pre-existing divides: The gender divide, increasing asymmetries between the incomes of the rich and the poor, and an increasing rural-urban digital divide. As each of these inequalities are subjects that need targeted policy interventions, the focus in this post is on the World Economic Forum's *Global Gender Report 2021*, wherein India has slipped to the 112th ranking among 153 countries.

India, home to 0.65 billion women, has widened its gender gap from 66.8 per cent a year ago to 62.5 per cent this year. The decline is seen on multiple sub-index parameters, like the labour force participation falling from 24.8 per cent to 22.3 per cent; the share of women in senior managerial positions being as low as 14.6 per cent; estimated earnings being one-fifth of men; the political empowerment index has regressed by 13 per cent where in ministerial berths for women have declined from 23.1 per cent in 2019 to 9.1 per cent.

Gender equality is a basic human right enshrined in our Constitution and its achievement has multiplier socio-economic benefits. India is committed to the timelines of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) set by the United Nations which place gender parity at the heart of bringing a gender perspective to all development initiatives. However, the COVID-triggered economic stress will defer the timelines for achieving the SDGs by 2030. The post-pandemic policy initiatives require increased gender-specific budgeting and recovery strategies: The Modi Government's flagship schemes that positively impacted women during the first term are an outcome of closely aligning with the Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB) norms of the 'UN Women'. The GRB is a globally followed "best practice" among nations which allocates fiscal expenditure with specific gender perspectives. Though the *Magna*



Carta of Women (1999)

required that the Governments allocate at least five per cent of the GDP to address gender issues, the amount allocated towards women's welfare has stagnated in recent years. The Union Government releases the 'Gender Budgeting Statements' consisting of two parts. The first part reflects women-specific schemes in which 100 per cent allocation is only for women. The second part reflects pro-women schemes in which 30 per cent of the allocation is for women.

In the recent years, while some schemes have achieved transversal benefits like the Jan Dhan Yojana, DBT and MNREGA, specific gender-targeted schemes have made significant improvements in the socio-economic living conditions of women. However, the funds allocated for the GRB are limited to less than five per cent of the public expenditure, and shrink to about one per cent of the GDP making it necessary to significantly increase these budgetary outlays. The NITI Aayog estimates that India will have to increase its gender-specific spend by an additional 6.2 per cent to comply with the SDG targets. Upskilling women to

DATA POINT TO THE FACT THAT THE GIG WORK MODEL HAS FOUND A GROWING TRACTION. A WHOPPING 78 LAKH WOMEN WHO HAD EARLIER DROPPED OFF FROM WORK FOR REASONS LIKE CHILD CARE, HAVE SOUGHT TO REVIVE THEIR CAREERS

adapt to the changing nature of jobs: The job market has undergone a tectonic shift since COVID, so the nine-to-five model is no longer the future. Deloitte's research shows that economic contraction is nudging companies towards hiring experienced freelancers.

Data point to the fact that this gig work model has found a growing traction, with 78 lakh women who had earlier dropped off from work have sought to revive their careers as the WFH concept has opened the floodgates for those who hold professional degrees combined with robust work experience. Therefore, while automation will displace many jobs, it will also create 90 million flexi-jobs in the next 10 years, according to the Boston Consulting Group.

Second, as self-employment and micro-entrepreneurship is expected to grow at an annual rate of 17 per cent and projected to reach \$455 billion by 2023, State and cooperative banks must readjust their models to disburse loans at lower rates for priority sector lending to women because the data show that women have stronger saving habits and lower non-performing loans than men. As most women lack collateral and

credit history to access formal lending, we need innovative ways to build credit history. How much has gender inequality stunted India's economic progress? The lack of equal ownership of land, access to formal credit, the unfamiliarity of women with the latest technologies, high educational dropout rates as well as inequitable household and unpaid workload distribution have impeded Indian women's economic prosperity.

Gender inequality has, therefore, translated enormous national capital losses for India. The economic impact of achieving optimum levels of gender equality in India is estimated to be \$700 billion of the added GDP by the next 10 years, according to the Boston Consulting Group.

There is clear evidence: "When women do better, economies do better." That means, translated into more national capital losses for India. The economic impact of achieving optimum levels of gender equality in India is estimated to be \$700 billion of the added GDP by the next 10 years, according to the Boston Consulting Group. (The writer is an author, columnist and Chairperson, NCFIL, at NITI Aayog. The views expressed are personal).

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Respect our jawans



The Cooch Behar violence may or may not have been fomented by the TMC but West Bengal Chief Minister and party chief Mamata Banerjee has created a flutter by accusing the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) of wrongdoing — that the security force intentionally shot down four people in her serious allegation. Over and above, she has put the blame at the doorstep of the BJP and Home Minister Amit Shah by charging him with "genocide".

The CISF personnel were apparently targeted by a rampaging mob of over 500 men,

incensed by a rumour that a boy of theirs was shot dead by the police, so goes the common version. It is said that when things went out of control, the CISF men fired at the mob. A very unfortunate incident that should not have taken place in the first instance if everybody had a good head on their shoulders. Here, neither the mob nor the police can be blamed. On the other hand, Shah has accused Mamata of provoking the people. Caught between the two political bigwigs are the CISF and the Election Commission (EC). It is a mockery of democracy that the constitutional bodies and paramilitary forces are ridiculed and berated by politicians every now and then. Our paramilitary personnel are steadfast on their duties but our politicians have scant respect for them. Let us face the truth — these entities work against all odds. The security forces have a thankless job — no encomiums for doing a thing right. But one mistake, even if inadvertent, can turn things topsy-turvy. Ditto with the EC.

Ganapathi Bhat | Kolkata

aging India, making the lives of poor, daily-wagers and migrant labourers very difficult. One of the main reasons for the fast spread of the pandemic is the elections being held in five States where COVID protocols are not being adhered to by the public or leaders.

Adding to the woes are the large congregations of people at religious events and places. It is advisable that after the completion of elections there should be no more elections, to local bodies or other bodies as these will only aggravate the situation. We all must act responsibly at this stage; else we will lose our battle against Coronavirus. The cases are rising exorbitantly and taking precaution is the only thing that is in our hands. CR Ramani | Mumbai

Dennis Fitzgerald | Australia

STICK TO COVID PROTOCOL

Sir — The second wave of COVID-19 is rav-

SOUND BITE

The Governors can play an important role with the involvement of the Red Cross volunteers and others in creating awareness among the people on the COVID-appropriate behaviour.

Prime Minister — Narendra Modi

Over the past two years, we've been reducing our military presence in Afghanistan from a high of over 1,500 personnel to around 80 personnel currently.

Australian Prime Minister — Scott Morrison

Every day you go through your own journey of asking questions to yourself. There are your own challenges and weaknesses. You have to overpower them.

Actor — Fatima Sana Shaikh

It's nice to have batters behind you, you have the freedom with AB to come and it's a very similar role I have in the Australian cricket team.

