

OPINION 6 CAN ISRAEL BE LED BY A FRAGILE COALITION?

WORLD 8 COURTS CANNOT APPOINT PM: OLI

SPORT 12 BUFFON RETURNS TO PARMA

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SIDDHANT RELIVES CHILDHOOD 10 VIVACITY

3rd Covid wave in 2 weeks! Maha scrambles for cover

Delta+ may unleash tragedy soon unless Covid-appropriate behaviour is followed: Maha Task force

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Maharashtra on Thursday began to gear itself for Covid-19 "third wave", which the State Task Force apprehended might be unleashed in the State by a high virulent strain Delta Plus in the next "two to four weeks" if the pandemic-appropriate norms were not followed by the people. A day after the State Covid-19 Task Force made a presentation before Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray about the possible break out of "third wave" in Maharashtra, the State administration began to mobilise medicines and health equipment to be sent across to both rural and urban areas. This followed a directive it received from the Chief Minister himself. At Wednesday's meeting, the State Task Force warned the Chief Minister that the cases would double in the coming weeks after a possible advent of third wave in the State. "Uncontrolled crowds and the



People walk past the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj train Terminus after it rained in Mumbai on Thursday

refusal by the people to follow Covid-19 norms, coupled with the advent of Delta plus variant might trigger a third wave of pandemic in the State," a senior official who briefed the chief minister about a possible third wave said. The task force told the CM that the lower middle class of people who were not affected of the first and second waves of Covid-19 would be hit by the third wave of the pandemic. It advised the Uddhav to increase

testing, strengthen infrastructure and increase vaccination. Quantifying the impact of the "third wave", the task force officials told the CM that the State would have to contend with 8 lakh "active" cases, out of which 10 per cent would be children. There were as many as 19 lakh Covid patients in the State during the first wave, while the number of patients jumped to 40 lakh during the second wave. The number of patients

would be doubled during the third wave. "The children would not be majorly affected by the third wave. The children make up for more than 3.5 per cent of the patient pool in the State," a senior official said. The impending Covid-19 "third wave" should be seen in the context of the five-level relaxation plan announced by the state government and its decision to relax restrictions in 18 to 36 districts of the State.

Class 12 evaluation on 30:30:40 formula

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Centre on Thursday cleared the air on the cancelled Class 12 CBSE Board exams' evaluation criteria saying that the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) will be adopting a 30:30:40 formula for evaluation of marks based on results of Class 10, 11 and 12 respectively and the results will be declared by July end.

The Government informed the Supreme Court that 30 per cent marks will be based on Class 10 board exam, another 30 per cent from Class 11 and 40 per cent marks based on the performance in the unit, mid-term and pre-board tests of Class 12. The Supreme Court accepted the formula of CBSE and CISCE to evaluate the Class 12 students, whose board examinations were cancelled due to the Covid pandemic.

The components adopted by CISCE for arriving at the evaluation formula is — marks percentage in Class X board examinations, the project and practical work in the subjects, the performance of the candidates in the school examinations in the subjects in Classes XI and XII, measured through their best marks obtained in the two years (referred to as raw marks) and the best performance of the school in the last six years.



The Supreme Court also directed the boards to incorporate provisions for disputes resolution in their assessment schemes themselves for those students who may be dissatisfied with the marks awarded in the Class 12 board results. CBSE later announced that for such students exams will be conducted on physical mode and the candidates will have to register accordingly. A special bench of Justices AM Khanwilkar and Dinesh Maheshwari said, "After perusing the scheme presented by the concerned Boards, prima facie, we have no hesitation in accepting the same and permit the Boards to proceed on that basis".

The CBSE said that for evaluating Class XII students, after their board examinations were cancelled for the academic year 2020-21, it has entered

into consultative process with stakeholders to know the factual position of the students and the schools. The board said that consultation process was held with principals of affiliated schools, feedback was obtained from 229 Sahodaya School Complex comprising 7,734 schools and 13-members committee of experts.

It said that theory paper evaluation formula will be of 30 per cent weightage, to be given to Class X marks, 30 per cent weightage to Class XI marks and 40 per cent weightage to Class XII marks obtained in unit test/mid-term/pre-board exams.

The CBSE said that 20 marks will be given for practical in Class XII and the result will be declared by July 31. The CBSE scheme further elaborated that for Class X 30 per cent marks based on average

SC accepts Govt's criteria based on Class X, XI, XII performances

theory component of best three performing subjects out of main five subjects will be taken.

For Class XI, 30 per cent marks based on theory component of final exam will be taken and for Class XII 40 per cent marks based on unit test/mid-term/pre-board exams will be taken.

"The marks of practical/internal assessment of Class XII will be on actual basis as uploaded by the school on the CBSE portal," the CBSE said, adding that the total marks awarded should be in consonance with the past performance of the school in Class-XII board examinations.

The board said that each school shall form a result committee comprising five members (principal of the school as chairperson, two-senior most teachers of the school, teaching class-XII and two teachers from neighbouring senior secondary school teaching class-XII) and it may decide weightage to be given to each exam based on credibility and reliability of the assessment.

It said that the marks of Class XI and Class XII component will be awarded at school level; they will strictly not be comparable across schools due to variations in the quality of question papers, the evaluation, standard and processes, the mode of conduct of exams.

More fatal fungus Candida auris' threat looms large

Covid crisis is ideal condition for outbreak of deadly fungus

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

After mucormycosis or black fungus, another multi-drug resistant similar infection candida auris is looming large amidst Covid-19 pandemic. Health experts have sounded alarm that Covid-associated fungus Candida auris cases are worsening in India even as it has spread across the globe from neonatal unit in Venezuela to a hospital in Spain and Brazil where cases of drug-resistant super fungus were reported on Wednesday, leaving the exhausted authorities in a worried lot.

According to the researchers, death among candidemia patients infected by C. auris can reach 60 per cent. This can happen for some people because fungus enters the bloodstream and causes a systemic infection known as



candidemia. They warned that there was enough evidence that suggests that the ongoing Covid-19 crisis may provide ideal conditions for outbreaks of C. auris in hospital ICUs, thus leading to adverse outcomes and additional strain on healthcare resources. The death rate is quite high, they said. The Covid-19 conditions in Brazil have opened the door for the emergence and spread of a relatively new fungus that is quickly showing signs of becoming a drug-resistant "superfungus", as reported by a study published in the Journal of Fungi. India had for long been hotbed for the deadly fun-

Covid-19 IN INDIA	
TOTAL CASES:	2,97,61,523 (+61,934)
DEATHS:	3,83,515 (+1,584)
RECOVERED:	2,85,72,139 (+87,539)
ACTIVE:	7,94,155
MAHA:	58,44,710 (+9,830)
K'TAKA:	27,90,338 (+5,983)
KERALA:	27,73,944 (+12,469)
TN:	23,97,864 (+9,118)
DELHI:	14,31,868 (+158)

In fact, before the SARS-CoV-2 spread its tentacles, C. auris was already considered a major global health threat due to high rates of drug resistance and ease of transmission in hospital settings. However, now in the backdrop of Covid-19 the threat has enhanced.

Amid LJP crisis, girl says rebel MP Prince raped her

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Amid the raging war in the Lok Janshakti party (LJP), MP from Samastipur Prince Raj is facing a sexual assault charge from a woman who has filed a three-page police complaint and also narrated her side of the story before the media. Prince is not available for comment so far.

Prince Raj is cousin of Chirag Paswan who is engaged in a bitter battle with his uncle Pashupati Kumar Paras for taking control of the party. Prince and three other MPs sided with Paras to oust Chirag from the post of party president and leader of the Lok Sabha.

On the other hand, Chirag has expelled them from the party. The Police said they are verifying facts and an enquiry is being conducted. A First Information Report (FIR) will be registered once the preliminary probe is over. A police officer said a three-page complaint has been



filed by a woman with Coughtnaugh Place police station. She has alleged that Prince mixed intoxicants in water and raped her after she passed out.

Pashupati Kumar Paras new LJP chief: Sources

Patna: Lok Janshakti Party MP PashupatiKumar Paras, who recently staged a political coup and deposed nephew Chirag Paswan as the party chief, was on Thursday declared elected, unopposed, the new national president of the outfit.

Centre plans statute for OTT, news portals self-regulation

To address issues of sensitive video content, fake news

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

In a move aimed at providing a level-playing field in the media, the Modi Government has decided to bring in an overarching statute that will provide for self-regulation in digital media including Over-the-top (OTT) platforms and news websites to address issues of sensitive video content and fake news.

The Ministry of Information and Broadcasting on Thursday issued a notification amending the Cable Television Network Rules, 1994 providing a statutory mechanism for redressal of grievances/complaints of citizens relating to content broadcast by television channels in accordance with the provisions of the Cable Television Network Act, 1995.

Now, the broadcaster will have to establish a self-regulating body to redress citizens' grievances. Besides, they will



have to ensure that programmes are not violative of the programme code or advertising code. According to the new amendment, the Centre may prohibit the transmission or retransmission of any such channel or programme if they fail to act despite the complaint. "Programme of any channel is not in conformity with the programme code, it may, after giving an opportunity of hearing to the cable operator, and by an order in writing, prohibit the transmission or re-transmission of any such channel or programme in accordance with the provisions of section 20 of the Act," it said.

Any person aggrieved by the content of a programme of a channel as being not in conformity with the programme code may file his complaint in writing to the broadcaster. A broadcaster shall establish a grievance redressal mechanism and appoint an officer to deal with the complaints received by it.

Centre plans statute for OTT, news portals self-regulation

advertisement of any channel is not in conformity with the advertising code, it may, after giving an opportunity of hearing to the cable operator, and by an order in writing, prohibit the transmission or re-transmission of any such channel or programme in accordance with the provisions of section 20 of the Act," it said. Any person aggrieved by the content of a programme of a channel as being not in conformity with the programme code may file his complaint in writing to the broadcaster. A broadcaster shall establish a grievance redressal mechanism and appoint an officer to deal with the complaints received by it.

Punjab Cabinet meet today, Ministers asks CM to keep 'his officer' away

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

Ahead the crucial meeting of the Punjab Cabinet on Friday, two of the Ministers wanted the Chief Minister's Chief Principal Secretary Suresh Kumar to stay away. In fact, the two Ministers has attended the Chief Minister Capt Amarinder Singh's luncheon meeting on a pre condition that the "officer" would not be present in the meeting.

The pre-condition was put by the state's Jails and Cooperation Minister Sukhjinder Singh Randhawa and Water Resources Minister Sukhinder Singh Sarkaria. As a result, Suresh Kumar did not attend the Chief Minister's luncheon meeting with his nine Cabinet colleagues. Notably, Randhawa has not been happy with the Chief Minister after the Punjab and Haryana' adverse ruling in

the Kotkapura firing case. In fact, he had also offered his written resignation to the Chief Minister after the discussion over the High Court order turned ugly. The State Cabinet is expected to take up a long list of agendas in its meeting on Friday. The previous meeting, which was expected to see the acceptance of Punjab's Pay Commission's report, concluded after taking up just two agendas. It is believed that the government may also take a decision regarding regularizing the services of all contractual employees of Municipal Bodies. Besides, the Congress-led State Government, which is now focusing its attention on the issues concerning the state's Dalit population, has set up a panel with Finance Minister Manpreet Badal as its member to resolve the same.

Punjab AG's office staff pruned on collision course with Govt

MONIKA MALIK ■ CHANDIGARH

Considered close confidant of Punjab Chief Minister Capt Amarinder Singh, Punjab Advocate General Atul Nanda appears to be on a collision course with the Government, which has abolished 23 posts, including those of stenographers and librarians, without taking him in confidence. His wife and Additional Advocate-General Rameeza Hakim has also resigned on Thursday. Accusing the "interference in AG office's functioning", Nanda has sought revival of these posts. The action, just about eight months before the Assembly polls in Punjab, has apparently not gone down well with Nanda, who has objected to the "arbitrary abolishment of posts in his office". Nanda said some of the posts were critical for the functioning of any lawyer's office. "The working of the AG's office is of a permanent nature and its main function is to defend, conduct or watch the interests of Government in cases pending before the Supreme Court of India, Punjab and Haryana HC, Chandigarh, and many tribunals, and to file appeals and pursue the same on behalf of Government in higher courts. The case work is increasing day

by day and there is no possibility of decrease in load of work of this office," he wrote in the letter. The letter added, "The next six months are crucial as being end of the term. I am amongst the likely to be faced with critical litigation which will require this office to work at its best. At a time like this, to try and cripple my office with the abolishing of posts, betrays an arbitrary approach if not, a total non-application of mind by the ACS Home." Nanda said that he found it "inexcusable" that the ACS Home, without the courtesy of having a discussion with him, acted in such a manner. It amounted to a clear "interference in the functioning" of his office. Punjab AG asked the Chief Secretary to intervene in the matter and "direct the ACS Home to do the needful and revive the said posts". Notably, Nanda has been on target of the Chief Minister's detractors, including Rajya Sabha MP

Partap Singh Bajwa, for poor losing out in significant cases, including Kotkapura firing incident. It has been learnt that among other things, removal of Nanda as state AG was also among demands raised by the party leaders and workers before the high command constituted three-member panel. Meanwhile, Rameeza Hakeem has also put in her papers, which was also accepted by the Chief Minister. Hakeem, who had also resigned the previous year but Chief Minister rejected her resignation citing her critical role in the Government's legal team, said: "Regrettably, I find that I can no longer continue to do so. I have therefore tendered my resignation from the position of Additional Advocate General, Punjab with effect from June 1, 2021, with a request that it be accepted this time, so that I may be able to refocus my attention and efforts on my private practice and professional career."

CAPSULE

DOORSTEP RATION: AAP SENDS FILE TO LG AGAIN New Delhi: In a fresh bid to get approval for the doorstep delivery of ration scheme, the AAP Government has again sent the file to Delhi Lieutenant Governor Anil Bajjal on Thursday.

HARYANA TO GIVE AID TO THOSE HIT BY PANDEMIC Chandigarh: The Haryana Government on Thursday announced a one-time payment of ₹5,000 each to small shopkeepers, construction workers, auto-rickshaw drivers and unorganised labourers who have faced financial hardship due to the Covid-19 pandemic and lockdown.

ASKED PM TO RECALL DHANKHAR TRICE: DIDI Kolkata: West Bengal Chief Minister Manmata Banerjee on Thursday said she has thrice written to the PM to recall Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar.

Haryana CM gives Covid package of ₹1,100 crore to needy

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

In a bid to provide relief to the poor and needy people affected due to Covid-19 pandemic, Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar on Thursday announced an economic package of more than Rs 1,100 crore.

The announcement was made by the Chief Minister during a press conference held to mark the completion of 600 days of BJP-JJP led State Government tenure in Haryana.

Accompanied by his entire Cabinet, Khattar while making a series of announcements said that in view of the financial constraints faced by the labourers working in the unorganized sector, a relief package of Rs 600 crore will be given to 12 lakh such families of the state. Under the ambit of this package, a financial assistance of Rs 5,000 will be given to all such families in the state.

The Chief Minister said that to ensure that the beneficiaries of the unorganized sector have easy access to the scheme, a portal has been designed and the registrations on the portal will start from June 18.

600 DAYS OF KHATTAR GOVT



A relief package of Rs 150 crore will also be provided to small shopkeepers, who belong to BPL families.

The Chief Minister also announced a financial aid of Rs 5,000 per family to the families of Corona warriors like ASHA workers and employees of NHM. Under this, a financial aid of about Rs 11 crore will be borne by the government.

He said that the State Government is steadfast to provide relief to consumers of

electricity during the ongoing Corona-crisis and the Electricity Department has decided that surcharge will not be levied on electricity bills till June 30.

Apart from this, the State Government has announced to provide relief to the traders as business activities are affected due to Corona pandemic.

The consumers whose average electricity bill for the months of April, May and June is 50 per cent less than the average electricity bill for the

months of January, February and March, their fixed charge of Rs 10,000 will be 100 per cent waived off. Those consumers whose fixed charge ranges from Rs 10,000 to Rs 40,000, they will get a rebate of up to Rs 10,000 and a rebate of 25 per cent will be given on electricity bills having fixed charges of more than Rs 40,000.