Cricketer — Glenn Maxwell

There is no test, no bed in hospitals, no ventilators, no oxygen, no vaccine, bus ussar ka dhong hai (a festive pretence). PM cares

Congress leader — Rahul Gandhi

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

FIRST COLUMN

AN INVESTMENT FOR PEACE

It is exactly in a moment of crisis that art consoles us with hope and reminds us that we are not alone



SNEHA GAUTAM

Art can serve as an excellent means of self-expression. Curating an art collection that reflects one's personality and taste is indeed an extremely fulfilling experience. When one looks at an artwork from a vantage point, beyond its financial aspect, s/he tends to delve deeper and reflect upon its inherent attributes of mystery and philosophy. This, in turn, will help achieve further clarity and give one the confidence to keep adding art works to one's collection. The World Art Day is observed on April 15 to make people realise that one of the most important roles of art is its ability to trigger introspection and the mirror it holds up to society at any given point of time. Acquiring and being in the presence of art is also about breaking one's perception and engaging with the work of visionary artists. The art one chooses to display at home or the workplace will most likely be a topic of discussion, so it makes sense to carefully pick and select the work that resonates with one's mind and aligns with one's philosophical ethos. The pandemic and the subsequent lockdown also have a positive side when looked at from the aspect of being in the presence of art and the effectiveness of creative expression in our daily lives.



Before the pandemic brought most of the world to a standstill, the World Health Organisation had published a report enlisting the various beneficial effects of art on the health and well-being of individuals. This report encouraged many firms to use art as a medium to boost the morale of their employees during the pandemic. With movements and social interactions largely restricted, art gave countless people a way to look inwards and thus proved to be a means of cathartic relief and helped people in staying optimistic during these tumultuous times. It is exactly in a moment of crisis that art consoles us with hope and reminds us that we are not alone. It's a proven fact that looking at art triggers the human brain to release the feel-good hormone, Dopamine, and initiates a chemical reaction within that is similar to the feeling of euphoria. Hence, one can easily imagine the far-reaching and therapeutic effects of art. Carefully, surrounding oneself with hand-picked creations can play a deciding role in influencing one's mood and have a calming effect. It is widely known that colours affect us and certain hues are largely associated with catalysing the onset of different moods. Thus, inevitably, the colour composition of an artwork a person selects will affect him/her. The advantages of being around art are so well-established that a complete art therapy field has been recognised. It helps individuals explore their creative side, arm their perceptions with the thought of the artists, process and present their ideas in a unique way. The fact that museums display artworks as a visual treat for visitors reflects the fact that Governments have recognised these benefits and thus they promote art. People invest good sums in masterpieces made by various renowned artists so as to broaden their horizons and increase their joy.

If these reasons are not convincing enough for someone to actively collect art work, then the originality factor would definitely inspire him/her to do so. This way, one can be assured that the artwork she has decided to collect or which is already in one's possession will be uniquely his or hers. Another important aspect while collecting art is the connections one can forge within the art world with like-minded people. Collecting artwork is a passion for many and certainly adds value to one's life. Currently, technology has definitely eased how enthusiasts can learn and explore the techniques of seminal artists from the past and contemporary ones, too. Virtual exhibitions and online auctions are also tools that can help one make decisions regarding acquiring artwork that will add a soothing presence to one's mental space.

(The writer is vice-president, AstaGuru. The views expressed are personal.)

Engineering a better future for humankind

In this age of unprecedented technological revolution, genetic engineering is fast occupying the centre stage



BKP SINHA

SOMNATH PAI

In this age of unprecedented technological revolution, genetic engineering is fast occupying the centre stage. Susan Hockfield, a Professor of Neuroscience at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), says that virus-powered batteries, protein-based water filters, cancer-detecting nanoparticles, mind-reading bionic limbs, computer-engineered crops, and so on, have the potential to overcome some of the greatest humanitarian, medical and environmental challenges of our time. These are going to be next generation products that have the potential to reshape our lives. For instance, the discovery of products like aquaporin to purify water for our use that functions like a parking lot that permits only cars identified with a specific transponder to enter, is nature's marvel. All these frontier technologies have inputs of genetic engineering.

Genetic engineering has come a long way since 1971, when two scientists, Berg and Jackson, created the first molecules of a recombinant DNA. Many milestones have been accomplished since then to make genetic engineering almost child's play in the hands of a molecular biologist. But gene therapy, which genetic engineering promised, has been fraught with pitfalls despite a multitude of methodologies. As a result, inherited disorders resulting from aberrations in one's genes could not be treated by replacing or correcting a faulty gene. Correcting the gene in its specific location was an issue and when this was overcome by employing viruses, our immune system would play the spoilsport apart from other issues that sprang up. Ever since the failure of the Jesse Gelsinger trial for the cure of a rare metabolic disorder called ornithine transcarbamylase deficiency syndrome, (OTCD) in 1998, gene therapy was left gasping for breath amid stringent regulations. This is where a serendipitous observation of bacteria having the ability to specifically target the DNA of viruses to inactivate the invader, provided the breakthrough to overcome many of the pitfalls of the earlier methodologies.

CRISPR and GENE editing: CRISPR technology is a simple yet powerful tool for editing genomes. It allows researchers to easily alter DNA sequences and modify gene function. Its many potential applications include correcting genetic defects, treating and preventing the spread of diseases and improving crops. The CRISPR-Cas9 can do the job easily and precisely as CRISPR is a part of the bacterial immune system and germs, too, can get sick from viruses. Bacteria fight them by chopping their DNA or RNA with CRISPR sequences and then remember them by pasting their DNA bits into their own genome, allowing to ward off any future infections. These genetic scissors, whose use for targeted modification of genomic DNA was perfected by Jennifer Doudna and Emmanuelle Charpentier, have given a new life to genetic engineering and gene therapy. Both these scientists were the recipients of the Nobel Prize in Chemistry in 2020.

The use of CRISPR-Cas9: Many diseases that were incurable through traditional means can now be treated easily, thanks to genetic engineering. There are ongoing clinical trials using



APART FROM MEDICAL APPLICATIONS, IT IS BEING USED TO GENETICALLY MODIFYING CROPS TO MAKE THEM RESISTANT TO VIRUSES, MAKE LEANER PIGS, HELP YEAST MAKE BETTER BEER, MAKE MOSQUITOES INFERTILE AND SO ON. IT IS ALSO POSSIBLE TO RECREATE AN EXTINCT SPECIES, SO A JURASSIC PARK COULD BE A REALITY IN THE FUTURE

Sinha is a former IFS officer and Pai is Assistant Professor, Amity Institute of Virology & Immunology. The views expressed are personal.



CRISPR-based approaches to treat monogenic inherited diseases such as sickle cell anemia, childhood blindness and so on. It holds the promise to treat many other diseases such as cancer, autoimmune disorders and polygenic genetic disorders in future.

Apart from medical applications, it is being used to genetically modifying crops to make them resistant to viruses, make leaner pigs, help yeast make better beer, make mosquitoes infertile and so on. It is also possible to recreate an extinct species, so a 'Jurassic Park' could actually be a reality in the future.

Research is also underway for the use of CRISPR gene editing that could make us less vulnerable to pandemics, cancer, Alzheimer's and other diseases. Mammals have a gene known as p53 that encodes the proteins that suppress the growth of cancerous tumours. Humans and most other mammals have only one copy of this gene, whereas elephants have 20 copies, and they almost never get cancer. Hence, research is ongoing to double this gene in human beings.

Up till 2020, over a dozen clinical trials were underway for a disease called acute myeloid leukaemia, super-high cholesterol and baldness. The thrust of the ongoing research is to study how bacteria developed an immune response to ward off new viruses.

Coronavirus: COVID-19 jabs, like many modern vaccines, have

also gained from the advancements in genetic engineering.

Bits of the SARS-CoV2 genes have been pasted onto the adenoviral DNA backbone, some of whose own genes have been knocked off to accommodate the foreign gene. When this vaccine is delivered, the adenovirus carrying the SARS-CoV2 will enter the human cell, it will pretend that it produces the SARS-CoV2 protein but will itself be unable to replicate and make a person sick. This creates a temporary SARS-CoV2 protein factory in our bodies to prime our immune system and prepare it to tackle any infection with the real SARS-CoV2 virus.

Hopes and pitfalls: Ever since Herbert Boyer and Stanley Cohen patented the recombinant DNA technology that they developed in 1972, and Boyer co-founded Genentech, the world's first biotechnology company in 1976, genetic engineering has been the subject of intense debate beyond the scientific arena, involving lawyers, journalists, politicians and the public at large.

Since then, genetic engineering has come through the moral issue of man playing God, with a possibility to determine the fate of the evolution of all species on planet Earth. It is generally agreed that genetically engineered organisms will not be released into the environment. Many countries, including India, have put in place ethical committees at various levels

that oversee and approve research that involves the use of genetic engineering. Even routine laboratory experiments which only aim to demonstrate cloning experiments to students in biology laboratories also need mandatory approvals of the institutional ethical committees or relevant boards. Though there are already products of genetic engineering in the market like vaccines, pest-resistant crops and genetically-engineered mosquitoes, debate continues on the ethical and moral issues surrounding genetic engineering and gene therapy. Thankfully, its fruits are slowly blossoming for larger public good.

Fortunately for humankind, in 2015 at the NAPA international conference, a consensus quickly developed that it would be bad to completely ban germ line gene editing.

The CRISPR inventor, Jennifer Doudna, herself summed it up: "We wanted the scientific community to hit the pause button until the social, ethical, ecological and philosophical implications of germ line editing could be properly and thoroughly discussed ideally at the global level."

It was concluded at the conference that though it was too early to do germ line editing safely, but someday it would happen and the goal should be to provide prudent guidelines. This holds the key to the future of this marvelous invention.

POINT COUNTER POINT

THE POOR PEOPLE OF BANGLADESH COME TO INDIA AS EVEN NOW THEY DO NOT GET ENOUGH TO EAT IN THEIR OWN COUNTRY.
—UNION HOME MINISTER
AMIT SHAH



I WOULD SAY THAT HIS KNOWLEDGE ABOUT BANGLADESH IS LIMITED. NOBODY DIES OF HUNGER IN OUR COUNTRY.
—BANGLADESH FOREIGN MINISTER
AK ABDUL MOMEN

Arrest the COVID wave as lockdown is not an option

Any congregation, be it election rallies, religious or social gatherings, must be immediately banned if the pandemic is to be controlled

There is a familiar sense of dread in the air and a feeling of *déjà vu*. That is because, what we are witnessing right now is a rerun of last year and at vastly alarming proportions than before. The new strain of the Coronavirus is creating havoc across the country and straining the existing healthcare system once again.



KUMARDEEP BANERJEE

Railway stations and bus depots are getting packed once again with migrant workers trying to catch a public transport back home. Once again, we can see motley groups of migrant workers slowly trudging back home with all their worldly belongings on their drooping shoulders. Thankfully, this time the exodus on foot does not seem to be as major as the last time because the trains and buses are still running.

The writer is a policy analyst. The views expressed are personal.

down are constantly being shared by State-level Ministers, even as the Centre is maintaining that localised containment is the best solution to effectively bring the pandemic under control.

The only fact emerging from this second wave sweeping the nation is that India has failed to take lessons from the total lockdown and the first COVID wave that hit it last year. As the experts rightly point out, somewhere towards the beginning of this year, when the active cases across the country started to come down drastically, the Government and citizens alike, threw caution to the winds. The best example of this was the number of weddings which took place in the last couple of months or the long queues outside restaurants for a seat at the table. People, tired of being stuck in the house for almost

a year, forgot that masks and social distancing are going to be a part of our everyday existence for a long time to come. From weekly bazaars to shopping malls or airports, not to forget the recent festival of Holi and the Maha Kumbh in Uttarakhand, everywhere there is a massive crowd to be seen. It was only a matter of time before the contagion started spreading exponentially. This explosion of cases that we are witnessing now was imminent and new studies suggest that the virus strain is much more infectious, even though the mortality rate could be lower.

What, therefore, needs to be done before India shuts down again for business and a year of irreparable economic damage is registered? First, as the Prime Minister has been saying, "track, trace and isolate." India, in the last two



weeks, has again got back to ramping up its testing infrastructure to identify the patients. However, the strategy should not have been discarded or taken lightly in the first instance. It took a while to set up centres testing for COVID across the country and there were instances of mandatory negative reports before anyone was allowed free movement across borders. The creation of micro-containment zones to stop the spread of infections was also an

effective tool, thereby leaving the larger area open for economic activities. It is time to revisit these lessons learnt last year.

Any congregation, be it election rallies, religious or social gatherings, must be immediately banned if the pandemic is to be controlled in any manner. It is a mockery of the citizens' patience and persistence if local lockdowns are imposed in some cities or districts thereby curtailing free movement, while thousands congregate to celebrate the festival of democracy, or mammoth religious events like the Kumbh Mela. There has to be political will cutting across party lines to immediately priorities public health and prevent the spread of the contagion by voluntarily calling off any public rallies in the remaining phases of elections. The migrants have already

started to trickle back into their towns and villages from the big cities, bringing with them unknown variants of the virus. Any mass spread of the pandemic in rural belts and smaller towns may cripple the backbone of India. Any amount of night curfew or complete lockdown may not be able to contain the spread of the disease if a sizeable chunk gets infected.

India has achieved a great feat by vaccinating over 10 crore people in 86 days since the exercise began. However, vaccine shortages are being reported from across the country. First the Central Government should ensure that all States, down to the last district, get the appropriate number of vaccines and are prepared to face any life-threatening conditions due to the jab. It is an established fact now that the new variant of the

virus may make the vaccine less effective even though the mortality rates are still within control. India was one of the largest suppliers of vaccines to the world and it is time the focus shifts to domestic use. As we read this, there are five more vaccines awaiting the Government's nod in order to be introduced into the market. Speedy approval and speedier delivery of the Sputnik V vaccine in India could go a long way in saving lives. The Government needs to rethink its vaccine strategy and provide financial support to private players to ramp up production. Plus, based on vaccine availability they should allow every willing person to start taking the jab. All the facets of this deadly disease are still unknown, however, last year's knowledge and the preventive shield of the vaccine are always reliable options.

HAVE A SAFE JOURNEY

Urgent travel plans amid the pandemic? Here are a few things to keep in mind while booking your tickets

India is a land of varied culture and one of the best ways to explore its beauty is by experiencing a train ride. As soon as you enter a train station, you are greeted by the site of multiple vendors selling their products, different types of trains entering and leaving the platforms and people running back & forth to drop/receive their relatives. To match the needs of modern times, trains in India are equipped with CCTV cameras, biotickets and internet connectivity, ensuring the highest level of comfort to passengers. Though all this may excite you to hop on the train right away, much of the train travel experience has changed due to COVID-19.

With the pandemic not willing to take a beating, Indian Railways had to come up with a certain set of rules to promote social distancing and keep a check on the spread of infection. Because of this, the glam and charm of the train journeys are not what they used to be. That means a ban on entry of hawkers selling food, fewer pit-stops in between to take a joy ride, etc, are the new normal. Even after knowing all this, if you have urgent travel plans and have chosen 'train' as your medium for the ride, there are a few things you need to do or know while booking your ticket.