The relief provided in power bills would cost Rs 80 crore to the state exchequer, the Chief Minister added.

Providing relief to the people of the state in property tax, Khattar said that it has been decided to waive off the entire property tax for the first quarter of the year 2021-22. With this, a financial burden of about Rs 150 crore will be borne by the Urban Local Bodies Department.

The Chief Minister further said that Motor Vehicle Tax for the first quarter of the year 2021-22 will not be levied on vehicles carrying passengers. Due to this, the financial burden of about Rs 72 crore will be borne by the Department. Also, the fitness date of vehicles has been extended till June 30.

Taking another favourable decision for the people of the

TOTAL FINANCIAL RELIEF PACKAGE ANNOUNCED BY CM

Categories	Financial Assistance announced
Unorganized Labour	₹600 crore
Shopkeepers and small businessmen	₹150 crore
Property Tax Exemption	₹150 crore
Relief in power tariff	₹80 crore
Motor vehicle tax	₹72 crore
Ex-gratia grant on Death, Treatment and Hospitalization	₹50 crore
ASHA and other health workers	₹11 crore
Total	₹1,113 crore

that the State Government had earlier announced an ex-gratia of Rs 1 lakh on the death due to COVID of a family member falling between the age group of 18 years to 50 years of BPL families. The benefits of this scheme were given to 46 families by transferring an amount of Rs 2 lakh each to their accounts through DBT, thereby initiating the scheme on Thursday. Besides, Rs 5,000 per family were transferred directly to the bank accounts of 2,755 BPL families, who have COVID affected family members in home isolation.

Khattar said that the State Government has borne the entire cost of the Covid affected patients of BPL families and will continue to do so in the future as well.

borne by the Department. Also, the fitness date of vehicles has been extended till June 30. Taking another favourable decision for the people of the

state, he said that the government has also given permission for registration of fourth floor in big cities. The Chief Minister said

Drone Corporation of Haryana to be established in State: CM

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar on Thursday announced the establishment of a Drone Corporation in the State.

"The work of drone mapping related to various Departments including Agriculture, Mines, Forests, Urban Local Bodies, Town and Country Planning among others will be done through Drone Corporation of Haryana," said the Chief Minister while addressing a press conference held to mark the completion of 600 days of BJP-JJP led State Government tenure in Haryana.

He said that 100 drones will be procured in the first phase and 100 drones in the next phase for the Corporation to conduct aerial surveys. At present, various Departments are using about 40-50 drones which will be given to the Corporation. After this, whichever department would need a drone for conducting aerial survey, that work would be done by Drone Corporation of Haryana, Khattar added.

On the occasion, the Chief Minister also released a booklet 'Incredible Haryana' depicting the achievements of 600 days of the tenure of the State Government in Haryana.

Highlighting achievements of his government, he said we started a unique scheme called

Parivar Pehchan Patra, through which poor families of the state will be identified and every effort will be made to ensure family income for them.

The State Government has also started an ambitious Scheme, 'Mukhyamantri Antyodaya Parivar Utthan Yojana', under which efforts will be made to identify one lakh poor families of the state and connect them with the mainstream, he said.

On the issue of agriculture, the Chief Minister said that the Haryana Government procures 11 crops and at this time the payment has been made directly in the accounts of the farmers. Farmers have been paid Rs 1700-1800 crore directly in their bank accounts, he said.

INCENTIVE OF ₹4000 PER ACRE ON CULTIVATION OF PULSES AND OIL SEEDS IN PLACE OF MILLET

The Chief Minister said that the production of millet is increasing in the state, so this time the government has decided that farmers who grow pulses and oilseeds in place of millet will be given an incentive of Rs 4000 per acre by the government.

Farmers who sell millet (Bajra) will come under Bhavanant Bharyaveer Yojana from now onwards, he said. Khattar said that the government had faced a loss of Rs 700-800 crore after procure-

ment of millet last season. **25% DISCOUNT TO 600 FARMERS PURCHASING E-TRACTORS**

The Chief Minister announced that a discount of 25 per cent will be provided to 600 farmers purchasing e-tractors in the state. The farmers who will book an e-tractor by September 30, 2021 will be eligible to get the benefit of this offer. If the number of applicants seeking this offer is less than 600 then every applicant will get the benefit of this offer and if the number of applicants is more than 600 then the decision will be taken through a draw of lots, he said.

WILL RAISE PANIPAT RESIDENT ISSUES WITH MEA AND HIM

The Chief Minister said that during his Delhi visit, he will take up the issue with the Home Minister and Ministry of External Affairs of a Panipat resident who had been abducted by Islamic State terrorists. The issue has come to our notice through the media and we will take appropriate action in this regard, he said. Notably, the family of Vinod Beniwal (42), who was abducted by the Islamic State (IS) terrorists in Mozambique have urged the Prime Minister through an email to intervene into the case to ensure his safe and prompt release.

Haryana reports 38 deaths, 232 Covid cases

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

Thirty eight more fatalities were reported due to Covid-19 in Haryana as 232 fresh cases surfaced on Thursday. According to the health bulletin, the death toll reached 9147 while the total case tally was 766838 in the state. The total number of people recovered from the virus in the last 24 hours taking the total recoveries to 754464.

In the last 24 hours, a maximum of six deaths were

reported in Panipat. No case was reported in Hissar. There were 3227 active cases in the state, the bulletin stated. Over 96 lakh samples have been tested in Haryana till date.

HP REPORTS 10 DEATHS, 292 FRESH CASES

Himachal on Thursday reported ten Covid-19 related fatalities and 292 fresh cases. According to the health bulletin, the death toll has reached 3408 while the Covid-19 case-load stands at 199699. In the

last 24 hours, a maximum of four fatalities were reported in Kangra, which also reported the highest number of 84 cases. There were 3430 active cases in Himachal. 585 people recovered in the last 24 hours and the total recoveries were recorded at 129841, the bulletin stated.

AT 32, UT SEES LOWEST CASE IN OVER 3 MONTHS

Covid pandemic's downward trend continued in Chandigarh on Thursday as 32 fresh cases were recorded, the

lowest in the past three and half months. However, there was no respite in the number of fatalities in the city as three more people lost their lives to the

contagion. Chandigarh has been registering a decline in infections since May 8 as the city had registered the highest single-day spike of 895 cases.



Mark RaGa's birthday through social work: Jakhar urges party cadre

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

Punjab Congress wanted the party cadre to celebrate the birthday of former party's national president, Rahul Gandhi, that falls on June 19, by undertaking social work initiatives across the State.

"In view of unbearable pain and difficulties endured by citizens during the second COVID wave, Rahul Gandhi, this year, has decided to not celebrate his birthday. He has also appealed to the party members to avoid any ostentatious activity like cake-cutting, sloganeering, and putting up banners or posters to instead utilize the resources to provide help and succour to those in need and those who have lost their source of livelihoods to the COVID onslaught," said Punjab Congress resident Sunil Jakhar on Thursday. Jakhar has also appealed to

the entire Congress leadership to distribute medical kits, masks, sanitizers, and ration kits to celebrate Rahul's birthday. The leaders could also visit affected families who have lost their loved ones to Covid to provide relief and a healing touch to them, he added.

As a part of the same, Punjab Youth Congress has announced to give scholarships to the children affected by corona to mark Rahul Gandhi's 51st birthday.

"Punjab Youth Congress would provide scholarships to the children affected during the corona times across the State for which a list has been prepared," said Punjab Youth Congress president Brinder Singh Dhillon. He said that 250 children from all over the State would be funded a scholarship facility, which district-level functions would be organised.

Chandigarh adviser Manoj Parida transferred to head central body

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

Senior Indian Administrative Service officer Manoj Kumar Parida was on Thursday appointed as Chairman, National Authority of Chemical Weapons Convention, in the rank and pay of Secretary to the Union Government, under the Cabinet Secretariat.

Parida had joined the UT Administration on December 26, 2018, as Adviser to the Chief Minister, UT. After a stint of nearly two and a half years with the Chandigarh Administration, he has been transferred to Delhi.

The 1986-batch AGMUT officer is among six IAS officers who have been given new

responsibilities after the Appointments Committee of the Cabinet gave its approval in its latest meeting on Thursday.

In his statement, Parida said, "I am happy to get a chance to serve in the Government of India at the Secretary Level. But I am happier that at least Corona is under Control in Chandigarh when I am leaving."

MLA Sukhpal Khaira formally merges his outfit with Congress

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

Two weeks after his home-coming in the Congress party, the former Leader of the Opposition in Punjab Vidhan Sabha and founder-president of the Punjab Ekta Party Sukhpal Singh Khaira on Thursday formally merged his two-year-old political outfit with the ruling Congress.

Elected legislator on the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) ticket from Bholath, Khaira met

the Congress' former national president Rahul Gandhi, along with AAP's two other 'rebel' MLAs — Jagdev Singh (Maur) and Preet Singh (Bhadour) — at Gandhi's Delhi residence. The state party affairs-in-charge Harish Rawat, and general secretary Randeep Singh Surjewala were also present.

While describing his decision to join AAP as 'biggest mistake', Khaira claimed that more legislators and leaders from the Aam Aadmi Party are expected to join the Congress soon.

Khaira's Delhi visit and meeting with Rahul Gandhi came at a time when the Congress high command is struggling to defuse the prevailing crisis within the Punjab party unit. The meeting came just days before the interim president Soni Gandhi had invited Punjab Chief Minister Capt Amarinder Singh, firebrand

leader Navjot Singh Sidhu, besides other senior leaders in Delhi on June 20 to work out a compromise and end the factionalism.

At the meeting with Rahul Gandhi, who has been closely monitoring the prevailing situation in Punjab party unit, has put a final stamp of approval on the induction of three AAP MLAs in the Congress. They are yet to be formally inducted into the party.

On June 3, a day before

Capt Amarinder was to meet the three-member panel constituted to resolve the factionalism, the Chief Minister had announced Khaira even before a formal announcement from the central leadership.

Khaira had joined AAP in 2015 and won from the Bholath seat on AAP ticket in 2017. After conferences with the AAP leadership, he had joined the party's supreme Arvind Kejriwal, Khaira went on to

float his own political outfit in January 2019, ahead of parliamentary polls.

Firebrand Khaira, once the hard-core critic of Capt Amarinder, had been two-time MLA; while the other two MLAs are the first-timers.

All three have submitted their resignations as the members of the state legislative assembly from Punjab on June 11 and 18 in which the Speaker Rana KP Singh is expected to take a call.

Captain engages in 'lunch diplomacy' with MLAs

Punjab Congress crisis: Sonia to meet sr party leaders on June 20

MONIKA MALIK ■ CHANDIGARH

As Punjab Chief Minister Capt Amarinder Singh and his proposed deputy Navjot Singh Sidhu continue to differ in political scripts, the Congress' interim president Sonia Gandhi is set to meet them on June 20, along other senior leaders from the state, to bring them on the same page.

And to make sure that his critics don't rock his boat before the party high command, the Chief Minister continued to engage in lunch diplomacy. Meeting the party leaders and legislators for the past two days, the Chief Minister on Thursday hosted a royal luncheon for his Cabinet colleagues, including those who are unhappy with him.

Moreover, the meeting came a day before the State Cabinet is set to take up a long list of agenda items in a crucial meeting on Friday.

reportedly aired their grievances against the Chief Minister before the three-member panel, set up by the high command to resolve the infighting and power struggle in the Punjab party unit.

Speculations are rife that a Cabinet reshuffle is on the cards, besides significant changes in the party's organizational structure. The high command is struggling to find out a way to 'suitably adjust' Sidhu, who has adopted a rebellious attitude against his own party's Government, especially the Chief Minister, ahead 2022 polls that was harming the party's poll prospects which is facing the anti-incumbency in the state.

Sources informed The Pioneer that the party high command was caught in a catch-22 situation where it was difficult to keep both the warring sides happy as Capt Amarinder has categorically refused the proposal to appoint Sidhu as state party chief while agreeing to induct him in the Cabinet or as his deputy. On the other hand, Sidhu has conveyed it to the party high com-

mand that he would not be able to work "under Capt Amarinder" while indicating his preference to be appointed as the state party chief.

Moreover, it is unlikely that both the top positions would be given to the Jat Sikhs, and also to the leaders hailing from Patiala.

"Party chief Sonia Gandhi has summoned senior leaders from the State on June 20. Chief Minister, Sidhu, Punjab president Sunil Jakhar, Cabinet Ministers or even senior leaders like Rajya Sabha MP Partap Singh Bajwa are expected to join the meeting. However, it is yet not confirmed if all the leaders would sit face to face to resolve the prevailing crisis.

The three-member committee comprising Leader of Opposition in Rajya Sabha Mallikarjun Kharge, former MP JP Agarwal, and party's state affairs-in-charge Harish Rawat, had submitted its detailed report recommending to contest the 2022 polls under Capt Amarinder's leadership.

The party had recommended to 'suitably accommodate' Sidhu, while also pressing upon the urgent need to adjust all the sections of the society at top positions within the party or the government.

Gandhi has already gone through the report and would take a decision only after personally interacting with all the leaders. It has also been learnt that the party supremo has getting an independent survey done in Punjab, however, it was not exactly known whether the survey is to assess any leader's popularity or the performance of the party and the government.

Sidhu has resigned from the State Cabinet in July 2019 and maintained a distance from the party activities since then. It was only the previous year, when the farmer's agitation was on its peak, he made a comeback in the state political scene and participated in Rahul Gandhi's tractor rally. Subsequently, he started attacking his own party's government and the Chief Minister over the several issues.

As Rawat made strenuous efforts to break the ice between Sidhu and Capt Amarinder, the two leaders attempted to resolve their differences over tea on March 17 this year, but all in vain.

The relationship took a bad hit after the Punjab and Haryana High Court quashed the SIT probe into the Kotkapura firing incident on April 9, that followed sharp attacks by Sidhu against the Chief Minister for purportedly

delaying the justice in the incidents of desecration of the Guru Granth Sahib and the subsequent police firing incidents.

Breaking his silence on Sidhu's attitude, Capt Amarinder on April 27 dared him to contest from Patiala in the 2022 polls and predicted that he will lose his deposit. Furthermore, he contended that the cricketer-turned-politician wanted to join some other party.

'NO RESOLUTION IN SIGHT'

Indications are that the high command may replace the state party chief Sunil Jakhar — to maintain the equilibrium amongst all sections within the party; and also the state party affairs-in-charge Harish Rawat — who himself wanted to concentrate in his home state, Uttarakhand, which is also slated to go to polls along with Punjab.

After meeting the party's national president Rahul Gandhi on Wednesday, had stated that a comprehensive party revamp was underway and consultations were on.

The party has all along been insisting on putting up a united face while bringing everyone along, and that was why the delay in taking the final call in the matter.

With the political equations going under massive change in Punjab and new alliances evolving, the party high command is engaged in a complex balancing act.

As Sidhu has made it clear not to work under Capt Amarinder, the party high command is looking for a fair resolution to the matter. To maintain the caste and regional equilibrium, the party wanted to have a post for a Hindu as per its tradition, besides giving a major responsibility to a Dalit leader, besides OBC.

"Sidhu is the main issue where the matter is holding-up. We are discussing ways to adjust all. Appointing working class president along with the party chief, or appointing two deputies are the proposals we are discussing," a senior party leader, who did not wish to be named, said.

It is believed that the party may give a major responsibility, that of state party chief or Cabinet berth to a Dalit leader for which name of Raj Kumar Verka is doing the rounds. Besides, the name of former Union Minister and MP Manish Tewari is also in the list of names as Hindu face.

Indications are that the high command is expected to take the final call by the first week of July.

PSPCL suffered ₹25 cr loss due to heavy storms

PNS ■ PATIALA

Punjab State Power Corporation Limited, the state's power utility, has assessed a financial loss of around ₹25 crores as a series of heavy storms in Punjab on June 10 and 11 and 13 causing massive damages to the state's power transmission and distribution infrastructure.