PLAN YOUR TRAVEL AHEAD OF TIME

COVID is not a hoax and shouldn't be considered otherwise. If you wish to stay at a hotel in your chosen destination, you should scan through the COVID protocols and go with the safest option. It's also recommended to go for off-season dates (weekdays) to avoid mixing with the heavy crowd. Further, you should map the places you wish to visit and be prepared to tackle the infection like a champ.

NO MORE 'UNRESERVED TRAVEL' FOR YOU

To avoid overcrowded trains and minimise the spread of infection, trains no longer allow unreserved

travel. Reserved bookings are the only way to board the trains without security saying 'no entry' to your face. So, make sure you have a confirmed train ticket to travel to your destination.

GO THROUGH THE COVID PROTOCOLS

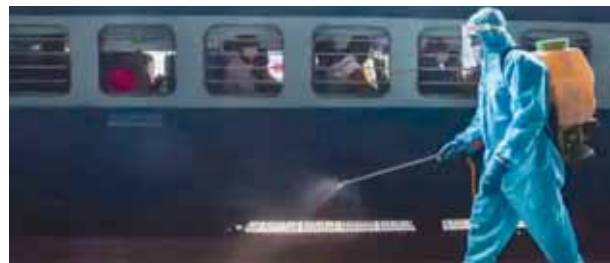
To ensure the safety of its citizens and passengers, several state governments have updated their COVID protocols. For instance, the Tamil Nadu government has made it mandatory for train passengers from several Indian territories to register online a few days before coming to the state. You should check all the guidelines listed by your chosen destination to avoid breaking any rules and spoiling your journey.

SHARE YOUR COMPLETE ADDRESS

Earlier, there was no need to share your address details while booking train tickets. But now with COVID hovering over our heads, the risk of an outbreak/new red zone is quite imminent, even on trains. So, passengers have to provide their correct and complete address details to the Indian Railways so that they can trace them when needed.

GET YOUR RT-PCR TEST DONE

As more and more COVID+ cases surround our country, Indian Railways have requested passengers to get their RT-PCR tests done within 72-96 hours of boarding the train, which guarantees that a person is safe to travel (after getting a negative result), without posing a health risk to other passengers. The listed timeline varies from one Indian state to another. It's recommended that a passenger gets familiar with the rules laid by the chosen destination to avoid any trouble. The COVID pandemic has indeed introduced a few roadblocks in the train travel industry. But as we try to overcome these and prepare for a post-COVID world, passengers have to



carefully follow the rules laid down by the government. So, whether you are travelling for work or pleasure, just

make sure to remember the above details while booking your train ticket to experience a safe journey ahead.

(The writer, Dinesh Kumar Kohla, is the co-founder and CEO of Confirmit.)



'Busy exploring shades of myself'

Actor KRITI SANON shares that no set or film is like the other

Kriti Sanon is the busiest bee of tinsel town currently with more than six films in her kitty. What makes these even more interesting is the range of her films in terms of their genres. From a horror comedy to an action film, the actor will be seen leading multiple genre films. Talking about having so many different genres in her lineup Kriti says, "My work is so exciting because no set, no film is like the other. Doing such varied genres is helping me explore different shades of myself as an actor."

She adds, "From *Bhediya* being a horror comedy to action in *Ganpath*, mythology in *Adipurush* and an entertainer like *Bachchan Pandey*, I have many genres that I am working on right now which makes all the work even more exciting and interesting. It does also keep me on my toes."

Sanon has a bag of big budget films in her lineup for which she has been shooting non-stop for a while with all safety measures being taken as per government guidelines. She has been shooting in Arunachal Pradesh for *Bhediya* with Varun Dhawan, which is a horror comedy.

She will be seen playing Sita in Om Raut's mythological drama *Adipurush* with Prabhas. She has also signed an entertainer film *Bachchan Pandey* with Akshay Kumar and the drama - *Mimi*, which will star her as the solo lead. The actor also has a quirky comedy, *Hum Do Hamare Do* with Rajkummar Rao and her first action film, *Ganpath*.

'I am proud'

VIN DIESEL opens up about what makes his *Fast & Furious* franchise so popular globally. He says that people feel they've grown up with the saga

"I think the greatest difference is when the first film came out, you had no idea who these characters were. You had no idea what world you were entering when you came into the theatres to see this movie. Now, people feel that they have grown up with this saga. People feel like this is their franchise," said he.

Fast & Furious 9: The Fast Saga also stars John Cena, Michelle Rodriguez and Dwayne Johnson. The film is directed by Justin Lin. Diesel stressed that each time the makers embark on a new chapter they always thought of how to reach higher.

"How do we dazzle the audience even more? As John (Cena) articulated these are characters that are very familiar to the moviegoers, and the moviegoer has their own relationship with this family of characters that live in the saga. I will just say there is a familiarity," said Diesel.

He added: "I remember when the cast members used to say the release of *Fast And Furious* is like a holiday the world expects to see it every two years."

Fast & Furious 9 is the penultimate film in the franchise, and the next part will be done in two films. As of now, it has been decided the two-



part tenth film would wrap up the series.

"When my daughter heard that ten would be the last, broken into two films, she started crying and I can't tell you how bad I felt. I tried to console her but she just didn't want to hear that this world saga could finally have a finale," Diesel, whose real name is Mark Sinclair, said.

He finds it incredible that the fans can finally have a look at the ninth installment. He said: "It feels incredible to be a part of something that will bring the world together again. There is something I think we as society never anticipated we'd be losing by not being able to be entertained together as a community."

"There is something special that happens when people see *Fast And Furious* in a packed audience with your family, friends and your loved ones, and you can feel the rumble of excitement and you can feel the emotions in the theatre building," he said.

"To be a part of the return to the theatrical experience is something so right, and I feel so proud of. To do it with my family that has been doing it for two decades is a dream come true," he concluded.

—JANS



Recently, I got my hands on the refreshed BMW 6-series, it takes this very nice sportback sedan to another level of refinement. Driving it in the 630i M Sport trim is extremely engaging. I have always liked BMW's two-litre turbocharged petrol engine with the 301 mm and 250 horsepower. This particular one, running the longer-wheelbase variant of the 5-series platform, will go up against the recently refreshed E-Class sedan from Mercedes-Benz. Honestly, in this segment, the Mercedes wins out, not because it is the better vehicle but because of the badge value. The E-Class is the standard luxury sedan of choice for the companies and governments alike. It is the car, once you hit a certain age, that you want to be seen in.

But, as the title of this piece suggests, I have a preference for BMW's. While I am not alone among automotive writers here because other than a few, dastardly misses with exterior design, and they are all very engaging to drive, and we will not get into the mad-cap super-sedans that all the German companies put out. But sitting behind the wheel of the 6-series, I realised why I really enjoy driving a BMW even bumper-to-bumper traffic in the city. I love BMW's 'iDrive' system, and one major reason is because it has been most consistent in terms of functionality among all the luxury car manufacturers. I experienced this system over a decade ago, there has been a consistency to the way it functions.