PSPCL chairman-cum-managing director A Venu Prasad on Thursday said that more than 15,000 workers, his so far, addressed more than 1.8 lakh power complaints across Punjab, mainly from Patiala, Kapurthala, Faridkot, Bathinda, Gurdaspur, Khanna, Ropar, Mohali, Sangrur, Barnala, due to destruction caused by heavy storms in the past two weeks.

The storms resulted in breakdown of around 900 11 kV and 66 kV feeders and 11 and 13 causing massive damages to the state's power transmission and distribution infrastructure.

Prasad said that with the continuous 24x7 monitoring, systematic patrolling of feeders and clearing of lines, PSPCL has been able to restore power supply of majority of the affected area within 72 hours. PSPCL consumers, especially in rural areas, also came forward to help PSPCL in all possible ways, he added.

Bengal Guv meets Prez over law & order in State

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Camping in New Delhi for the past two days apparently to seek a redress for the deteriorating law and order situation in Bengal, Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar on Thursday lodged his first complaint with President Ram Nath Kovind drawing his attention towards how human rights were being violated in the State, post polls.

The Governor who reportedly met the President for about 45 minutes submitted a note detailing his observations on the deteriorating law and order and human rights. State oppression of opposition workers, persecution of them by the ruling Trinamool Congress and what he called a "stunning silence" of the powers that be towards the ongoing bloodshed and loot.

In the note the Governor has raised the issue of a prejudiced administrative system where the police and the administration allegedly worked to further the interests of the ruling political party.

The Governor is also reported to have given detailed

reports on every district and sub-division where such violence was taking place and the places he recently visited to acquire a firsthand experience of the alleged trouble being perpetuated on the people, requesting presidential action.

Dhankhar who also met Home Minister Amit Shah on Thursday evening had on Wednesday called on National Human Rights Commission Chairman Justice Arun Mishra seeking his intervention in the present state of affairs in the State.

Sources said that the Home Minister briefed the Governor about the "retributive violence" being perpetrated on the people in a planned manner with the State Government turning a blind eye on the situation. He also mentioned the raised issue of latest "sectarian" attacks that took place at Chandannagore in Hooghly district and Tiljala area right in the heart of Capital Kolkata.

Earlier Bengal Opposition Leader and Trinamool Congress leader had complained about a Basirhat-Dhulagarh like com-



munal attacks being organized in these two places.

On whether Dhankhar had suggested any "constitutional measures" was not clear but TMC leaders in Kolkata said that the party was prepared of any such step with a minister from North Kolkata adding "whole State will erupt if the Centre dares impose Article 356".

The Governor who was on a 3-day trip to the national Capital earlier met Union Ministers Prahlad Singh Patel and Pralhad Joshi before Tuesday. The CISCE's Class 12 ISC result form will be issued by Union Minister of Coal and Mines and Parliamentary

Affairs..." Sources reporting on the "useful interactions" said talks also featured on investigations into the multi-core coal scam from Bengal -- involving some of TMC's top leadership.

Earlier complaining on the alleged "retributive post poll violence" Dhankhar said how the State Government was turning a blind eye to the incidents

that had rendered thousands of people homeless and properties worth cores looted and destroyed.

Later before flying to Delhi he wrote to Chief Minister who despite four Cabinet meetings having taken place in the past six weeks ... not a single word was spent on the post poll violence ... and no minister or officer visited the affected areas

BJP creating 'perspective' for ulterior motive: Didi

Kolkata: Bengal Chief Minister on Thursday chose to ignore the concerns of the opposition visit to Delhi saying "speech is silver and silence is golden".

Instead of directly attacking the Governor -- a usual tactic that he would adopt for the past couple of years -- you cannot make a person "political gimmicks" of the BJP to create a 'perspective' for some ulterior motive.

She would not refer to the Governor but say "you can rebuke a child into silence but you cannot make a person with bad eyesight to see reasons." Pointing at the alarming

state of affairs in the BJP-ruled States she said how the saffron party was bothered about the situations in UP, MP, Gujarat etc where "people are dying like animals and their bodies floating in the rivers."

Refuting charges of post-poll violence Banerjee said, "as a journalist you should have better information about the so-called violence... but have you seen violence anywhere? ... some incidents happened during election, but at that time, the Election Commission was in charge...".

She said the BJP was trying to create a perspective... But it is not true...

I don't support violence and I have asked my police to take stern action against those who will try to break law and order in the state."

In an apparent reference to the Governor's visit to Delhi she said "whatever you are witnessing now is nothing but the BJP leaders' gimmick. It is a part of their pre-planned move after facing a defeat in the poll which they cannot accept."

She said instead of disturbing Bengal "they (BJP) should look at UP, MP and Gujarat where the law and order situation is deteriorating every day." PNS

Kerala HC rejects PIL challenging reform moves in Lakshadweep

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

The Kerala High Court on Thursday dismissed a petition filed by a local activist challenging the Lakshadweep Administration's reform measures including the move to introduce Lakshadweep Development Authority Regulation 2021 which envisages development of towns on inhabited islands and the Prevention of Anti-Social Activities Act (PASA).

A bench consisting of judges S V Bhatti and Murali Purushothaman ruled that the so called LDAR 2021 was a mere draft of the administrative reform proposal and not a final order.

Discontentment was brewing in the archipelago in the Arabian Sea for the last two weeks over the move by the administrator of the Union Territory to bring in reforms in the islands and make the atolls as developed as Maldives. The public interest litigation challenging the move by the administrator was a reflection of the public ire towards the reforms.

The judges observed that the observation of the legality of the draft regulation which was under the active consideration of the administration was completely premature. Because of the draft administrative reforms which were opposed by the inhabitants of the islands, the BJP unit is getting isolated. Every day hundreds of party workers are leaving the island in search of a better life.

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Earlier in the day, Aisha Sultana, a struggling film artist, who had accused the Centre of using bio weapon against the Lakshadweep population, was granted interim anticipatory bail by a single judge bench of the Kerala High Court. Judge Ashok Menon while disposing of a petition filed by the artist ordered on June 20 in connection with a notice served on her under Section 41A of the Code of Criminal Procedure.

Maha deaths drop to 636, cases down to 9,830

TR RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

The Covid-19 deaths dropped to 636 in Maharashtra on Thursday, even as the infections came down to 9,830 in the state. A day after Maharashtra logged 1,236 deaths and 10,817 cases, the daily deaths came down by nearly half, while the infections dropped marginally by 277.

With 636 deaths reported on Thursday, the Covid-19 toll in the State jumped from 1,15,390 to 1,16,026.

With 9,830 fresh infections, the total infections in the state rose from 59,34,880 to 59,44,710.

As 5,890 patients were discharged from the hospitals across the state after full recovery, the total number of people discharged from the hospitals since the second week of March last year increased from 56,79,746 to 56,85,836. The recovery rate in the state dropped from 95.7 per cent to 95.6 per cent. The total 'active cases' in the state climbed from 1,36,661 to 1,39,960. The fatality rate in the state went up from 1.94 per cent to 1.95 per cent.

Pune with 1,047 cases continued to remain first in the state in terms of maximum number of 'active cases' in the state, while Mumbai with 18,417 stood second, followed by Thane (14,088), Kolhapur (13,485), Sangli (11,490), Belgaon (7,483) and the districts of Sindhudurg (5,581), Ahmednagar (4,829) and Raigad (4,810), Nagpur (4,742) and Nashik (4,355).

Class 12 students who wish to take exams can appear as situation gets normal: CBSE exam controller

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Following the Supreme Court's acceptance of the CBSE and CISCE class 12 board results' evaluation formula, the CBSE Controller of Examinations Sanyam Bhardwaj explained the 30:30:40 formula for the marking criteria for Class 12 exams, saying "40 per cent marks will be based on Class 12 pre-board, midterm exams, and unit test, 30 per cent marks will be based on Class 11 final exams, and 30 per cent marks will be based on the best of three-class 10 marks".

Bhardwaj said, "CBSE is also developing a software on the basis of which schools can calculate marks for Class 12 exams". He mentioned that the students who will sit for the exams can appear once the situation gets normal. "The process of exams for students who want to take will be initiated after results", he said adding that the Class 10 Board results will be declared on the basis of the Class 12. On its part, the CISCE mentioned that performance of the candidates in the school examinations in the subjects in Classes 9 and 10, measured through their best marks in the subjects in level and has no relevance at this stage," said Meenu Kanwar, Principal of the Amity International School Mayur Vihar, New Delhi.

However, Vikas Ojha, Principal of Foundation School, Buzar, appreciated the decision taken by the CBSE on the evaluation process given the odd prevailing circumstances that has affected the education system equally.

India will retaliate strongly if provoked, Rajnath warns China

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A face-offs continue at the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in Ladakh, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Thursday cautioned China that India is a peace loving nation but will hit back strongly if provoked. He also paid tributes to the 20 Indian army personnel including the commanding officer who were killed in a brawl with the Chinese troops in the Galwan valley a year ago.

Dedicating 12 strategically important roads built by the Border Roads Organisation (BRO) to the nation in the north east, particularly Assam and Arunachal Pradesh, on Thursday, Rajnath said India is a priest of world peace but any serious disturbance to peace and tranquility in border areas would have adverse implications.

"We seek world peace (but) if someone shows us an aggressive attitude, we will respond," Singh said, adding the "new roads will help secure international borders".

The defence minister said, "Last year in Galwan valley, our soldiers displayed exemplary courage and valour in line of duty. I salute all brave soldiers who laid down their lives fighting for the nation."

Highlighting the significance of the 2 roads including 10 in Arunachal Pradesh and one each in Ladakh and Jammu and Kashmir, he said they will not only give a boost in connectivity but would facilitate faster movement of troops along the international border.

He made these observations in an event organized in Lakhimpur district of Assam. The defence minister dedicated the roads virtually in the presence of Union Minister of Pradesh chief ministers Himanta Biswa Sarma and Pema Khandu respectively.

Army takes stock of LAC, LOC situation

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Army top brass on Thursday began a three-day brainstorming session to review the situation on the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in Ladakh and the Line of Control (LOC) and the operational readiness to meet any challenge.

Incidentally, the Army Commanders' Conference comes a year after the Galwan Valley clash in Eastern Ladakh.

The face-offs began in May last year when the Pangong Tso (lake) in Ladakh. The Chinese stopped an Indian patrol leading to a scuffle in which several soldiers from both the sides were injured. Soon, stand-offs erupted at some other points including Hot Springs, Gogra and the Depsang valley.

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Amit Shah launches helpline for cyber fraud

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Thursday launched a national helpline (155260) and reporting platform for preventing financial loss due to cyber fraud.

The national helpline and reporting platform provides a mechanism for persons cheated in cyber frauds to report such cases to prevent loss of their hard earned money.

"The facility empowers both the banks and the police, by leveraging new-age technologies for sharing online fraud related information and taking action in almost real time. The loss of defrauded money in online cheating cases can be stopped by chasing the money trail and stopping its further flow before it is taken out of the digital ecosystem by the fraudster," the MHA said in a statement.

Currently, the helpline and its reporting platform has all the major public and private sector banks on board. The notable ones include State Bank of India, Punjab National Bank, Bank of Baroda, Bank of India, Union Bank, IndusInd, HDFC Bank, ICICI Bank, Axis, Yes and Kotak Mahindra Bank. It also has all major wallets and merchants such as PayTM, PhonePe, Mobikwik, Flipkart and Amazon linked to it, said MHA.

Central BJP leaders arrive in Agartala to meet rebel MLAs amid speculation of them joining TMC

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In an urgent bid to avert a TMC overreach in Tripura, BJP rushed Party leaders including its General Secretary, BL Santosh to Agartala who on Thursday held marathon meetings with party MLAs to work out a reconciliation between the Chief Minister Biplob Kumar Deb and the Dissident group in the State.

BJP State president Dr Manik Saha, accepted 'differences' saying "we are a family, and in a family it happens sometimes and has been sorted out." He, However, skirted answer to the query on TMC's attempt to poach BJP MLAs in Tripura.

BJP is apprehending that Mukul Roy back in the ruling TMC fold in West Bengal may organise defections of MLAs from the faction-ridden BJP in the state. BJP's fears are not unfounded as it was Roy in the BJP who had facilitated defections of six Congress MLAs to the BJP in 2016. BJP central leadership rushed Santosh and its organisation secretary for the Northeast, Ajay Jamwal to Agartala a day before and met with Chief Minister and MLAs including 'rebels'.

Santosh reportedly held a closed door one-to-one meeting at Agartala with several BJP leaders to understand the differences and address the grievances and differences.

BJP General Secretary had discussion with MPs Pratima Bhownick and Rebati Tripura, Deputy Chief Minister Jishnu Debbarman and dissident MLAs. Tripura BJP in-charge Vinod Kumar Sonkar, who was also to arrive here, is to cancel his visit on account of a family issue. Dissident MLAs like Sudip Roy Barman, Ram Prasad Paul, Ashish Das, Sushanta Choudhury and Ashish Kumar Saha went to the party office to meet Santosh.

Sources said he also met Deputy Chief Minister, two MPs, four Ministers and the MLAs who were called in six separate groups. Dissidents demanded replacement of state president. Dr Manik Saha, expansion of Cabinet and certain changes in the organisation.

BJP leaders here, however, denied rebel activities in Tripura. BJP saying senior leaders are in the state to discuss assembly poll preparations which are thought two-years ago.

Raj district second in country to build over 93K houses under PM Awas Yojana

Jaipur: Notwithstanding the difficult times brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic, the tribal-dominated Dungarpur district in Rajasthan has scripted ed history by becoming the first place in the state and second in the country to build 93,128 houses under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana.

The Dakshin Dinajpur district in West Bengal occupies the top position in the national list, while Hooghly in the same state is placed third.

As per the list released on Wednesday, Chhattisgarh's Rajnandgaon is placed fourth, followed by Kanker in the same state.

The list took many parameters into consideration and declared Dungarpur as the first district in Rajasthan to build over 93,000 houses under the PM Awas Yojana in the last one year, officials confirmed.

District Collector Suresh Kumar Ola said that different teams under Anjali Rajoriya, Chief Executive Officer, Zila Parishad, Dungarpur, worked hard at the ground level to accomplish the feat.

Rajoriya said that as many as 1,00,054 houses were approved under the scheme in the district of which 93,128 were completed.

Officials said that besides fighting the Covid crisis, the district officials also focused on ensuring that people do not migrate for employment and have their own roofs over their heads before the monsoon set in. Keeping this in mind, they monitored the construction works across the district and ensured that the set goal was achieved. They also ensured the generation of a significant number of man hours for the jobs besides creating employment opportunities under MNREGA. IANS

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Active Covid cases drop below 70k in Andhra, tally 8.3 lakh

IANS ■ AMARAVATI

Active Covid cases dropped below the 70,000 mark to reach 69,831 on Thursday in Andhra Pradesh, even as 6,151 new Covid infections have been reported.

With the new cases, Andhra Pradesh's Covid tally crossed 18.3 lakh.

On a positive note, 7,728 more people recovered from the disease in the past 24 hours, increasing the total number of recoveries over 17.5 lakh.

Bucking the daily trend of an average 10,000 recoveries, the southern state witnessed fewer recoveries on Thursday.

East Godavari district reported the highest number of cases at 1,244, followed by Chittoor (937), West Godavari (647), Prakasam (554), Kadapa (478), Krishna (424), Anantapur (359), Guntur (331), Nellore (274), Srikakulam (264), Visakhapatnam (237), Kurnool (203) and Vizianagaram (199).

Except for Krishna and Vizianagaram, all other districts in Andhra Pradesh have now reported more than 1 lakh Covid cases, however, Krishna district is also inching towards the 1 lakh mark, just shy of 3,000 cases.

With 1.02 lakh more tests conducted in the past 24 hours, the total number of tests carried out in Andhra Pradesh has crossed the 2.08 crore-mark.



Visitors at Bada Imambara that reopened after some ease in Covid 19 lockdown, in Lucknow on Thursday



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PAPER WITH PASSION

India-Pak thaw?

Both countries would prefer to keep taking small steps that would not alter the status quo on their core stands

India and Pakistan have taken another tentative step away from the precipice of a bilateral freeze with both sides clearing the assignment visas of diplomats and High Commission staff pending because of a two-year stand-off. This will help staff on both sides to resume work and both Missions will get back to their sanctioned strength. The numbers were reduced after relations soured, with Pakistan demanding the revocation of Jammu and Kashmir's (J&K's) special status by India in August, 2019. Pakistan even recalled its High Commission and India asked the neighbour to reduce its Mission strength by half. This is the latest in a series of measures taken in recent months to reach a point from where a bilateral thaw could be achieved if both sides so wished. The year began with speculation about the mediation of the United Arab Emirates between the two countries. It acquired the halo of truth in late February when both armies agreed to adhere to the 2003 ceasefire pact at the Line of Control. The Emirati Foreign Minister has separately met his counterparts in India and Pakistan as well. A sense of calm simultaneously entered the bilateral space. For instance, India allowed Pakistan Prime Minister's plane to fly through its airspace while on its way to Sri Lanka. The Pakistan Army chief suggested in March that both sides should bury the hatchet and move ahead. The Indian Prime Minister greeted his Pakistani counterpart on Pakistan Day. A Covid-infected Prime Minister Imran Khan received speedy recovery wishes from Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Khan offered anti-Covid medical equipment to India.



It is much too early to read any long-term messaging from these developments. The basic issues remain where they are, both stands as frozen as ever. India will not revoke its decision on J&K and Pakistan has shown no inclination to withdraw its demand either. India continues to insist on Pakistan discouraging cross-border terrorism even though Islamabad blatantly denies involvement in spite of concrete evidence. Both sides, however, need respite from their individual sources of stress. Pakistan faces the blacklist threat from the Financial Action Task Force because of relentless pressure from the US and India. With the US leaving Afghanistan and much of the Taliban leadership living in Pakistan, it has its hands full on that front. The least it wants at this juncture is further escalation of tension with India. New Delhi, on the other hand, has been engaged in a stand-off with China in Ladakh for over a year and would not want the other border with Pakistan to become a hotspot. For their own reasons, both countries would prefer to keep taking harmless steps that would not alter the status quo on their core stands but ease day-to-day tensions and extend the fragile peace. These measures will at best test the flexibility of both sides to create conditions in the future to discuss the broader bilateral issues.

Women work in a paddy field, in the absence of their family members who are staging a protest in Delhi against the new farm laws, during the monsoon season at Daun Kalan village in Patiala

PICTALK



Women work in a paddy field, in the absence of their family members who are staging a protest in Delhi against the new farm laws, during the monsoon season at Daun Kalan village in Patiala

Battle lines drawn

UP is going to witness a multi-cornered fight in the Assembly poll, where Yogi and Akhilesh will be the main contenders

The BSP chief Mayawati's decision to join hands with the Akali Dal in Punjab and her description of the SP as an expert in "narrow politics" — whatever it may mean — is full of portent for Uttar Pradesh (UP) politics ahead of the Assembly poll next year. By aligning with the Badals, Mayawati has shown that she may not be game for any alliance in UP with the Congress. Similarly, by unleashing a vituperative attack on the SP and calling it an expert in despicable manipulations, malice, and casteism, she has virtually shut the door on any SP-led broad-based anti-BJP tie-up. This has not come as a surprise to anyone. Except for making occasional noises on Covid mismanagement and the law and order situation under the Yogi Adityanath Government, the BSP supremo never indicated that she was eager to be part of the Opposition game plan to dislodge the BJP-led Government. With Mayawati out of the way, SP chief Akhilesh Yadav has limited options. Already there are talks that the SP can join hands with the AAP and also rope in the RLD and farmer leader Rakesh Tikait as well as Dalit leader Chandrashekhar Azad. So far there is no clarity if the Congress could be part of any such alliance. If that happens, then the Congress will have to swallow its pride and accept a smattering of seats and sacrifice its mission to revive the party in India's most politically-important State.

While the BSP and the Congress seem to be preparing to ferry their own boats, Asaduddin Owaisi is all but ready to join the battle for UP after grabbing five seats in the Bihar Assembly elections last year and sabotaging the prospects of the RJD on at least 11 seats, much to the delight of the BJP. In December, Owaisi announced that the AIMIM would contest the Assembly elections in UP. Owaisi is trying to go to the polls with Om Prakash Rajbhar, whose SBSP has considerable following among the Rajbhar, Pal and several backward castes in the politically-significant Bundelkhand region. A former BJP ally, Rajbhar is the sitting MLA from Zahoorabad constituency in UP's Ghazipur district. By every indication, UP is going to witness a multi-cornered contest where Yogi and Akhilesh will be the main contenders. In addition to the caste factors, the ongoing farmers' agitation will also play a key role in the polls, and Tikait will be a key player in Western UP. If the Centre does not concede the demand of the farmers, then the region could see major political churning and bring together the Jats and Muslim voters on one plank. This could be deadly for the BJP. The Government has already started making the right noises and resumed offers for dialogues with the growers. But more than anything, the pandemic will be the key factor that could decide the outcome of UP polls. If the third wave of the outbreak hits UP before the polls, Yogi will face an unenviable task in managing the electoral challenge.

Can Israel be led by a fragile coalition?



PRIYADARSHI DUTTA

Will Bennett be able to stay afloat or go down the quicksand of a hopelessly divided Knesset? His ousted rival Netanyahu has not thrown in the towel yet

Israel has got a new Prime Minister after 12 years, an exceptionally long period in the history of the Zionist country with splintered politics. Not even David Ben-Gurion, Israel's first Prime Minister, had served so long continuously in any of his two stints i.e. 1948-54 and 1955-63 as did Benjamin Netanyahu in his second innings before being ousted by Naftali Bennett recently. Interestingly, both Netanyahu and Bennett came from the prestigious Israeli commando unit Sayeret Matkal also called Unit 269. Its motto — "Who dares, wins" is likely to play out in Israeli politics in the days ahead. The fragile coalition of Yamina, Yesh Atid, New Hope, Blue and White, Yisrael Beiteinu, Meretz and Labour parties forming the 36th Government is an audacity of hope that might go down the quicksands of a divided Knesset anyway. With Likud still the single-largest party, only one vote (60-59) differentiates the ruling "Parliamentary Grouping" from the Opposition.

Way back on May 17, 1999 Netanyahu was dislodged from the prime ministerial post for the first time. His then rival was an Israeli Defence Forces' General whose moving eulogy on Netanyahu's late brother Yonatan Netanyahu (1946-76) formed a part of the school curriculum in Israel. Yonatan was martyred in Operation Thunderbolt, or Israel's daring commando mission to rescue Israeli passengers from the hijacked Air France flight from Entebbe Airport in Uganda on July 4, 1976. The author of the eulogy was Ehud Barak, the man who became the 10th Prime Minister of Israel, by defeating Netanyahu convincingly.

For a brief period between 1996 and 2001, Israel had experimented with direct prime ministerial elections in a bid to arrest political instability. It was, however, soon junked after Ehud Barak's incumbency lasted less than two years, due to vicissitudes of Israeli politics, despite the fact that the Knesset completed its normal four-year term. Exactly 20 years later, it was interesting to find Netanyahu pitching for a revival of the system. He argued it could bring political stability in Israel by shielding the Government from the Knesset's longevity. However, the failed idea, found little favour with Knesset committee members mostly in the hands of Netanyahu's opponents.

Despite Netanyahu's best efforts a motley "Parliamentary grouping" has been able to dislodge him from the Prime Minister's post. His 12 years in the august office from March 31, 2009 have finally come to an end. Will this be a political requiem of 71-year-old Netanyahu, as many people feel and want? The man himself disagrees. Son of a centenarian and historian father, the late Bentzion Netanyahu, he perhaps feels life and history will both be on his side.

Naftali Bennett, the new Prime Minister of Israel, has impressive credentials. A commando by training, he served in reserve duty of the Sayeret Matkal. In 1999, he founded a high-tech company Cyota, specialising in information security. He also served as CEO, of Soluto, which he later sold for around \$100 million. In 2005, destiny brought him close to Netanyahu, when the latter was Leader of Opposition in the Knesset. He became the head of



Minister of Diaspora Affairs in the 34th Government. Did Bennett realise that he would come to lead the 36th Government? The credit greatly goes to the fissiparous politics of Israel, which can throw up impossible coalitions as the current one. The true credit goes to Yair Lapid, a former journalist and boxer, who leads the Yesh Atid party, who convinced Bennett to form an anti-Netanyahu coalition that can seize power. While Lapid is avowedly secular, Bennett is a demonstratively religious Jew. Contrary to speculation Mansour Abbas has not become a Deputy Prime Minister. His United Arab List itself is a divided house on joining the Government. This was apparently after the bad Press they got in the neighbouring Arab countries on their plans to join the Government.



WITH BENNETT BEING PRO-SETTLEMENT, HE IS LIKELY TO FOLLOW A HAWKISH POLICY VIS-A-VIS WEST BANK. THE TWO-STATE SOLUTION, DEFUNCT ANYWAY SINCE 2007, AFTER FATAH AND HAMAS IRRETRIEVABLY SPLIT, WILL ELUDE THE LIBERALS AGAIN

With Bennett being pro-settlement, he is likely to follow a hawkish policy vis-a-vis West Bank. The two-state solution, defunct anyway since 2007, after Fatah and Hamas irretrievably split, will elude the liberals again. (The writer is an author and independent researcher based in New Delhi. The views expressed are personal.)

Minister of Diaspora Affairs in the 34th Government. Did Bennett realise that he would come to lead the 36th Government? The credit greatly goes to the fissiparous politics of Israel, which can throw up impossible coalitions as the current one. The true credit goes to Yair Lapid, a former journalist and boxer, who leads the Yesh Atid party, who convinced Bennett to form an anti-Netanyahu coalition that can seize power. While Lapid is avowedly secular, Bennett is a demonstratively religious Jew. Contrary to speculation Mansour Abbas has not become a Deputy Prime Minister. His United Arab List itself is a divided house on joining the Government. This was apparently after the bad Press they got in the neighbouring Arab countries on their plans to join the Government.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Let masking-up become a habit



The gradual recession of the second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic should not make us complacent and we must not let our guard down. Vaccination is a time-consuming process, a fact that should persuade us to continue to adhere to Covid-19 appropriate behaviour. As it is the experts are warning that there will be a third wave of the Coronavirus outbreak as has been in other countries like the UK. So if we have to prevent the third wave or at least delay it till the maximum number of citizens are inoculated we need to adhere to all Covid protocols in all seriousness. Wearing masks is a non-pharmaceutical intervention being made worldwide for the containment of the pandemic. It is a proven fact that it saves

lives. A naked face or a face without a mask is an open invitation to the virus. Masks should be of high quality and worn properly. All sorts of masks are now available in the market; they are bought and used for whatever they are worth which is not much. Only those masks that really save the purpose of preventing the transmission of the virus should be allowed to be sold.

The Government can incentivise the production of good quality masks and subsidise them. Better still would be the procurement and distribution of masks free of cost to citizens by the Government. However, the way many people still wear masks undermines the need for greater awareness of how to wear the masks properly. A mask below the nose, the mouth and the jaw is not a protective armour against the virus. The intended purpose is served only when a mask fully covers the nostrils and the mouth and fits tightly. Properly worn, good quality masks go a long way towards halting the spread of the disease. We must all make mask-wearing a habit till the pandemic comes to an end.

G David Milton | Maruthancode

RIGHT TO PROTEST

Sir — There is a difference between the constitutionally-guaranteed right to protest and terrorist activity, said the Delhi High Court, as it granted bail to three student activists arrested more than a year ago in connection with riots in northeast Delhi that followed protests against the controversial citizenship law. The three students from Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), were arrested under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA), and for this the court was sharp in its criticism of the Delhi Police. It noted that the UAPA, an anti-terror law, could not be casually applied to petty criminal acts or protests by citizens.

In its anxiety to suppress dissent, in the mind of the State, the line between the constitutionally-guaranteed right to protest and terrorist activity seems to be getting blurred. The High Court remarked that the chargesheet lacked any specific, particularised, factual allegations that would make out the ingredients of offences under the UAPA. In the absence of an actual case against the offenders, the process then becomes the punishment. Scathing judgments by courts are notable, but unfortunately not a solution to the problem. It is time to uphold the right to protest else, India will no longer remain a true democracy.

CK Subramaniam | Navi Mumbai

LOOK OUT FOR CHIRAG

Sir — Blood is thicker than water is a well-known saying. This applies surely to the country's political system. Both at the national and the regional level fathers, sons, daughters, uncles and nephews have influenced India's politics from a long time. Earlier, politics wasn't a profession; it was a passion. The decline in political discourse of the country began with the onset of dynastic politics. Not that the political families always prospered in the process as affection and amicability often gave way to bad blood, betrayal and belligerence. Chirag Paswan will know better because he is "shell shocked" by the election of his uncle Ashupati Kumar Paras who "rebelled" against his nephew for "disrespecting"

him. Disgruntlement with Chirag's style of functioning had come to the fore when a couple of IJPs senior leaders switched sides some time ago. Instead of introspection, the young leader's detached look appeared to have surprised his supporters. Nothing succeeds like success, and failure is an orphan. The IJP's poor showing in the Assembly elections seem to have emboldened his rivals in the party. All this said, all is not lost for Chirag. He has a long political journey ahead. Bihar politics is most likely to open up sooner than later. Nitish Kumar cannot hold his own forever. Chinks in his armour have repeatedly been exposed. Lulu Prasad is still in the background. Undoubtedly, Tejashwi and Chirag are the men to look out for.

Ganapathi Bhat | Akola

A GOOD DECISION

Sir — The Central Board of Secondary

Education (CBSE) has decided to go for a '30:30:40 formula' — 30 per cent from Class 10 Board, 30 per cent from Class 11 exam, and 40 per cent from Class 12 assessment — to tabulate Class 12 results this year, the Board informed the Supreme Court which gave its green signal. The Council for Indian School Certificate Examinations (CISCE) has also decided to go for a similar formula as the CBSE, except they have decided to take the average of the last six years.

The apex court said there was no question of rolling back the decision of not holding exams. Students who are not satisfied with the result will be given an opportunity to appear in examinations when conditions are conducive for it. This is a good decision and a fair one for all. This is the best the powers that can do right now.

Bhagwan Thadani | Mumbai

SOUNDBITE

We did our best to keep away the supporters who came to take part in the function. We even closed the gates of our party office.

Kerala Leader of Opposition — VD Sathyanathan

Would like to see the cessation of hostilities be maintained in order to give space for the relevant parties to work out arrangements to stabilise the situation.

United Nations Secretary-General — Antonio Guterres

Whatever my equity is today, is mainly due to the success of my social entertainers, which made me connect to the people of India.

Actor — Ayushmann Khurrana

Both India and New Zealand have got very strong pace-bowling attacks. India has got a more balanced attack because they have better spinners.

Former Australia captain — Ian Chappell

Met Dharmendra Pradhan and proposed a revival plan for the PCPIR project in AP. This plan will pave the way for all round industrial development coupled with employment in the region.

Andhra Pradesh Industries Minister — Mekapati Goutham Reddy

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com



FIRST COLUMN

FIND INDIA'S PLACE IN THE WEST

World leaders want to shift from a China-dictated supply chain and find new allies. This is our chance



KUMARDEEP BANERJEE

A couple of high decibel global events in picturesque locales dominated headlines in the past few days while India grimly remembered one year of a brutal military ambush in the north-eastern frontiers by China. This sets the stage in more ways than one for a focused coalition of open dialogues between some of the richest and largest democracies in the world. One of the first few events in these series was the new US president meeting old allies and not-so-friendly regimes at various platforms like G7 and NATO besides holding bilaterals on crucial world issues. This also signifies US' rekindled interest in multilateral platforms and re-claiming its seat on the global stage. The world economies have undergone a significant change ever since the G7 started meeting formally in the 1970s. A couple in the G7 have lost their largest-economy status and new ones like India and China have moved in. China has galloped to being an extremely voracious market for many European luxury products, cars, etc., building significant interlocked linkages with these economies. It has also leaptfrogged on the global technology arena with its gigantic manufacturing units cornering a significant share of the global supply chain for technology equipment. Heady with its recent wealth and technology prowess, China has



also moved its military units to strategic locations in its neighborhood while using its debt-trap diplomacy on weaker nations as the 'velvet glove on an iron fist'. The post-2008 financial crisis world, lulled by the need for large, addressable markets and money for spending, has been ignoring most of these strategic moves until 2020, when suddenly a microbe jolted everyone out of their dream. Citizens around the globe experienced their worst nightmares played out with the Covid pandemic raging and bringing nation after nation down. The only exception was China (from where the microbe originated), which in just two months was able to bring its economy back on track while continuing with its technology and military maneuvers on the global stage.