There has been no sudden dramatic change between generations of the iDrive system. Although it has come a long way from the very basic system that I first experienced on the E65 7-



Why I like BMWs

More than performance, BMW has always been on the ball when it comes to their infotainment system — the fabled iDrive

series years ago, the fact that the click-wheel, despite touchpads and touchscreens being added over the years, and the button layout on the centre console added in the third iteration of the system, remain the same. Of all the infotainment and car control systems of any manufacturer, I can find my way around the iDrive system just by feel. While it was called 'iDrive' because the 'i' was then in vogue, thanks to Apple, I must admit that the system, like iOS, has evolved without drama over the years.

On top of that, BMW's integration with iOS is among the most comprehensive of any carmaker and over the years, they have taken out the kinks. For example, BMW was the first carmaker to have wireless connectivity for Apple CarPlay. And initially working one's way through the menus to connect an iPhone through CarPlay could take a reasonable amount of time even if you knew your way around the system. On cars like the 6-series that run the eighth-generation iDrive system, it takes under 30 seconds. Honestly for the life of me I do not understand why other luxury carmakers haven't done wireless connectivity as yet, particularly since every new iPhone or even mid-

spec Chinese Android phone has wireless inductive charging and all cars come with a wireless charging bay.

There are many good reasons to choose a BMW, after all, they are great to drive like this 630i is. And while the large kidney grilles on some of the latest cars such as the X7 and the forthcoming 4-series may not be to your aesthetic choices (they do look better in real life than on the wide-angle handset photos), BMW's iDrive system is strangely enough, becoming a top reason to choose the car, because just like the driving, it really does bring a smile to your face.

TRENDBLAZER

DON'T BELIEVE IN A B&W WORLD: VIDYA

Actor VIDYA BALAN shared a monochrome picture on social media, saying she does not believe in a black and white world except for a picture.

Vidya posted the picture on Instagram, where she is seen sitting on a chair dressed in a black outfit. She completed her look by leaving her long hair open with a middle parting.

"I don't believe in a black and white world, except for a picture maybe," she wrote as the caption.

fairtalk

FATIMA SANA



"Every day you go through your own journey of asking questions to yourself. There are your own challenges and weaknesses. You have to overpower and overcome them. You'd cross those and then you have more challenges and insecurities. That is a constant journey. Everyday, there is a new mindset."

dailytalk

URVASHI RAUTELA



"India is a diverse nation and lately many festivals of different cultures and religions happened to be on the same day. Some parts of the country celebrated Ugadi, while others had Navratri. But amid all the festivals, I request everyone to be safe and follow all the precautions to avoid COVID-19."

JLO AND ALEX RODRIGUEZ BREAK UP

Singer JENNIFER LOPEZ and baseball star ALEX RODRIGUEZ have officially ended their relationship. The two called off their engagement.

"We have realised we are better as friends and look forward to remaining so. We will continue to work together and support each other on our shared businesses and projects," they jointly said in the statement.

They said they "wish the best for each other and one another's children."



TIME TO DETOX

Fasting is an effective way to get rid of accumulated toxins from the body. AISHWARYA DWIVEDI shares a few tried and tested weight loss techniques which you can try this Navratri

Be it any religion or any ritual, they always have a logic behind it. Navratri usually falls on the time of season change, when our immunity is low and we are most likely to fall sick. This time is best for detox and fasting is an effective way to get rid of accumulated toxins from the body and mind. So here are a few tried and tested weight loss and detox technique, which you can try this Navratri.

STAY HYDRATED

To achieve a healthy weight loss, keeping yourself hydrated is must. Also, water plays a key role in suppressing your appetite. One must drink at least three to four litres of water. This really works if you are trying to lose fat off your belly. Other ways to stay hydrated during Navratri is to have coconut water, more of water-based vegetables and fruits like muskmelon, watermelon, cucumber, etc.

One interesting recipe you can try is trying the latest trend: Nature's natural cereal. In a bowl, combine all your favourite fruits like watermelon, papaya,



pineapple, pomegranate, grapes and add coconut water into it. Top with ice and chia seeds (optional). Avoid including bananas and mangos.

Another drink which can be included is by taking one bowl of your favourite fruit like strawberry, watermelon, mango with one bowl of ice and half bowl of milk, water or yoghurt whichever is appropriate as per the fruit and making a slush or frappe. Sounds tempting, isn't it?

Tip: Avoid packaged fruit juice or coconut water as they contain sugar. Try opting for natural things.

DON'T STARVE OR SKIP MEALS

Most people tend to skip meals expecting a faster result. But this lowers metabolism and hampers your digestive system in the longer run. One must have three to four balanced meals even during Navratri. Fruits like apple, watermelons,

dry fruits like almonds and raisins, roasted foxnuts are excellent snacks. Eat them whenever you feel hungry. Cucumber and yoghurt, especially homemade, is a great snacking option as well.

EAT SAGO (SABUDANA) KHICHADI
Sago (*sabudana*) is a rich source of carbohydrates and calories, but if taken in right and small quantity, it is very wholesome, provides energy, prevents digestion issues and aids muscle growth. So here is one such delicious recipe of *sabudana khichadi*:

INGREDIENTS

- ▢ *Sabudana* (soaked overnight): 100 gm
- ▢ Peanut: 20 gm
- ▢ Green chillies (chopped): 3-4
- ▢ Coriander (chopped): 20 gm
- ▢ Red chilli as per taste (optional)
- ▢ Rock salt as per taste
- ▢ *Desi* ghee: 1-2 tsp

METHOD

- ▢ In a non-stick pan, heat *desi* ghee.
- ▢ Now shallow fry peanuts until crispy and keep them aside in a bowl.
- ▢ In the same ghee, now add chopped green chillies and saute for one to two minutes.
- ▢ Now add *sabudana* (washed three to four times after being soaked overnight or minimum for three hours.)
- ▢ Saute the *sabudana* for three to five minutes on low flame, garnish with chopped coriander and peanuts.
- ▢ Add rock salt as per taste. You can also add red chillies as per taste.
- ▢ Finally after cooking for five to seven minutes on low flame, garnish with chopped coriander and peanuts.
- ▢ Serve with cucumber salad and fresh yoghurt.

AVOID SUGAR

The most important thing while considering detox or weight loss is to complete-



ly skip sugar. Honey or jaggery can be used as a substitute when required. Try to avoid sweets as much as possible. So think twice before having lot of *prasad*.

TRY SAMAK RICE AND BOTTLE GOURD KHICHADI

Barnyard millet or *samak* grain is a good source of protein, carbohydrate, fiber and micronutrients (iron and zinc). It also has high content of fibre which helps to keep the body feeling full. This stops the urge to consume more food and avoiding high calorie intake. Bottle gourd aids weight loss, helps in digestion and reduces stress. So here is a delicious one pot recipe combining these powerful ingredients to make a scrumptious meal.

INGREDIENTS

- ▢ Bottle gourd (small): 1
- ▢ *Samak* rice: 1 cup
- ▢ *Desi* ghee: 1tbsp

- ▢ Water: 5-6 cups
- ▢ Green chilli: 4-5
- ▢ Rock salt and red chilli powder as per taste
- ▢ Coriander

METHOD

- ▢ In a pressure cooker, add *desi* ghee.
- ▢ After ghee heats up, add chopped bottle gourd, green chillies and cook on a medium flame until soft for five to seven minutes approximately.
- ▢ Now add salt and red chilli as per taste.
- ▢ After bottle gourd turns soft, wash *samak* rice and add. Saute for two to three minutes.
- ▢ Now add lukewarm water and garnish with coriander.
- ▢ Pressure cook until one whistle.
- ▢ Serve with cucumber and *raita*.