However, the world has perhaps learnt a lesson and despite ambivalence among some open democratic countries, the majority are willing to collaborate and work towards a new order. This is where India brused by China in the middle of the pandemic has a huge opportunity. The key narrative emerging from the recent global meetings of world leaders has been to move away from a China-dictated supply chain and find new allies and friends. Strategically the Indo-Pacific region therefore gains prominence in all top leader's dialogues. India has a geographical advantage of being right in the middle of this theatre of global attention and action. The coming together of US, Japan, Australia and India aboard the Quad focusing on a peaceful Indo-Pacific is a challenge to China's aggressive military moves in that region. India has to move aggressively on QUAD, bringing the other three allies on same page on shared issues of concern. India currently is one of the largest vaccine makers in the world and what most leaders agree is the world is as weak today as the last unvaccinated person. The aim to put a job on every shoulder cannot be achieved without India playing a significant role in the process. This is also a huge money-making opportunity for the country while creating a specialisation in the emerging threat of biological hazards preventive care. India has to negotiate with the big pharma for manufacturing opportunities simplifying regulations for setting up global units in the country in order to ease the manner of doing business while working towards the dream of becoming the pharmacy to the world.

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

Steering the boat safely amid Covid

India needs to prepare well for a competent and concerted response that can anticipate, avert or attenuate future public health emergencies



K SRINATH REDDY

Several States in India have started to open up, with their respective lists of permitted and restricted activities. While there is concern about the undercounting of cases and deaths in some States, the overall trend of a receding second wave is not being disputed. The frenetic rush and public anguish, which marked the frequently futile search for hospital beds that became the painful images of the second wave are no longer the dominant themes of Indian or international media reports. That, in itself, provides assurance that the second wave is ebbing.

However, it would be unwise to assume that the turbulent waters of the second wave have stilled and the boat is set on a safe course ahead. We still need to see whether there will be a rebound when the lockdown eases. There are already reports of people rushing to tourist spots and holiday resorts. Malls and restaurants are crowded. These represent the more affluent sections, but the signals they send can misguide the rest of the population. Desire to live life to the full is understandable after lockdowns but wisdom must caution against abandonment of safeguards against a virus which still poses an active threat. Common sense tells us that if some care-less revellers start prancing around when the boat has just left the rough sea, it can still capsize, putting everybody in danger.

Even as we steady the boat, when it sails out of choppy waters, we must watch the charts and study the signals to see when it might be rocked again by a third wave. Considerable speculation has already commenced in the media about the timing and contours of such a wave. Predictions have been made, by mathematical modellers and some epidemiologists, that we may be rocked by the third wave in November this year. While the accuracy of such predictions is uncertain, since they are based on several assumptions, we do need to be well prepared to meet such a threat whenever it arises.

Several elements will determine the severity of a third wave: the nature of variants in circulation; the number of persons who have acquired immunity from vaccination or recent infection; the number of susceptible people who are available for the virus to infect and cause symptomatic illness; adherence of people to public health advisories on wearing masks and avoiding crowds; ability of public authorities to prevent super-spreader events and the preparedness of our health systems to ensure timely case detection, supportive home care or assured hospitalisation with competent service provision.

Our surveillance systems must be sharpened, to detect the levels of circulating variants and emergence of new forms. Case detection will need to be based on both testing and clinical features gathered by healthcare teams visiting homes. False negative results from tests can be compensated by adding clinical criteria (syndromic surveillance, as used for other infectious disease outbreaks). Genomic analysis of 5-10 per cent of all positive test samples would be needed, with higher levels of scrutiny for virus samples recovered from international travellers. Since testing would pose more challenges in rural areas, symptom-based surveillance and contact-based quarantine would have to be followed, along with the use of rapid antigen tests for spot diagnosis and mobile laboratories to carry samples for RT-PCR testing to authorised laboratories.

Home care would be appropriate and ade-



OUR SURVEILLANCE SYSTEMS MUST BE SHARPENED, TO DETECT THE LEVELS OF CIRCULATING VARIANTS AND THE EMERGENCE OF NEW FORMS. CASE DETECTION WILL NEED TO BE BASED ON BOTH TESTING AND CLINICAL FEATURES GATHERED BY HEALTHCARE TEAMS VISITING HOMES

The writer, a cardiologist and epidemiologist, is president, Public Health Foundation of India. The views expressed are personal.



quate for 80-85 per cent of all symptomatically infected cases. Primary health care teams must be trained in providing supportive care and monitoring. Symptoms, pulse oximetry readings, temperature should be part of daily monitoring of such home-managed persons. If the person is a diabetic, blood sugar too should be monitored with a glucometer. Telemedicine facilities should be scaled up and standardised, to support home management. Prior planning should be done to ensure timely transfer of a person under home care to an intermediate or advanced care facility when the need arises.

Sub-district, district and medical college hospitals should be equipped to handle a possible surge of the third wave. It is difficult to predict how severe it would be, as it depends on the behaviour of the virus and its different variants, as well as the behaviour of people in adhering to public health advisories on masks, ventilation and avoidance of crowding. However, strengthening of the healthcare infrastructure and health-workforce at various levels of care is long overdue. This is an opportunity to reduce the existing disparities of healthcare provisions between states and districts as well as between urban and rural areas.

There is speculation in the media that children will be more affected in a third wave. It is possible that more children will be exposed in an open society than during the first wave when they

were mostly sheltered or even during the second wave when they were still partly guarded. Numbers of susceptible adults may also decrease by that time as several of them would have been vaccinated or infected by then. Nevertheless, adults will still be far more likely to have severe infection than children where the vast majority will have asymptomatic or mild infections. Even so, expanding hospital services for children, including intensive care capacity, will still serve a useful purpose by strengthening paediatric care for many serious illnesses.

Vaccination must be speeded up, with accelerated domestic production and international procurement. The number of vaccination centres must be increased. Vaccination in rural areas will require careful planning of logistics, sensitive communication for confidence building, support for overcoming technology barriers to registration and availability of close-to-home vaccination centres. The Delta variant poses challenges with high infectivity and capacity for vaccine evasion, at higher levels than the wild virus or the Alpha variant. However, there is reassuring evidence that the variant responds well to two doses of all available vaccines. So, we need to provide both doses of vaccines to vulnerable persons, identified by age and co-morbidities. Even pregnant women now need to be regarded as candidates for priority vaccination.

The period of relative calm will also give us time to build partnerships between and among government services, local bodies, non-governmental organisations, school personnel, trade unions, industry representatives, community groups and citizen volunteers. Capacity-building for concerted action among these groups will give us the collective strength to respond more effectively to the third wave. Whether to promote Covid-appropriate behaviour or to reduce vaccine hesitancy, local networks in the community are vital. Community based surveillance systems can also give early alerts of rising cases.

We should also utilise this opportunity to enhance health and nutrition literacy to increase immunity. Healthy diets and physical activity are vital for both innate and adaptive immunity to fight the virus and also for prevention and control of non-communicable diseases which are the predominant co-morbidities that predict poor outcomes in Covid infection. Promotion of healthy living habits using the Covid platform, will help foster future health and well-being.

We need to prepare well for a competent and concerted response that can anticipate, avert or attenuate future public health emergencies. By being forewarned and forearmed, we can restrict the third wave to a ripple rather than a tidal wave.

POINTCOUNTERPOINT

WE AGREED TO TASK EXPERTS IN BOTH OUR COUNTRIES TO WORK ON SPECIFIC UNDERSTANDINGS ABOUT WHAT IS OFF-LIMITS. — US PRESIDENT JOE BIDEN



WE NEED TO THROW OUT ALL INSINUATIONS, SIT DOWN AT THE EXPERT LEVEL AND START WORKING IN THE INTERESTS OF THE US AND RUSSIA. — RUSSIAN PRESIDENT VLADIMIR PUTIN

Covid orphans must be a priority care group

There is a need to remove bottlenecks and unburden the courts so that the process of providing permanent care facilities for orphans is speeded up

The period between April 1 and June 5 found 30,071 children in need of care of protection as 26,176 of them lost either parent, 3,621 children lost both parents and 274 children were abandoned. Many of them are Covid Orphans. Of them 15,620 are boys, 14,447 girls and four transgenders. 11,815 are in the 8-13 age group and 5,107 in the 4-7 age group. Nearly all of them are in the care of a guardian, a family member or a surviving parent while the rest are in shelter homes, orphanages or with special adoption agencies.



SUBHASH C PANDEY

The writer is former Special Secretary, Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Government of India. The views expressed are personal.

ly on the rise. Several financial support measures have been announced for orphaned children from the PM Cares Fund, Ministry of Women and Child Development and by States. However, the issue remains that these orphans' needs in terms of permanent homes and settlement have to be taken care of as a priority.

Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015 is primary legislation for ensuring the safety, security, dignity and well-being of children. The orphans need to be produced before Children Welfare Committees (CWCs) which decide whether the child can be kept with the extended family, in foster care with support or at State-run centres. The Act also lays down procedures



for their adoption. However, in practice, it has been found that the courts are heavily clogged with arrears and the adoption proceedings take years. In 2015, the Government instituted a centralised online system CARINGS (Child Adoption Resource Information and Guidance System) to facilitate adoption primarily to check abuse of adoption proceedings by NGOs. Only prospective

parents registered on CARINGS portal managed by Central Adoption Resource Agency (CARA) can adopt children. CARA prefers orphans under kinship care, with shelter homes being the last resort. A child under two years is considered 'legally free' to be adopted if no one approaches the shelter home for two months. The waiting period is four months for older children. As many as 5,693 children were adopted in 2010 and 5,964 in 2011. After the institution of CARA and CARINGS in 2015, the pace of adoption has distinctly slowed down to 188 in 2015-16, 3,210 in 2016-17 and 2,160 in 2020-21. The pandemic has slowed down the adoption process further as it also affected functioning of courts.

There is a bias towards adoption of infants. Over 80 per cent of adoptions are of children below two years. Litigation and challenges end up delaying the adoption process. In the last three years, 174 cases ended in disruption — termination of adoption proceeding before finalisation — and five cases ended in dissolution — termination after finalisation. Hundreds of adoption cases are still pending in courts. An amendment to the concerned Act to transfer powers vested in courts to District Magistrates in order to speed up adoptions process is awaiting Rajya Sabha approval. The amendment also seeks to give a prominent role to District Magistrates in superintendence of Child Care Institutions, mostly run by

NGOs supposedly under the oversight of the Social Welfare Department. It is found that the NGOs are interested in getting funding without properly providing even basic facilities of food, hygiene and sanitation. There have also been serious complaints of abuse of inmates in some of NGO-run facilities. The 2015 law had ushered in the concept of foster care in India in which the child is placed with a caregiver running a residential child care facility or in a private home of a foster parent. They receive financial support from Government. The system provides personalised parental care in a family-like environment to a group of unrelated children in a community setting. It is considered suitable for street chil-

dren who pass through a weaning period prior to their placement in individual foster care or any other form of family-based care. In the broader interest of these children, there is a case for evolving newer, more flexible mechanisms that are less stringent than full-scale legal adoption or a formal foster-care arrangement. One mechanism is that of sponsorship charities run by NGOs, which can be adopted by the Government to connect a donor/sponsor with a particular child. It allows for financial and emotional support without the legal implications on succession. Not only the childless seeking adoption but persons of means with children can come forward under a Government-managed system to support children.

Oli cannot appoint PM: Oli heading minority Govt after losing trust vote in House

PTI ■ KATHMANDU

Nepal's embattled Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli on Thursday defended his Government's controversial decision to dissolve the House of Representatives and told the Supreme Court that it is not up to the judiciary to appoint a premier as it cannot undertake the legislative and the executive functions of the state.

Office to furnish a written response within 15 days. Furnishing a written reply to the Supreme Court on Thursday as demanded by the Constitutional Bench, Oli said he cannot appoint a Prime Minister as it cannot undertake the legislative and the executive functions of the state.



This whole issue, saying Article 76 of the Constitution grants the sole right to appoint a Prime Minister to the President only. "Appointment of a Prime Minister is absolutely a political and executive process," he underlined. "As per Article 76 (5), there is no such provision of a person gaining or losing a vote of confidence in the House being examined by the legislative or the judiciary," he said.

Congress President Sher Bahadur Deuba had submitted signatures of as many as 149 lawmakers before President Bhandari, requesting her to appoint him the new prime minister as per Article 75 (6). As many as 29 members of the Madhav Nepal faction of the CPN-UML had provided their signatures showing support to Deuba.

He filed in the Supreme Court against the dissolution of the House, which they said was "unconstitutional".

The Supreme Court has started hearing on the case. Regular hearings on the case will resume from June 23. Nepal plunged into a political crisis on December 20 last year after President Bhandari dissolved the House and announced fresh elections on April 30 and May 10 at the recommendation of Prime Minister Oli, amidst a tussle for power within the ruling Nepal Communist Party (NCP).

In February, the apex court reinstated the dissolved House and asked Oli to reappoint a caretaker government. Oli repeatedly defended his move to dissolve the lower house, saying some leaders of his party were attempting to form a "parallel government".

UK Parl panel warns of China's 'bullying' in multilateral arena

PTI ■ LONDON

There is evidence of China's increasing use of "aggressive" means to "coerce" states to back their position or their candidates towards a steady acquisition of key official positions in multiple multilateral organisations, a report by an influential UK parliamentary panel warned on Thursday.

report, the committee calls upon the UK to take a more proactive role in combating the influence of countries who seek to manipulate and undermine multilateral organisations and mobilise the soft power of the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) to strengthen democracies.

Editors of Hong Kong newspaper arrested under security law

AP ■ HONG KONG

Hong Kong police used a sweeping national security law Thursday to arrest five editors and executives of a pro-democracy newspaper on charges of colluding with foreign powers — the first time the legislation has been used against the press in yet another sign of an intensifying crackdown by Chinese authorities in the city long known for its freedoms.

Iran nuclear deal hangs in balance as Islamic Republic votes

AP ■ DUBAI

Iran's tattered nuclear deal with world powers hangs in the balance as the country prepares to vote on Friday for a new president and diplomats press on with efforts to get both the US and Tehran to reenter the accord.

It's certainly not as complex as drafting a deal from scratch, which is what the sides did that resulted in the 2015 deal, said Henry Rome, a senior analyst focusing on Iran at the International Energy Agency. "But there's still a lot of details that need to be worked out."

The House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee (FAC) said its evidence spoke of an increasingly "bullying" stance of China in its dealing with organisations such as the United Nations and World Health Organisation (WHO). In its 11th report, the UK's role in multilateral diplomacy

"The report found evidence of China's increasing use of aggressive means, including exploiting bilateral economic leverage, to coerce states to back their position or their candidates and then using the organisations to shift policies away from the cooperation to promote," the FAC notes.

Police said they had evidence that more than 30 articles published by Apple Daily played a "crucial part" in what they called a conspiracy with foreign countries to impose sanctions against China and Hong Kong.

The deals collapse with President Donald Trump's decision to unilaterally withdraw America from the agreement in 2018 spiralled into a series of attacks and confrontations across the wider Middle East. It also prompted Tehran to enrich uranium to highest purity levels so far, just shy of weapons-grade levels.

With analysts and polling suggesting that a hard-line candidate already targeted by US sanctions will win Friday's vote, a return to the deal may be possible but it likely won't lead to a further detente between Iran and the West.

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Biden, Putin discuss ambassadors, nuclear weapons and more

AP ■ WASHINGTON

Presidents Joe Biden and Vladimir Putin of Russia spent more than three hours discussing issues Wednesday at their summit in Geneva.



U.S. Authorities to be Russian, penetrated multiple U.S. Government networks and prompted Biden to impose additional U.S. Sanctions against Russia.

They ticked through their respective lists so quickly and in such "exciting detail" Biden says, that they looked at each other and thought, "OK, what next?"

The most pressing issues the leaders discussed: AMBASSADORS Biden and Putin agreed to return their respective ambassadors to Washington and Moscow in a bid to improve badly deteriorated diplomatic relations between their countries.

Biden said the U.S. and Russian governments would follow up on certain criminal cases and on references to cybercriminals operating with impunity from Russian territory.

Russia's ambassador to the United States, Anatoly Antonov, left Washington in March amid a row after Biden called Putin a killer in a television interview and imposed sanctions against him.

The agreement comes amid a series of ransomware attacks against U.S. Businesses and government agencies, including one in May that disrupted fuel supplies along the East Coast for nearly a week.

Putin agreed there is mutual interest in the subject. Biden also made an implicit threat against Russia, saying the U.S. has "significant cyber capabilities" it could use against Russia if it were to interfere with U.S. Critical infrastructure.

John Sullivan, the U.S. Ambassador to Russia, flew out of Moscow in April after public suggestions from Russian officials that he should leave to mirror Antonov's departure.

No breakthroughs on this issue were announced, but the leaders agreed to at least talk about what has become a major source of conflict between the U.S. and Russia.

NUCLEAR WEAPONS Biden and Putin instructed their diplomats to begin laying the groundwork for a new phase of arms control.

Putin also said the Russian foreign ministry and the U.S. State Department would begin consultations on other vexing issues including the closures of consulates in both countries and the employment status of Russian citizens working for U.S. Missions in Russia.

The disruption was blamed on a criminal gang operating out of the Middle East and extradite suspects to the U.S. Other serious incidents include the SolarWinds intrusion discovered last year in which hackers, believed by

The "strategic stability dialogue" would be a series of discussions designed to set the table for a negotiation by sorting out what exactly should be negotiated. More broadly, it would aim to reduce the risk of war between the world's two largest nuclear powers.

A senior Biden administration official said Sullivan is likely to return to Moscow next week. A different senior administration official said both governments had begun discussing consulate and local

the prospect of accidental war. He said this was discussed in detail. No date was announced for the start of talks.

The basic idea is to identify and sort out the many areas of mutual concern over what future arms control treaty should address. It also would address ways to avoid unintended or accidental moves that could trigger war.

Israeli officer charged in killing of autistic Palestinian

AP

Jerusalem: Israeli prosecutors on Thursday charged a border police officer with reckless manslaughter in the deadly shooting of an autistic Palestinian man in Jerusalem's Old City last year.

Palestinian teen shot by Israeli troops in West Bank dies

AP

Jerusalem: The Palestinian health ministry said Thursday that a Palestinian teenager who was shot by Israeli troops in the West Bank a year earlier has died of his injuries.

3 Chinese astronauts enter space station after successful docking operation

PTI ■ BEIJING/JIHOUAN

Three Chinese astronauts on Thursday entered the country's new space station after their spaceship successfully docked with it, just over seven hours after the launch from the Gobi Desert, in a major milestone for the Communist giant's space exploration plans and its bid to

become a leading space power. According to the China Manned Space Agency (CMSA), the 12-man spaceship successfully docked with the space station core module Tianhe on Thursday afternoon and entered the orbital capsule from the return capsule of the spaceship.

After a series of preparations, the astronauts opened the hatches of the node and the crew module and entered the Tianhe module one by one, saying that for the first time the Chinese have entered their own space station, the CMSA said.

The trio will carry out relevant work as planned, it said in a statement here.

WESTERN RAILWAY STORES DEPARTMENT. E-AUCTION SALE DURING JULY 2021 FOR P-WAY & OTHER VARIOUS SCRAP. SPECIAL ATTENTION - ALL STEEL PURCHASERS & RE-ROLLERS. Public e-auction for disposal of P way Scrap, Rail Scrap & other various scrap material will be held in JULY, 2021 as per program given below:-

Table with columns: 1st Round, 2nd Round, Depot, Dept Officer, In-Charge, Material Manager, Contact No. Rows include dates from 07/07/2021 to 28/07/2021 and various depot names like S/Divisional, BVP, SBI, BRC, DHD, MX, ADI, RJT, PRTN, MAMCT.

SEARCH FOR MISSING/KIDNAPPED. General Public is hereby informed that male person named Zeeshan, S/o Aash Mohammad, R/O C-117, Holombi Kalan, Metro Vihar, 2nd Narela, Delhi, Age: 28 years, Height: 5'7", Face: Round, Complexion: Wheatish, Built: Normal, Wearing: Black Colour T-Shirt and Blue Lower has been missing/kidnapped from his home since 07.06.2021. In this regard a DD No. 66A dated 08.06.2021 has been registered at PS Begumpur, Delhi.

Sensex extends losses

AS FED'S TAPER TALK TRIPS WORLD MARKETS

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Domestic equity benchmarks retreated for the second straight session on Thursday, mirroring weakness in global markets after the US Federal Reserve surprised investors by signalling further-than-expected rate hikes.

A sharp drop in the rupee - which plunged 76 paise against the US dollar - also sapped risk appetite, traders said.

The 30-share BSE Sensex ended 178.65 points or 0.34 per cent lower at 52,323.33. The broader NSE Nifty declined 76.15 points or 0.48 per cent to 15,691.40.

Banking and finance stocks accounted for most of the losses, while the IT pack saw brisk buying, fuelled by a weak rupee.

IndusInd Bank was the top loser in the Sensex pack, shedding 2.91 per cent, followed by Dr Reddy's, NTPC, Maruti, Bajaj Auto, Axis Bank, Bharti Airtel and HDFC.

On the other hand, UltraTech Cement, Asian Paints, TCS, Infosys, Tech Mahindra and HCL Tech were among the major gainers, spurring up to 1.86 per cent.

"Domestic equities traded weak today on account of weak global cues led from the FOMC meeting outcome as investors focused more on the US Federal Reserve raising the country's economic growth forecast while noting its projection will hike interest rates sooner than expected."

"The Fed raised the US growth forecast to 7 per cent this year, while officials moved their first projected rate increases from 2024 into 2023 and opened talks about when to pull back on the USD 1.20 billion in monthly bond purchase program," said Vikas Jain, Senior Research Analyst at Reliance Securities.

Vinod Narai, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services, said a fast normalisation of the US economy and strong job market can lead to the Fed tapering its bond buying.

"This can lead to tightening of bonds yields which will impact the pricing of equity assets," he added.

Sectorally, BSE power, metal, realty, industrials and utilities indices ended up to 2.38 per cent lower, while IT, tech and FMCG indices closed with gains. Broader BSE mid-cap and smallcap indices fell up to 1.29 per cent.

Rupee falls for 8th day, slumps 76 paise to 74.08 vs USD

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Declining for the eighth consecutive session, the Indian rupee tumbled 76 paise to close below the 74-mark against the US dollar on Thursday, tracking a strong greenback overseas after the US Federal Reserve surprised the market by signalling rate hikes sooner than expected.

At the interbank foreign market, the domestic unit opened weak at 73.65 against the American currency, then lost further ground and finally closed at 74.08, showing a fall of 76 paise over its previous close.

Elsewhere in Asia, bourses in Shanghai and Hong Kong ended on a positive note, while Seoul and Tokyo were in the red.

Stock exchanges in Europe were also trading with losses in mid-session deals.

Microsoft names India-born CEO Satya Nadella as tech giant's new Chairman

PTI ■ NEW YORK

Microsoft's India-born CEO Satya Nadella has been appointed as the technology giant's new Chairman, an additional role which he will lead the work to set the agenda for the board.

Microsoft Corp on Wednesday announced that the board's independent directors unanimously elected Nadella to the role of board chair, and unanimously elected John W Thompson as the lead independent director, a role he held previously from 2012 to 2014.

Nadella, who has served as chief executive since 2014, has helped transform the company into a leader in cloud computing in recent years, resulting in blockbuster earnings and a market cap of close to USD 2 trillion, CNN reported.

NPPA asks drug makers to ensure GST cuts passed on to consumer

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

In order to ensure the cuts in GST rates of essential Covid-19 drugs and other medications is passed on to consumers, the National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority has directed all pharmaceutical manufacturing and marketing companies to revise the maximum retail price (MRP) on drugs and formulations.

The move from the pharmaceutical regulator is expected to ensure that the tax cuts benefits consumers by way of low cost of drugs and videos conferencing in the current difficult period of the pandemic.

The office memorandum issued by NPPA said that the change in GST rate has an impact on fixation of MRP of items of pharmaceuticals. As the MRP of drugs and formulations is inclusive of tax, therefore, any downward change in tax/GST rates should be reflected in MRP and the benefit of this reduction should be passed on to the consumers, it said.



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Flipkart, Amazon challenge court order on CCI probe: Report

Flipkart and Amazon.com Inc have filed legal challenges against an order on CCI probe: Report

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Indian IT sector continues to be net hirer, top 5 IT cos to add over 96,000 employees: Nasscom

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The industry body Nasscom on Thursday said the sector continues to be a net hirer of skilled talent, and that the top 5 Indian IT companies are planning to add over 96,000 employees in 2021-22.

The statement comes in the backdrop of a report by Bank of America that said domestic software firms are set to slash 3 million jobs by 2022 as automation gains pace across industries, especially in the tech space.

"With the evolution of technology and increasing automation, the nature of traditional IT jobs and roles will evolve over leading to creation of newer jobs. The industry continues to be a net hirer of skilled talent, adding 1,38,000 people in FY2021," Nasscom said in a statement.

It asserted that players have robust hiring plans for 2021-22 with the top 5 Indian IT companies planning to add over 96,000 employees.

"The industry is upskilling more than 250,000 employees in digital skills and has hired more than 40,000 fresh digitally-trained talent, indicating that with one of the strongest deal pipeline, and strong business outlook, the industry is on track to meet its vision of USD 300-350 billion revenues by 2025," Nasscom said.

It added that the industry will continue to be a net creator of jobs and is "committed to people-centric innovation, relentless talent focus," and delivering a superior transformative customer experience.

Nasscom pointed out that the business process management (BPM) sector in India, which has been called out as the sector ripe for automation, employs over 1.4 million people (excluding domestic and in-house) and not 9 million as the said report suggested.

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Sebi bans Shri Research Services from securities mkt

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Sebi has barred Shri Research Services and its proprietor Gourav Kumar Gour from the securities markets for at least two years and has asked them to refund the money that was collected by providing unauthorised investment tips to investors.

In addition, a penalty of ₹ 5 lakh has been imposed on them. They have to pay the fine within 45 days. Sebi said in its order passed on Wednesday.

Sebi noted that Shri Research Services and its sole proprietor Gour carried out investment advisory activities without obtaining a certificate of registration from the regulator. This violated the provisions of Investment Advisers (IA) Regulations.

The regulator said that a total of ₹14.63 lakh was credited in their accounts for the January-July, 2018 period. However, it could not be confirmed whether such amounts were received only from investors for unregistered advisory services.

Corporate Affairs Ministry eases rules for board meetings conducted through virtual mode

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Boards of companies can now approve annual financial statements and matters related to mergers, among others, at meetings held through video conferencing and other audio-visual means.

This step would go a long way in ensuring that the hurdles faced by companies are reduced in the current difficult period of the pandemic.

Earlier, the rules specifically mentioned a list of matters that cannot be dealt with by a company's board through video conferencing or other audio-visual means. Approval of the annual financial statements, boards report, prospectus, matters relating to amalgamation, merger, demerger, acquisition and takeover, and holding of the audit committee meetings for consideration of accounts, were not permitted.

With the latest amendment, the list has been done away with.

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Khadi sales decline 16 pc to ₹3,527.71 cr in 2020-21: MSME Ministry

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Khadi sales contracted by 16 per cent year-on-year to ₹3,527.71 crore in 2020-21, as spinning and weaving activities across the country impacted due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the MSME ministry said on Thursday.

The overall production in the Khadi sector also declined to ₹1,904.49 crore in 2020-21, as compared to ₹2,292.44 crore in 2019-20, it added.

The production and sales in the Khadi sector, however, slightly declined as spinning and weaving activities across the country took a major hit during the pandemic, the ministry said.

"The overall production in the Khadi sector in 2020-21 was recorded at ₹1,904.49 crore as compared to ₹2,292.44 crore in 2019-20, while the overall Khadi sales stood at ₹3,527.71 crore as compared to ₹4,211.26 crore in the previous year," it added.

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PLI scheme to help India become Atmanirbhar in APIs: ICRA

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Government's production-linked incentive (PLI) schemes for key raw materials such as bulk drugs and formulations, with a total incentive outlay of ₹210 billion will help the country become Atmanirbhar, ratings agency ICRA said.

As per a note by the agency, PLI scheme will reduce import dependence and boost domestic production of high-value products; and increase the value addition in exports.

High value-added pharmaceutical products are generally R&D intensive and difficult to manufacture and these include products such as complex generics, patented products, and biologics among others.

Further, the GoI has also announced the promotion of the bulk drug parks scheme with a financial outlay of ₹30 billion for three select states, which will provide infrastructure assistance to the active pharmaceutical ingredient (API) players.

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Public Notice

Public notice regarding the sale of immovable property...

SEARCH FOR MISSING

General Public is hereby informed that a lady namedly Beena, W/o Yash Pal, R/o H.No. C-68, First Floor, Buzh Vihar, Ph-1, Delhi, Age: 45 years, Height: 5'2, Complexion: Wheatish, Face: Round, Built: Thin, Wearing: Blue Colour Saree, Black Blouse, Blue Colour Shoes in her feet has been missing from her home since 08.04.2021 at 12.30 pm. In this regard a DD No. 121A dated 08.04.2021 has been registered at P.S. Vijay Vihar, Delhi.

Beena

Sincere efforts have been made by local police to trace out the missing lady but no clue has come to light so far. If any one having any information about this lady please inform undersigned.

E-mail: cic@cbl.gov.in

Ph: 011-24368638, 24368641

SHO P.S. Vijay Vihar, Delhi

DP/788/RD/2021

Ph: 011-27521294, 27521295

SHO P.S. Vijay Vihar, Delhi

DP/880/RD/2021

Ph: 011-27661921

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Bollywood
 'The moment Raj (Kundra) tried singing, I figured that singing is not, and will never be, his forte.'
 —Shilpa Shetty

GIVE HIM THE FASHION BOOST HE NEEDS

For Father's Day, designer KUNAL TANNA curates a few quirky, stylish and fun looks. By TEAM VIVA

A father is someone you look up to no matter how tall you grow. Growing up we all have a fixed notion of how dads usually are. Or at least are perceived to be a certain way. In 2020, the pandemic changed everything and saw most dads take on an array of chores. From working from home, lending a helping hand in daily chores to hanging out with the kids and juggling zoom calls at the same time, we have seen new-age dads do it all. While they love chilling in their tracksuits and tees at home, this Father's Day give them the fashion boost he needs. Fashion designer Kunal Tanna curates a few quirky, stylish and fun looks for your lockdown dad! Check it out:

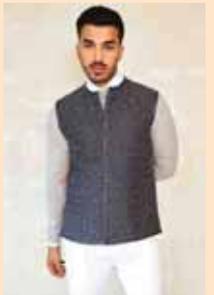
THE SUNDAY BRUNCH DAD

For all the social media dads out there, your Sunday Brunch is incomplete without the perfect Insta pic. So, make brunch fun with this off-white turtleneck knit teamed with a lazy rainy day gray thread textured cardigan style jacket.