Try these above tips and see some good results.
(The writer is the food and lifestyle creator at Trell.)



Home-made pastries are becoming a new trend in India. It has become a form of expression, a stress relief exercise and most importantly a display of skills. As a beginner, whether you're trying to treat your loved ones after dinner or you want to impress your friends on social media, you can't afford to go wrong with a pretty cake.

Before you decide to go into a kitchen, start with the list of baking tools you must have. We'll help you set up a baking kit for beginners. For those who already own these tools, the list may provide motivation that you need to prepare the yummiest pastries or cakes. Building your essential baking toolbox starts here:

PASTRY BRUSH

An electric stand mixer is important and has uses more than you can realise. It can be used to grease a pan before pouring cake in it, to coat dough with melted butter or egg wash or to paint milk on the top of pie crust. This is a must-have.

MEASURING CUPS

Baking is all about accuracy, so having a full set of measuring cups and spoons is a must. One

Bakers gonna bake

Whether you're trying to treat your loved ones after dinner or you want to impress your friends on social media, you can't afford to go wrong with a pretty cake. Here are top 10 pastry tools every home-baker should have

type of cup for measuring isn't enough for baking. You will need both dry and wet measuring cups to precisely measure all the ingredients you're putting in your recipe. Most measuring spoons sets have a tablespoon, ½ teaspoon, and ¼ teaspoon, while most measuring cups come in sets with ½ cup, ⅓ cup and ¼ cup.

WHISK

Whisk is used to beat together a few eggs, but it is used for other things too. In particular, it's one of the best to thoroughly mix various ingredients but it is also great for stirring together a home-made custard.

BAKING PAN

From flat baking trays for cookies and loaf tins for breads and

loaf cakes to square tins for brownies and round tins for classic sponge cake, the baking pans come in different sizes and shapes. Non-stick aluminum baking pan is better than a glass one. While glass one looks more stylish and presentable, aluminum has high heat conductivity so that you cook evenly.

STAND MIXER

An electric stand mixer is expensive, but once you use it, you'll wonder how did you ever manage without it, especially when you make things like marshmallows, caramels, and creams, which can be finicky if they're not kept at a steady temperature, are too warm. A frosting might not whip properly, for example, if ingredients are too warm. Metal bowls are really

ICING SPATULA

It is needed to evenly spread the cream all over the cake. It comes in different sizes and is needed as per the size/height of the cake. If you don't have an icing spatula, you can use the back, straight edge of a large knife to smooth your butter cream and then clean up the bottom of your cake plate with a paper towel. Next, take a freezer bag and fill it with your icing. Push the icing into one corner and twist the bag.

METAL BOWLS

Baking often necessitates frostings, caramels, and creams, which can be finicky if they're not kept at a steady temperature, are too warm. A frosting might not whip properly, for example, if ingredients are too warm. Metal bowls are really

helpful as they are a better conductor of heat than glass.

SERRATED KNIFE

This is the best knife for cutting a cake in half or thirds. It will help maintain a smooth, precise cut that's perfect for when you want to add a flavourful layer of fruit jam or fluffy buttercream to a pastry or a birthday cake.

PASTRY BAG DECORATING KIT

If you want to decorate your pastries with rose petals or a basketweave to the top, then you'll need some pastry decorating tools. This kit contains six different shaped tips and two reusable nylon bags, which are more eco-friendly than disposable plastic bags because they can be used over and over again.

GEL-BASED FOOD DYE

Gel-based food dye is used to create vibrant pastries and cakes. You should avoid water-based dyes found in little tubes at the supermarket as these dyes are so weak they'll produce pastels in place of bold, saturated ones. Natural dye is great too, but don't expect the same results.

(The list is shared by top chefs from the Academy of Pastry & Culinary Arts.)

R E C I P E S

BUCKWHEAT (KUTTU ATTA) KADHI

WHAT YOU NEED

- Sour yoghurt: 250 gm
- Buckwheat (*kuttu atta*): 1 tbsp
- Curry leaf: 5-6
- Black cardamom: 1-2
- Black mustard seeds: ½ tsp
- Green chillies (slit down the middle): 1-2,
- Ghee: 1 tsp
- Himalayan pink salt (*sandha namak*) as per taste

METHOD

- Hand beat the sour yoghurt and buckwheat flour together ensuring there are no lumps.
- Heat ghee in a *kadhai*. Once hot, add curry leaves, black mustard seeds, black cardamom and green chillies till the ghee is fragrant.
- Turn off the flame.
- Slowly pour in the yoghurt and buckwheat while whisking continuously. This is done to avoid the yoghurt from splitting.
- Put it back on low heat while continuously whisking. Add salt. Keep whisking till



bubbles appear, that means the yoghurt has been cooked.

● Cook it till the desired consistency, some like their *kadhi* thin and runny, while some like it thick. Do keep

in mind that this will keep getting thicker as it cools down.

● Adjust seasoning and serve hot.

NAVRATRA SPECIAL ALOO TIKKI

WHAT YOU NEED

For tikki:

- Boiled mashed potato: 200 gm
- Chopped green chilli: 1/2 tsp
- Chopped ginger: ½ tsp
- *Kuttu ka atta* (for binding): 3 tbsp
- Chopped coriander: ½ tsp
- *Senda namak* to taste
- Oil

For saunth:

- *Anchoor* powder: 50 gm



- jaggery: 80 gm
- Fennel: ½ tsp
- Roasted cumin: 200 gm
- Black peppercorn

crushed: ½ tsp

- A pinch of *senda namak*

For mint chutney:

- Mint: 50 gm

PANEER MAKHANI

WHAT YOU NEED

- *Paneer*: 250 gm
- Tomatoes: 4-5
- Cashews: 3-4 tbsp
- Fresh cream: 4 tbsp
- Unsalted white butter: 2 tbsp
- Oil: 2 tsp
- Cumin seeds: 1 tsp
- Cinnamon: 1 stick
- Cloves: 4
- Green cardamoms: 2
- Black peppercorns: 5-6
- Turmeric powder: ½ tsp
- Kashmiri red chilli powder: 1 tsp
- Chopped green coriander and ginger: 2 tsp
- Sugar: 2 tsp
- *Sandha namak* to taste

METHOD

- Boil water in a saucepan. Add cut tomatoes, ginger and cashew nuts for 10 minutes.
- Make paste of tomatoes using a blender.
- Heat oil, add the

cumin seeds, cinnamon, cloves, green cardamom and black peppercorns.

- Make paste of the above spices. Add turmeric powder, kashmiri red chilli powder, sugar, salt and cook the sauce on medium-high flame for 10 to 12 minutes.
- Cut the *paneer* into cubes and add into it.
- Garnish with fresh cream and chopped coriander leaves.

Courtesy: Executive chef Anvita Rai at The Ashok Hotel.



KUTTU KA ATTA AND MIX THEM WELL TO MAKE A MIXTURE.

- Divide the mixture into equal proportion rounds.
- Made the medallion shape (*tikki* shape) out of the rounds.
- Deep fry them in *kadhai* till they turn golden brown.
- Spread some beaten yogurt on the plate and place the *tikkis* over it.
- Top with *saunth*, mint chutney and beaten yogurt.
- Garnish with chop coriander, beetroot juliennes and pomegranate.