THE ZOOM MEETING DAD

A formal shirt and pant have always been the go-to attire for working dads. This time lets up the style quotient and try out some layering. Try on this classic light blue shirt and throw on a comfortable melange beige knit. To add that final dapper look for zoom call meetings, you can layer it with a tone-on-tone thread textured reversible bandi jacket.



THE ONLINE WEDDING BARAATI DAD

Every wedding is incomplete without the *baraat* and its *baraatis*. If your dad was looking forward to attending one such wedding and the lockdown killed his enthusiasm? Then, this salmon and beige patched kurta paired with an asymmetrical overlapped long bandi jacket is exactly what he needs. Complete this look with a contrasting blue jute silk trouser. After all, he needs to make a *dhamakedar* entry as the online wedding *baraati*.

THE FUN WITH KIDS DAD

With everyone at home, spending time with kids during the lockdown is definitely an unscheduled activity now. If you will be indulging in fun games etc, then your attire needs to be fun too. Opt for this blocky print trousers with a white side seam placket polo tunic. Make sure your kids don't have paint on their hands.



THE DATE NIGHT DAD

If your dad is a true-blue romantic. Then this dark blue shirt tunic with a gray mock layered collar worn with dark blue Matty trousers will set the fashion mood for date night.

THE DAILY CHORES DAD

Sharing household chores has become a norm during the lockdown. Well, you can make running errands look stylish in these beige sketchy checks print polo tunic. Pair it with beige shorts to keep it cool and breezy for everyday chores.

THE KITCHEN KING DAD

Does your dad love to play chef? Then spruce up his look in this blue mesh print tunic teamed with shorts. Also, remind your MasterChef Dad to wear an apron. So, this Father's Day give your #SuperHeroDad the stylish look he deserves.



Being economical in a time of extravagance

Intelligent Variable Transmission (IVT) on the Verna and other Hyundai-Kia cars as well as on the Honda City and Nissan Magnite might prove to be a major ace up the sleeves of the automobile sector



The last few months have not been easy by any stretch of the imagination. And if you own a vehicle, the increased cost of fuel has only added to your headaches. Sure, those of us who have been driving around in the lockdowns have found emptier roads than usual, but exactly a ton of places to visit. Then again, some of us have driven around more than most, take me for example, finding myself in a situation where I had to make a few long-distance journeys to Kanpur from Delhi.

At the start of the lockdown, I found myself with a Hyundai Verna IVT, the 'Intelligent Variable Transmission' variant which is what Hyundai-Kia call their Continuously Variable Transmission or CVT. Now, CVTs are not new in cars, and they have been around in two-wheelers for decades. They are perfect in lower power output scenarios, but nowadays, with better machining and easier manufacturing, manufacturers have been fitting CVTs in cars with higher power and torque outputs. Honda, which pioneered the use of CVTs on their two-wheelers (remember the old

Kinetic Honda) brought CVTs onto the last generation of the City and the current generation car gets one as well. As costs for such gearboxes fitted in cars have come down, vehicles such as the Nissan Magnite are also getting CVT boxes. In fact, it may be only a matter of time before CVT gearboxes replace the slow Automated Manual Transmission (AMT) gearboxes. However, truth be told, I'd never spent time with a CVT vehicle for an extended period or made regular highway runs in such vehicles. But these last three months with the Verna have been illuminating, to say the least. CVTs have their flaws, they are not designed for drivers who push the pedal to the metal. It is not easy to explain the way they work without diagrams, but you can think of two cones at the end of two shafts — one from the engine and the driveshaft that is connected by a band, in-car CVTs this is usually a metal chain and well, the cones move back and forth giving an infinite amount of ratios between the engine shaft and the drive shaft, thus the



comes to fuel economy. The Verna I drove delivered over 18.5 kilometres per litre on the highway and even inside the city delivered over 15 kilometres per litre on longer drives. The Verna is a small car, it is well-equipped and being summer, the air-con was on all the time as was the seat cooling. I did not deliberately drive economically, keeping the car at the speed limit of the expressways, albeit on cruise control and the IVT always kept the 1.5 litres naturally aspirated petrol engine in a very sweet spot. Delhi to Kanpur is near 500 kilometres, and there are some bad patches towards the end. But it was still superb. Put on a podcast, there are some excellent ones to listen to and drive this car, and you'll be surprised. Not just at how nice it is, but also how little fuel it drinks to get the job done.

Dinosaur juice is getting expensive folks, and the IVT on the Verna and other Hyundai-Kia cars as well as on the Honda City and Nissan Magnite might have a major ace up their sleeve.

To look at artist Krishen Khanna's *bandwallahs*, at the Grosvenor online show in London, is to understand both sensitivity and sensibility, says UMA NAIR

Most of Khanna's work is figurative; he chose to not explore the abstraction that most of his contemporaries were delving into. In an interview with *Artforum*, he says, "I used to do abstracts earlier and I have now moved on to human forms. I thought that the person or the individual is being neglected; the person in a particular situation who is influenced by the conditions around. I want to now emphasise the human being, caught up in their particular condition."

Khanna's exploration of *bandwallahs* began in the early 1970s, these members of local brass bands engaged to play at weddings and other public ceremonies caught his eye for their uniforms and their devotion to the occupation. Speaking of how he came to paint his first portraits of these musicians, Khanna explains that once, while driving out of his Delhi studio, the path was blocked by the marching band of a wedding procession. The image of these musicians dressed all in red with their big brass instruments wrapped around them still remains as powerful for the artist today as it was that day in Delhi.

Khanna's site of works this time range from carefully created controlled compositions to gestural, spontaneous works created last year and this year. Between a few monochromatic drawings and colour paintings, his deployment of colour and strokes that evoke the human situation is deeply heartwarming. His *bandwallahs* series captures not just the quiet energy of a few musicians. In his many monochromatic works, one sees the energy in the frenzy of lines and tension in the tight compositions, with the overall picture pulsating with the interplay of formal elements. Through a lack of physical detail; Khanna's paintings aspire towards quality of timelessness and universality. As an artist, he defies categorisation as he simultaneously occupies multiple roles — as a narrator, as a formalist, an artist who captures precious moments as a narrative of insight and in-depth understanding.

Timeless pieces

To look at artist KRISHEN KHANNA's *bandwallahs*, at the Grosvenor online show in London, is to understand both sensitivity and sensibility, says UMA NAIR



Using a palette dominated by red, yellow and green, Khanna paints the *bandwallahs* as a representative of the subaltern and a symbol of urban life in modern India. Though the artist portrays these men in red — practicing, playing or at rest — as cheery, their cheer is only part of their job. Their celebration is not spontaneous; it is just another mode of survival in the city. He propels us to think of the aftermath of the lives of these humble musicians. When on duty, they play into the night and must also play early morning before twilight hours for the departure of the bride to her new home.

Khanna says, "The sitting room is hardly a sitting room per se; my wife Renu reads a lot so has all her books around. It is part library and part studio with furniture that has to be moved from time to time. It is a completely new experience moving away from my usual studio in the basement. I have to look for paints on the ground which

are all mixed up and improvise but it's all a part of the game in the end. In this current atmosphere, one can become very depressed, but fortunately, for me, there are the *bandwallahs* who are still making noise. When I'm painting, I have to concentrate fully on them. The *bandwallahs* take prime position in my life right now," he adds.



Khanna is known for his thematic sensibility, ranging from everyday domestic scenes, moments of historical importance, scenes from myths and poetry to portraits of people from his life and his love for literature. He has continually worked with the contrasts between the mundane and the sublime, the ordinary and the epic dimension. Constantly oscillating between the banal and the spectacular, for Khanna, the personal relativity is the fulcrum of his artistic ferment. The closest friend of the progressives still paints and is happy to create in his own home in Gurugram.

TRENDBLAZER



SIDDHANT RELIVES CHILDHOOD

Actor SIDDHANT CHATURVEDI posted a clip on Instagram that shows him sitting on a swing. Alongside the video, he wrote a poem in Hindi, "Akhi baar jhoole pe kab baithe the? Pedh se jaamun kab tode the? Kaagaz ki plane kab udai thi? X and O kab jeete the? Likhne se zada toh pen-fight mein use hoti thi pen, TV pe dekhte Popeye, Dexter aur Ben-10, geeli rumal ko ghuma ke phatak, kache aam pe namak aur jaal mirch ka chatak. Bachpan toh kalpana ko pankh deta hai, aur jaise jaise badey hote hain ye system uss udaan ko jung deta hai."

fairtalk

VAANI KAPOOR



'Bell Bottom' is a solid product and Akshay (Kumar) sir, like in every film of his, is simply outstanding. One has to see the film to understand what he has done. I'm grateful that I have a big film coming out now. It's been a long wait to see my films get a release, but I'm being super hopeful now that the audience will be entertained by them.'

dailytalk

AMAAL MALLIK



'I see a lot of singers (mostly the forthcoming ones) doing covers and mashups of songs without due credit. I have a sincere request. Please credit the original composers and lyricists, not just the singer. With due respect to the singers: A song is a team effort and crediting just the vocalist or just one person is not right. It is just the right thing to do'

MAYA OPENS UP ON HER ROLE IN LUCA

MAYA RUDOLPH, who features in the voice cast of the forthcoming animated film *Luca*, says an experience from motherhood in real life helped her bring alive her role. "It was pretty easy to relate to Daniela. When your children are pushing boundaries, you want to show them that you love them but you're serious. That can be an incredibly difficult balance, but one that every parent understands," says she.





PITAARA OF WHOLESOME FOOD

UDIT MAHESHWARI invited us over to try the wares of his delivery kitchen. Locked down at home, CHRISTY VARGHESE projected his soul to the chef's base to interact with him and try some delectable dishes, while following COVID-19 restrictions

Chef Udit Maheshwari always wanted to open a restaurant. Right from the moment he started training at the Le Cordon Bleu, London. And he was finally able to do so amid a raging pandemic. Not waiting for a more convenient time, he launched Pitaara Kitchen as a delivery kitchen around Diwali, 2020. He plans on converting it into a full-fledged restaurant as soon as the COVID-19 situation subsides.

We decided to project our consciousness to his kitchen with some ahead-of-time fictional technology so that we could interact with him while tasting some choice dishes from Pitaara Kitchen. And his offerings were anything but simple.

Right off the bat, the chef presented a set of what looked like purple tinted kebabs. Since we were famished, we did not wait on customary chit chat and simply picked one up to bite into it. Right from the first bite, we were hooked and we can't help but marvel out loud, "What is this deliciousness?!"

The chef laughed and told us this is a starter called the Purple *shiklam puri*. These grated beetroot kebabs were stuffed with hung curd and just melted in our mouth. We were tempted to bite into one, as it tickled our taste buds, and found out that it was better to let the kebab work its magic as it slowly melted and revealed some subtle flavours between our tongue and palate. Along with the creamy, slightly sweet taste there was the slight hint of an intriguing earthy flavour to the

kebabs. Seeing us rubbing our tummy, chef Udit produced a platter of kulchas with a flourish. He announced that these are the Bacon and Kalimping cheese kulchas. As we munch on one, we catch a whiff of the smoky flavour of the kulchas which were stuffed with desi bacon and indigenous Kalimping cheese. While serving us a heap of their spicy tomato chutney along with some pudina chutney, the chef shared that these were cooked in the tandoor. We finished them off in a jiffy, and couldn't wait to see what's next in store.

The chef is running a tight ship, and we couldn't help but feel that the Pitaara Kitchen is an extremely successful venture as he seemed to be on his toes all the time.

However, for the next dish, he sat down with us and served us some Dogri meat curry and asked his staff to pass on some bajra rotis. He explained that this is a traditional meat curry from the Dogri community of Jammu. The mutton was cooked with some choice spices and had a somewhat sweet taste to it, on account of the sour-dried mango powder it has been finished in, which also lends some viscosity to the gravy.

In between some bites, chef Udit shared, "With the pandemic in full swing, everyone in the food

'With the pandemic in full swing, everyone in the food industry has been forced to focus on delivering. Let's see what the future has in store for us. However, one good thing that has come out of this mess is that everyone is innovating these days.'

industry has been forced to focus on delivering. Let's see what the future has in store for us. However, one good thing that has come out of this mess is that everyone is innovating these days."

And we had to agree when we were served the next dish. Aptly, and quite simply named *Tinda*, it comprised *tindas* (or the Indian squash) stuffed to the brim with cottage cheese and dry fruits. As we dug into the dish with some garlic and kalonji naans, we were thinking that we would never have guessed that this was the humble *tinda* if the chef had not told us. Cooked well in the tandoor, the slight sourness of the vegetable combined well with the stuffing. He encouraged us to try it with the two chutneys and we were overwhelmed by this rich, wholesome dish.

As we smacked our lips, we caught a glimpse of the staff packing some ready to be delivered orders. Spotting us trying to spy, the chef guided us inside and explained that they only use eco-friendly packaging. He further elaborated, "Right from the preparation of the food with ingredients sourced from across India to the delivery, this is our source of innovation. We spare no effort to ensure the wholesome experience of each customer. All members of my staff have been vaccinated, including the people who deliver. And

that's right, we don't rely on third parties for deliveries so as to not risk contact with someone who is infected; these are uncertain times after all."

As the chef led us back to our table, we saw the next dish already set in place. We helped ourselves to the *Chemmeen mango* (literally translates as 'prawn with mangoes' in Malayalam) curry as he served us some of their in-house Malabar parotta. The prawns cooked in coconut milk curry with pearl onions and raw mangoes brought back some vivid memories of Kerala backwaters. The parottas were not as lumpy as the usual ones served in malayali hotels across Delhi and we delightfully finished the dish. Biting into a soft pearl onion, we couldn't help but wonder whether this was better than *Tinda*; before we remembered the wise man who said that 'Comparison is the root of all misery...'

We were rubbing our tummies in contentment when the chef unveiled the mango tart. And we were left wishing that we should not have scarfed down as much. The thick, luscious mango curd, topped with roasted pistachios, was complemented by the bajra tart shell it was served in.

We stifled several burps as we bid adieu to the chef. We hope that last bit is enough to convey that you should give the Pitaara Kitchen a chance if you would like to treat yourself to some tweaked regional specialties.

(The delivery kitchen caters in and around South Delhi and you can order from <https://pitaarakitchen.in>.)

Nothing that tomato soup can't fix

■ AVNI KAUL

CARDIOVASCULAR HEALTH

While soups are commonly made in our households during the chilly winter months, here are some reasons that will make you roast, stew, and later puree your tomatoes to prepare a bowl of rich, creamy soup every day.

A single bowl of tomato soup consists of several nutrients that include vitamins A, C, E, and K besides important minerals and antioxidants that are beneficial for your overall health.

A high amount of vitamin C in tomato soup gives arterial protection. It bolsters the heart and protects it from problems like blockage of arteries and helps prevent the risk of a stroke. It decreases the deposition of fats in the blood vessels, decreasing bad cholesterol. Tomato soup also helps prevent the clumping of platelet cells in the blood.

BLOOD CIRCULATION

Selenium present in tomato soup improves blood circulation which prevents anaemia which is one of its top benefits. A single serving of tomato soup gives 7 micrograms of selenium, providing 11 per cent of the daily recommended intake.

VITAMINS

Tomato soup is a rich source of vitamins A and C. Vitamin A is needed for tissue development. It activates the genes of the new cells, helping them to grow into mature tissue. A bowl of tomato soup gives nearly 16 per cent of the daily recommended quantity of vitamin A. Vitamin C is needed to maintain healthy tendons and ligaments. Tomato soup gives 20 per cent of the daily recommended quantity of vitamin C, helping you to keep your body healthy.

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DIETARY COUNTERING LYCOPENE

As stated before, tomato soup is rich in lycopene, the pigment that provides the fruit its bright colour. Processed tomato has more lycopene than raw ones. Lycopene neutralises the oxidative damage that occurs due to free radicals, a molecule that assists ageing. A diet rich in lycopene helps fight chronic diseases and prevents stroke. A cup of tomato soup gives 13.3 milligrams of lycopene. That's sufficient to keep your body fit.

So, what are you waiting for? Prepare your bowl of tomato soup right away! Having a bowl of tomato soup every day helps to keep the body healthy.

(The author is a nutritionist, wellness coach, certified diabetes educator and the founder of a diet and nutrition brand.)



R E C I P E S



CHEESY POTATO AND QUINOA CAKE

WHAT YOU NEED

- Potato (boiled, grated): 240 gm
- Quinoa: 240 gm
- Green chillies: 10 gm
- Smoked cheese: 80 gm
- Ginger: 25 gm
- Coriander: as per preference
- Crushed chillies: 1 tsp
- Oil: 50 gm
- Black pepper: 1 tsp
- Chaat masala: 2 tsp
- Salt to taste

METHOD

- Wash and boil Quinoa, then cool it down.
- Peel ginger, wash green

chillies, coriander and finely chop them all.

- In a bowl take boiled, grated potato, quinoa, chopped ginger, green chillies, coriander and mix it well with the bread crumbs and other spices.
- Make a round ball of the mixture and stuff the smoked cheese in the middle of the ball.
- Refrigerate for 20 minutes.
- Heat oil in a pan and deep fry.
- Serve hot with mint & tamarind chutney and quinoa salad with fruits on the side.

Courtesy: Michelin Plate Winner chef Dayashankar Sharma, Heritage Dulwich, London.

STRAWBERRY SPONGE CAKE

WHAT YOU NEED

- Butter: 40gm
- Eggs: 2
- Sugar: 45 gm
- Almond powder: 35 gm
- Flour: 15 gm
- Pinch of Salt
- Pinch of baking soda
- Strawberry flour: ¼ tsp
- Raspberry red food colour: ¼ tsp

METHOD

- Add butter to a



CALIFORNIA WALNUT AND CARROT FALAFEL

WHAT YOU NEED

- Chickpeas: 300 gm
- California walnuts (chopped): 100 gm
- Onion: 1
- Medium sized carrots: 4
- Chopped parsley: 2 tsp
- Chopped cilantro (optional): 2 tsp
- A pinch of cumin



- A pinch of salt
- Pepper to taste

METHOD

- Soak the chickpeas for 15 to 20 hours, then drain the water and dry for a while on an absorbent paper.
- Chop the chickpeas until they have a gritty texture.
- Chop onion, parsley, carrots and cilantro into small pieces and add to the chickpeas. Then add cumin,

microwave safe glass bowl.

- Microwave for one minute at 375°.
- Add the eggs and sugar in microwave safe glass bowl.
- Whisk the mixture till fluffy.
- Add all remaining ingredients to the mixture and mix and fold well.
- Pour it in a cake mould and even the mixture.
- Microwave for four minutes at 375°.

Serve hot, with fruit coulis.

Courtesy: Whippool, India.



DESSERT COCKTAIL: SPEYSIDE TIRAMISÙ

WHAT YOU NEED

- Glenfiddich 12-year-old: 60ml
- Chocolate sauce: 15 ml
- Single cream: 15 ml
- Espresso shot: 15 ml
- Caramel syrup/honey/maple syrup: 10 ml
- Orange peel/cinnamon: as per preference

METHOD

- In a shaker glass filled with ice, pour all of the above ingredients and shake well.
- Strain and serve straight up in a coupe/martini/margarita glass.
- Garnish with orange peel/cinnamon.

Courtesy: Angad Singh Gandhi, Glenfiddich India brand ambassador.



AVOCADO AND MANGO URAMAKI

WHAT YOU NEED

For the sushi rice:

- Japanese sticky rice: ½ cup
- Vinegar: 1/5 cup
- Sugar: 1/5 cup
- Salt: 1 tsp

For the sushi rolling:

- Avocado, cut length-wise: 1 bowl

- Alphonso mango, cut length-wise: 1 bowl
- Wasabi paste: 1 tsp
- Sushi nori: 1
- Gari: 1 tsp
- Soy: 2 tsp
- Black sesame seed: ½ tsp
- White sesame seed: ½ tsp

METHOD

For cooking the rice:

- Wash and rinse the sushi rice in running water to extract the excess starch from the rice grains. (process to be repeated five times)
- Boil the sushi rice with water, with the ratio of 1:1 ¼.
- Make the sushi vinegar by mixing vinegar, sugar and salt.
- Once the rice is cooked, mix the rice and sushi vinegar together and keep it covered with a moist cloth until used further.
- For rolling the sushi: Place the nori sheet on the sushi mat and uniformly spread a handful of sushi rice on the sheet.
- Sprinkle a mix of white and black sesame seeds on the sushi rice.
- Flip the nori sheet in such a manner that the sushi rice is facing the sushi mat.

- Place the cut alphonso mango and avocado on the nori sheet.
- Gently roll the sushi into a square shape applying even pressure throughout the roll and cut into eight equal pieces with a sharp knife.
- Serve with gari, wasabi and soy.

Courtesy: Masterchef Amit Patra, Edo restaurant, ITC Gardenia, Bengaluru.



STARS

TWO IN 2 FOR AZZURRI

Mancini's men confirm Euro 2020 knockout berth with 3-0 win against Swiss

Italy became the first team to reach the knockout stage of Euro 2020 as midfielder Manuel Locatelli scored twice in a 3-0 win over Switzerland in Rome on Wednesday.



Italy's Manuel Locatelli, right, celebrates with his teammates after scoring his side's second goal during the Euro 2020 group A match between Italy and Switzerland at the Olympic stadium in Rome on Wednesday night.

conceding a goal, sit first in Group A and are guaranteed a top-two finish and last-16 berth. "We played well, we wanted to win at all costs," Italy coach Roberto Mancini told RAI. "They started well, it was not easy to win a second game in five days."

Ukraine end 6-match losing run

Andriy Yarmolenko scored an early goal and set up Roman Yaremchuk for another as Ukraine defeated North Macedonia 2-1 to boost their high-16 hopes at Euro 2020 on Thursday.



Ukraine's Andriy Yarmolenko, left, reacts after scoring his team's first goal.

will be eliminated if the Dutch avoid defeat to Austria in a row as he slotted in from either side will secure a spot in the knockout phase. Ukraine's 3-2 loss to the Netherlands last weekend saw them match the longest losing run in tournament history, but they reignited their last-16 bid with a deserved victory over the Macedonians. Yarmolenko edged closer to Shevchenko's all-time lead-

Eriksen to have heart defibrillator implanted

Copenhagen: Danish star Christian Eriksen, who suffered a cardiac arrest during his country's Euro 2020 opener last weekend, will have a heart defibrillator implanted, the Danish Football Union (DBU) announced on Thursday.

"After Christian has been through different heart examinations, it has been decided that he should have an ICD (heart starter)," the Danish football body said in a statement on Twitter. The device, which is an improved variant of a pacemaker, is necessary to guard against attack due to rhythm disturbances," it added. DBU provided no details on the potential consequences for the 29-year-old Inter Milan player's future career. Eriksen "has accepted the solution" and it had also been "confirmed by specialists nationally and internationally who all recommend the same treatment," DBU said.

Buffon returns to Parma after 2 decades

Turin: Goalkeeping legend Gianluigi Buffon has returned to Parma two decades after leaving the Italian club where he relegated last season.

"He is back where he belongs, he is back home. Superman returns," the club said on Twitter along with a short video in which 43-year-old Buffon said: "OK Kyle (Krause) I'm in. I'm back." Club owner Kyle Krause replied: "Great news, welcome home." Buffon holds the record for Serie A appearances, played with 657, since his first with Parma in 1995 as a 17-year-old. Since then, Buffon has played just one season in Serie B when Juventus were demoted in 2006-2007 for the "Calciopoli" match-fixing scandal. The former World Cup winner announced last month he was leaving Juventus, the club he had played for since moving from Parma in 2001, apart from one season with Bayern Munich in 2018-2019. Former Italy captain Buffon is an iconic figure in Italian football, one of the stars of the Azzurri's 2006 World Cup triumph who racked up a record 176 caps for his country.

Public Notice

It is informed to the general public that our client Sh. Jitendra Singh, P.O. Bahadur, District: Ludhiana, Punjab, India, has decided to sell the property at No. 23, Sector 22, Phase-2, Patiala. Property measuring area 22.22 sq. mts. Situated within M.C.U. Bahadur, District: Ludhiana, Punjab, India. The property is being sold by the owner Sh. Jitendra Singh. The property is being sold by the owner Sh. Jitendra Singh. The property is being sold by the owner Sh. Jitendra Singh.

Public Notice

It is to inform general public that Mr. Satyraj Singh Choudhary and Mr. Anurag Malik are the owners of Property bearing No. WZ-1386/C, area measuring 100 sq. yds. out of Khanna no. 100, Khanna, Dist. Ludhiana, Punjab, India. The property is being sold by the owner Sh. Satyraj Singh Choudhary and Mr. Anurag Malik.

Lost-Found

1. Parinder Kaur Di Dhabang Singh, R/o Vpo Talwandi Salhan PS, Tarda Tehsil Dasuya (Hoshiarpur) PB India. I declare that my minor daughter Ms. Anurag Malik, aged 12 years, was missing from school on 18/06/2021. She was last seen at Khanna, Punjab, India. She is wearing a white school uniform with Khanna Public School Khanna. Class section 2011-12 Registration No. 2009284/under (ICSE) and 12th grade certificate number 1201/2021. Registration No. 2009284/under CBSE and DAV-B.com (Mons) certificate (SE-12/2021) Registration No. 11401597. All certificates have been lost on dated 02/08/2021 in Tarda. Said Documents related FIR No. PS Tarda under unique ID No. 254224 dated 08/08/2021. If anybody found these certificate contact at my above address.

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shortpasses

US OPEN TO ALLOW 100% CROWD
NEW YORK: The US Open tennis tournament will allow 100% spectator capacity throughout its entire two weeks in 2021.

RAFA OUT OF WIMBLEDON, OLY
MADRID: Rafael Nadal on Thursday said he's withdrawing from Wimbledon and the Tokyo Olympics in a bid to prolong my career.

IOA ROPES IN MPL AS SPONSOR
NEW DELHI: The Indian Olympic Association on Thursday roped in mobile gaming platform, MPL Sports Foundation as the principal sponsor of the country's contingent for the upcoming Tokyo Olympics and next year's Birmingham Commonwealth Games.

8 DEBUTANTS IN WOMEN'S TEAM
NEW DELHI: India on Thursday named eight Olympic debutants and as many veterans in its 16-member women's hockey squad for the Tokyo Games.

AZHAR SUSPENDED
HYDERABAD: The Apex Council of Hyderabad Cricket Association (HCA) has suspended its own president, former India captain Mohammed Azharuddin, for alleged violation of its constitution.

GATTUSO LEAVES FIORENTINA
FLORENCE: Genaro Gattuso and Fiorentina have agreed to part ways, just over three weeks after the former Italy International was appointed as coach at the Serie A club.

JAPAN TO LIFT VIRUS EMERGENCY
TOKYO: Japan plans to lift Tokyo's virus emergency on June 20, a month before the Olympics, the Govt announced on Thursday.

MILKHA 'STABLE AND IMPROVING'
CHANDIGARH: Legendary Indian sprinter Milkha Singh is 'stable and improving' under the constant supervision of a medical team at the PGIMER after having recovered from Covid-19, which he contracted last month.

DOCTORS 'KILLED' MARDONNA
SAN ISIDRO: A lawyer for a nurse under investigation in the death of football great Diego Maradona said that doctors killed him through negligence.

TOMORI COMPLETES MILAN MOVE
MILAN: Chelsea defender Fikayo Tomori has made his loan move to AC Milan permanent agreeing a four-year deal with the Serie A runners-up on Thursday.

WI RECALL BRAYDO, GABRIEL
ST LUCIA: West Indies recall pacer Shannon Gabriel and batsman Darren Bravo for the second Test against South Africa.

India, NZ ready for ultimate Test

Kohli & Kane will fight for a taste of silverware after near misses in recent ICC campaigns

Virat Kohli carries the expectations of a billion while cricket romantics will pin their hopes on Kane Williamson when India and New Zealand engage in a battle to create a lasting legacy in pristine whites in the inaugural World Test Championship final starting here on Friday.

For the connoisseurs of the elegant and the most cricket is the ultimate format and despite its aura, the 144-year-old history needed a facelift along with a context which the World Test Championship provided despite various bottlenecks, including the Covid-19 pandemic. For Kohli, India's most successful Test captain, a trophy-less cabinet doesn't do justice to the champion cricketer and the most articulate of players that he has been for a decade.

Kohli needs a global triumph. Every captain needs it but perhaps the Indian captain wants it more. It's how history will remember him just like it remembers Dhoni with a lot of respect and utmost fondness for those heroic World Test titles. Williamson stands in his way with a bunch of fine cricketers and the most articulate set of players that one would come across in International cricket. They are India's rivals but when Williamson hits those cover drives, Devon Conway leaves a trail, Ravichandran Ashwin or Ravindra Jadeja, Trent Boult gets one banana bowling aimed at Rohit Sharma's

boots, the crazy fans of a cricket-mad nation wouldn't possibly be able to hate them. These are 'Gentlemen Cricketers' who have grown on the fans bit by bit with their cricket and their conduct. It's difficult not to love them, especially after their gut-wrenching World Cup defeat at the Lords two summers back. If Williamson happens to start with the ICC Test Mace on the Hampshire Bowl balcony, one might just smile and think that perhaps "Nice guys don't always finish last". But after two years and half a dozen series later, a battle-hardened Indian team will give its all in a match, from which the winning team will also walk away with a \$1.6 million windfall. There are a number of cricketers, who would practically have a shot at any other global trophy and for them it's their 'World Cup' which they want to lay their hands on.

TEAMS
India: Virat Kohli (C), Rohit Sharma, Shubman Gill, Cheteshwar Pujara, Ajinkya Rahane, Ravindra Jadeja, Ravichandran Ashwin, Ishant Sharma, Mohammed Siraj, Jasprit Bumrah.
New Zealand: Kane Williamson (C), Tom Blundell, Trent Boult, Devon Conway, Colin de Grandhomme, Matt Henry, Kyle Jamieson, Tom Latham, Henry Nicholls, Ajar Patel, Neil Southee, Ross Taylor, Tim Wagner B) Waling and Will Young.

CHANDIGARH HOUSING BOARD
8, Jan Marg, Sector 9-D, Chandigarh Ph. 0172-4601827

PUBLIC NOTICE

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8, Jan Marg, Sector 9-D, Chandigarh Ph. 0172-4601827

PUBLIC NOTICE

Subject - Transfer/Mutation/Registration of D.U. No. 5684-A of Category-II(C) in Sector 38 West, Chandigarh in the name of Sh. Manjit Singh S/o Late Sh. Mehar Singh and 2. Sh. Gurmeet Singh S/o Late Sh. Mehar Singh from the name of Sh. Mehar Singh S/o Sh. Bakhtish Singh allottee/transfer on the basis of Registered Will.

It is hereby notified for the information of the general public and all concerned that 1. Sh. Manjit Singh S/o Late Sh. Mehar Singh and 2. Sh. Gurmeet Singh S/o Late Sh. Mehar Singh have applied after the death of the allottee/transfer of Sh. Mehar Singh S/o Sh. Bakhtish Singh to the Chandigarh Housing Board for transfer of the Dwelling Unit No. 5684-A of Category-II(C) in Sector 38 West, Chandigarh in the name of Sh. Mehar Singh S/o Sh. Bakhtish Singh was expired on 18-4-2021 at Mohal (Pb) and left behind a Will which was registered with Sub-Registrar, S.A.S Nagar on 6-7-2015 in their favour. They have further stated that the Will of deceased allottee/transfer is the last Will executed by him which has neither superseded nor cancelled till the death of the deceased.

If any body has any objection upon the mutation of the said property in favour of applicant, he/she/they may submit the objection in writing to the undersigned within 30 days of the publication of this notice, failing which, the registration and allotment of the said dwelling unit shall be transferred in favour of above said claimant(s).

Secretary, Chandigarh Housing Board

WEAR MASK, WASH YOUR HANDS, WATCH YOUR DISTANCE.

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8, Jan Marg, Sector 9-D, Chandigarh Ph. 0172-4601827

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