Courtesy: Jr sous chef Rubal Purneja at Samrat Hotel.

Hardik gets promotion

Pandya finds place in A category of BCCI central contracts; Virat, Rohit, Bumrah remain in top bracket; Kuldeep, Chahal demoted

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The star trio of India captain Virat Kohli, his white-ball deputy Rohit Sharma and pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah retained their top bracket BCCI contracts, worth ₹7 crore each, while all-rounder Hardik Pandya earned a promotion despite an injury-plagued season.

A total of 28 cricketers were awarded central contracts in four categories on Thursday. At this moment in Indian cricket, there are only three categories across formats and the scenario hasn't changed with Kohli, Rohit and Bumrah being the elite of elites.

All-rounder Pandya is one of the notable promotions to Grade A, which is worth ₹5 crore, despite the fact that he endured a back injury which has prevented him from bowling for much of the last year. He was in Grade B last year.

Hardik is very much in line to play Test matches in England and will be one of the most important players after our A+ cricketers when we play the T20 World Cup. So Hardik's promotion is about what he brings to the team. That's what the selectors have

LIST OF BCCI'S ANNUAL CONTRACTS (2020-21)

GRADE A+ (₹7 CRORE)	GRADE A (₹5 CRORE)	GRADE C (₹1 CRORE)
Virat Kohli Rohit Sharma Jasprit Bumrah	Kuldeep Yadav Ravichandran Ashwin Ravindra Jadeja Cheteshwar Pujara Ajinkya Rahane Shikhar Dhawan KL Rahul Mohammed Shami Ishan Sharma Rishabh Pant Hardik Pandya A (B to C), Bhuvneshwar Kumar (A to B), Yuzvendra Chahal (B to C)	Kuldeep Yadav Naveed Sami Deepak Chahar Shubman Gill Ranuma Vihari Axar Patel Shreyas Iyer Washington Sundar Yuzvendra Chahal Mohammed Siraj
Losers: Kuldeep Yadav (A to C), Bhuvneshwar Kumar (A to B), Yuzvendra Chahal (B to C)	Winners: Hardik Pandya (A from B), Shardul Thakur (B from C)	New addition: Mohammed Siraj, Shubman Gill and Axar Patel in Grade C. Miss out from last year's list: Sanjay Samson and Kedar Jadhav.

factored in" a senior BCCI official told PTI. Rookies Shubman Gill and Mohammed Siraj have got their maiden central contracts worth ₹1 crore in grade C while Shardul Thakur has been elevated to group B.

The trio has been rewarded for lion-hearted performance during India's historic Test triumph in Australia this year.

Among the demotions, pacer Bhuvneshwar Kumar has dropped to Grade B, which is worth ₹3 crore, while Kedar Jadhav has been dropped for good. Bhuvneshwar's

demotion from A to B comes in the wake of prolonged absences due to different injuries and he is no longer an all-format regular.

The biggest setback has come for left-arm wrist spinner Kuldeep Yadav, who has been pushed down two notches from Grade A to C.

"Kuldeep is slowly slipping down the radar and he should consider himself lucky that he has managed to retain his contract," said the source. However, Shikhar Dhawan, who is now a certainty in only one format (ODI), has managed to remain in category A along with Test specialists Ravichandran Ashwin and Cheteshwar Pujara.

Axar Patel's 27-wicket haul against England at home has also got him back in the central contracts fold.

Rishabh Pant, who is certainly a future A+ candidate, has retained his grade A position after a dream four months where he has singlehandedly won Test matches against Australia and England.

Unadkat keeps DC under check

Jaydev's brilliant spell of 3/15 restricts Delhi to 147 for 8



Rajasthan Royals pacer Jaydev Unadkat celebrates after he takes wicket of DC opener Shikhar Dhawan

PTI ■ MUMBAI

A brilliant three-wicket burst from pacer Jaydev Unadkat helped Rajasthan Royals restrict Delhi Capitals to 147 for eight in their IPL match, here on Thursday.

Unadkat (3/15 off 4 overs) dismissed Prithvi Shaw, Shikhar Dhawan and Ajinkya Rahane to trigger DC's top-order collapse from which they never recovered fully.

Captain Rishabh Pant's blistering 32-ball 51, studded with nine fours, was not enough as DC could only post a modest total after being put in to bat.

DC made a disastrous start as they were two wickets down for 16 runs in the fourth over with Unadkat dismissing the opening duo of Shaw (2) and Dhawan (9) cheaply.

Shaw was the first to go in the second over, caught at backward point before Dhawan perished while attempting a ramp shot with RR captain and wicketkeeper Sanjay Samson taking a stunning diving catch to his right. Ajinkya Rahane's (8) underwhelming IPL

form continued as he offered an easy caught and bowled chance to Unadkat with a slow ball that clocked just 110km per hour.

DC were 36 for 3 at the end of power-play but the slump continued as Marcus Stoinis (0), foxed by a Mustafizur Rahman (2/29) delivery, checked his shot at the last minute to offer a running catch to Jos Buttler.

The run rate started increasing once captain Pant came to the crease but still DC were 57 for 4 at the halfway mark.

Once he had a full measure of the pitch, Pant opened up and hit four boundaries, three of which were consecutive, to take 20 runs from the 11th over bowled by Rahul Tewatia.

Pant, in excellent form this year, reached to his fifty off 30 balls in the 12th over, with a four off Mustafizur but he was run out the next over with bowler Ryan Parag's throw crashing onto the stumps.

Delhi were 88 for 5 then.

After Pant's exit, Tom Curran gave some respectability to the DC innings with a 16-ball 21.

boundarymeter

4s	208
6s	80

PLAYER	RUNS
1. Nitish Rana (KKR)	137
2. Sanju Samson (RR)	119
3. Manish Pandey (SRH)	99
PLAYER	WKTS
1. Harshal Patel (RCB)	7
2. Andre Russell (KKR)	6
3. Rashid Khan (SRH)	4
MOST SIXES	
1. Sanju Samson (RR)	7
2. Deepak Hooda (PBKS)	6
3. Nitish Rana (KKR)	6

SUMMER SLAM

HOTION PICTURE



SURFING THEIR WAY: Mumbai Indians' foreign recruits — Trent Boult, left, and Chris Lynn spend time in Chennai beach on Thursday enjoying water sport

MULANI 1ST COVID BACK-UP

Delhi Capitals on Thursday roped in young Mumbai left-arm spinner Shams Mulani as IPL's first short-term Covid-19 replacement as he was brought in for Axar Patel, who is yet to recover from the dreaded virus and is still in a medical care facility. DC also has substituted injured captain Shreyas Iyer with Karnataka off-spinner Anuruddha Joshi. Mulani is a left-handed lower middle-order batsman and a slow left-arm orthodox bowler. The 24-year-old has an economy rate of 6.92 in 25 T20 games and a highest score of 73. He will not be permitted to represent another IPL franchise this season once he leaves the Delhi Capitals.

KOHLI REPRIMANDED FOR DISSENT

RCB captain Virat Kohli has been reprimanded for breaching the IPL's Code of Conduct after he was seen kicking a chair in frustration following his dismissal in the game against SRH. He was not at his fluent best in the game and ended up with 33 off 29 balls.

SHAHBAZ JUSTIFIES HIS SELECTION

RCB pacer Mohammed Siraj feels that spin bowling all-rounder Shahbaz Ahmed has justified his selection in the playing eleven, following a match-winning performance against SRH. Ahmed picked up three wickets in an over to stage a remarkable turnaround for RCB on Wednesday night. "Both Shahbaz Ahmed and Rajat Patidar (who played the last game) have been brilliant in the practice games," Siraj said in the post-match conference. "Shahbaz, as an all-rounder, gives us that extra option with his left-arm spin. The wicket was slow and turning also. Shahbaz Ahmed fitted into it for this game and did the job for us," he added.

POINTS TABLE

	P	W	L	NRR	PTS
1 RCB	2	2	0	+0.175	4
2 DC	1	1	0	+0.779	2
3 MI	2	1	0	+0.225	2
4 PBKS	1	1	0	+0.200	2
5 KKR	2	1	1	+0.000	2
6 RR	1	0	1	-0.200	0
7 SRH	2	0	2	-0.400	0
8 CSK	1	0	1	-0.779	0

Katich impressed with mature Maxi

PTI ■ CHENNAI

Glenn Maxwell is proving to be a multi-utility player for Royal Challengers Bangalore besides showing ominous form with the bat early in the IPL, feels head coach Simon Katich.

The 32-year-old, who was snapped by RCB for ₹14.25 crore after a massive bidding war with CSK, already has justified the faith shown in him by playing two match-winning knocks in their back-to-back wins this season.

The Australian is also looking to shed the perennial under-performer tag in the IPL.

"He's shown a lot of maturity, particularly today (against SRH on Wednesday), when wickets were falling around him... He summed up the conditions really well, and took the game deep, that's credit to him for his experience for summing it up and then executing right at the end when we needed some quick runs," said Katich.

In the 2020 edition held in the UAE, Maxwell endured a dismal run with Kings XI Punjab, scoring 108 runs from 13 matches at 15.42. He failed to hit a single six and also struggled to get the team over the

line on many a times as the Punjab franchise finally gave up on the Aussie ahead of this year's auction.

But Katich said he has been multi-faceted with RCB franchise this season.

"He's been magnificent. He's had a big role for us, first in the field helping Virat out there with field positioning to have the right guys in the right places at the right time. He has really embraced it," Katich said in a video posted on their website.

"He's taken a lot of the young guys under his wing at fielding practice, worked with him on that aspect of our game because we know that's an area we have to keep being good and really open up opportunities for run out and catches.

"He's been brilliant there but the big thing is obviously being with the bat. Both the times he's given himself a chance to get in stick to his game plan."

The head coach also hailed the spirit shown by the team in defending the modest total against SRH.

"It's certainly obviously gets tense, but I think spirit with which we played that was fantastic in both games, so regardless of result were really proud of the way they go about it."

Foden takes Man City to semis

AFP ■ DORTMUND

Manchester City set up a blockbuster Champions League semi-final against Paris Saint-Germain as Phil Foden's second-half run sealed a 2-1 victory at Borussia Dortmund on Wednesday to send the Premier League leaders through 4-2 on aggregate.

England midfielder Jude Bellingham gave Dortmund an early lead, but a second-half Riyad Mahrez penalty and Foden's powerful strike moved City into the last four of Europe's top club competition for the second time.

Having also scored the 90th-minute winner to give City a 2-1 victory in last week's first leg in Manchester, England international Foden again broke Dortmund hearts.

"We are finally in the semi-finals and we're really happy," Guardiola told Sky with their team bidding to win four titles this season.

"The guys deserve it because what they have achieved this season is incredible."

Guardiola was full of praise for Mauricio Pochettino's PSG after they reached the last four by squeezing past holders Bayern Munich on away goals.

"We saw yesterday how strong they



Pep Guardiola celebrates with Phil Foden after Manchester City's win in CL semis

(PSG) are, Neymar is an excellent player and they have eliminated the world's best team," said Guardiola.

"It's time to celebrate and drink a lot of wine, then prepare to face Chelsea (in the FA Cup semi-finals on Saturday)."

REAL THROUGH
Jurgen Klopp bemoaned Liverpool's

inability to turn dominance into goals as Real Madrid held out for a 0-0 draw at Champions League 3-1 on aggregate.

Mohamed Salah and Georginio Wijnaldum were guilty of wasting glorious opportunities to get Klopp's men back into the tie.

WINDOW ADVERTISEMENT

WALK-IN-INTERVIEW IN CRPF

Suitable and willing Male & Female candidates may attend WALK-IN-INTERVIEW for engagement as Specialist Medical Officers for Composite Hospital, CRPF, Jagdalpur on Contractual Basis as per details/dates given below.

Sl. No	Date and time of Interview	Venue/ Interview Centre	Interview to be held for CHs	No. of Vacancies of Spl. Mos.	No. of Vacancies of GDMO	Age	Remuneration	Qualification
01	22/04/21 at 0900 hrs	Composite Hospital, CRPF, Jagdalpur	CH Jagdalpur			Below 70 years as on date of Walk-in-interview	Rs. 85,000/- for Specialists MOs	➤ Post Graduate Degree/ Diploma in concerned specialty. ➤ One and Half years experience after obtaining PG Degree. ➤ Two and half years experience after obtaining PG Diploma.
			Anaesthesia	01	-			
			Ophthalmology	01	-			
			Gynaecology	01	-			
			Pathology	01	-			
			Medicine	01	-			
			Radiology	01	-			
			Surgeon	01	-			
			Total	07	-			

a) Appointment is purely on contract basis and the initial period of appointment of contract will be for three years which may be extended for further 02 years on year to year basis subject to the Maximum age of 70 years.

b) On completion of tenure, the contract shall lapse automatically. However, the appointment can be terminated at any time (on either side) by giving one month's notice or by paying one month's salary without assigning any reason or failure to complete three months service to the satisfaction of the competent authority.

c) The appointee shall not be entitled to any benefits like provident fund, pension, gratuity, medical attendance treatment, seniority, promotion etc or any other benefits available to the Government servant appointed on regular basis. The appointee will not be granted any claim or right to regular appointment to any post under CRPF.

d) The working hours of the appointee as per the schedule of CRPF Hospitals/Establishment or as fixed by competent authority.

e) The appointment carried the liability to serve in any part of the country.

f) The appointee shall perform the duties assigned to him/her. The Competent authority reserves the right to assign any duty as and when required. No extra/additional allowance will be admissible in case of such assignment.

g) The leave entitlement of the appointee shall be governed as per DOP & T.O.M. No. 12016/3/84-Estt(L) dated 12 April 1985, O.M. No. 12016/1/90-Estt(L) dated 05th July 1990 and O.M. No. 12016/2/99-Estt(L) dated 12th July 1999 as amended from time to time.

h) No TA/DA and boarding / lodging will be provided during walk-in-interview.

i) No TA/DA will be paid during the period of engagement in CRPF on contractual basis/hiring basis.

j) During the continuance of contract period he/she will be subject to follow the standard of discipline of the force and will execute the orders of administrative authority either written or verbal.

k) Interested candidates may also refer to our website www.crpf.gov.in for terms and conditions/ full details as applicable for contractual appointment of GDMOs and Specialist MOs.

2. While appearing for Walk-in-interview, the candidates should bring documents in original & photocopies of all relevant documents (Degree, Age Proof & Experience Certificate etc.) application in paper paper superscripting the name of post applied for & five passport size recent photographs. Interview will be followed by Medical Examination.

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