

OPINION 8
MPLADS: A BOON OR NECESSARY EVIL?

WORLD 11
GAS BLAST IN CHINA KILLS AT LEAST 12

SPORT 14
ENGLAND BEAT CROATIA 1-0

Published From
DELHI LUCKNOW BHOPAL BHUBANESWAR
RANCHI RAIPUR CHANDIGARH
DEHRADUN HYDERABAD VIJAYWADA

Late City Vol. 157 Issue 159
*Air Surcharge Extra if Applicable

LUCKNOW, MONDAY JUNE 14, 2021; PAGES 14 ₹3



the pioneer

www.dailypioneer.com



ON THE ROAD TO RECOVERY: KATRINA 12 VIVACITY

CAPSULE

NO CLARITY ON VAX PROCUREMENT: HOSPS

New Delhi: Several private hospitals across the country said they have no clarity on procuring Covid-19 vaccines under the new policy announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and that it has led to the vaccination being put on hold at their centres. The hospitals have sought a proper mechanism and a single-window system to be put in place for procurement of vaccine doses.

RAJNATH OK'S ₹499 CR FOR DEFENCE SECTOR

New Delhi: Defence Minister Rajnath Singh has approved budgetary support of nearly ₹499 crore for research and innovation in the defence sector for the next five years.

LOP IN U'KHAND HOUSE PASSES AWAY

Dehradun/New Delhi: Leader of Opposition in the Uttarakhand Assembly Indira Hridayesh passed away after suffering a cardiac arrest in New Delhi on Sunday. The 80-year-old senior Congress died at the Uttarakhand Sadan in New Delhi where she had gone to attend a party meeting. Uttarakhand Congress vice-president Suryakant Dhasmana said quoting her son Sumit Hridayesh.

'Work as one to meet challenges'

Modi tells G-7: India bound to democracy

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday stressed the need for open and democratic societies to work together to defend the values they hold dear and to respond to the increasing global challenges. This message during the three-day G-7 summit ending Sunday was in apparent reference to the growing economic might of China and its human rights record, which emerged as a topic of concern for the G-7.

India is a natural ally for the G-7 countries in defending the shared values from a host of threats stemming from authoritarianism, terrorism and violent extremism, disinformation and economic coercion, Modi said.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi participates in the Outreach Session of the G7 Summit virtually in New Delhi

He, however, did not name China during his speech.

Participating in the high-profile event virtually at a session on 'Open societies and open economies' at the G7 summit, the Prime Minister highlighted India's civilisational commitment to democracy, freedom of thought and liberty, the Ministry of External Affairs said here after Modi's address.

The Prime Minister underscored the vulnerabilities inherent in open societies and

called on technology companies and social media platforms to ensure a safe cyber environment for their users, Additional Secretary (Economic Relations), External Affairs Ministry, P Harish said.

Asked if the Prime Minister raised the issue of Chinese aggression during the summit, the official said it was not raised and there are other fora where such issues are discussed.

Continued on Page 6

Bengal Guv has six OSDs, Raj just one

Governor's Office, BJP rubbish charge

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

West Bengal's Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar, who has been in the news for his frequent run-ins with Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, has six Officers on Special Duty (OSD) while Rajasthan Governor Kalraj Mishra has only one OSD.

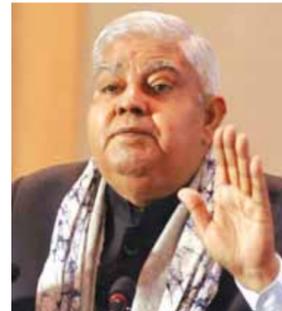
According to the websites of the different State Governments, there are four OSD to Bihar Governor and two OSDs to the Uttar Pradesh (UP) Governor. Similarly, Chhattisgarh and Odisha Governors have two OSDs each.

The OSD is an officer in the Indian civil service of the status between a secretary and an under-secretary in the Government of India. Recently, a controversy arose after the All India Trinamool Congress (TMC) MP from Krishnanagar Mahua Moitra shared details of six OSDs (Officer on Special Duty) to Governor Dhankhar and claimed that all of them are somehow related to him, or from his known circle.

The Governor Office and the BJP have rubbished the charge.

As per the Bihar Government's website, Governor Phagu Chauhan has four OSDs-Vinod Kumar Tiwari, OSD(J), Sanjay Kumar, OSD(Estb.), Mahabir Prasad Sharma, OSD(U) Vinay Thakur, OSD. The Governor also has two ADCs- Major Dhiraj Bisht ADC (M) and Rakesh Kumar Dubey IPS ADC (P).

As per the Madhya Pradesh Raj



Bhawan, there is no OSD to Governor Anandiben Patel. There is only one post of OSD to Governor in Haryana which is lying vacant.

As per the Maharashtra Raj Bhawan website, Governor Bhagat Singh has only one OSD Rakesh Naithani. But the Shiv Sena has claimed that there are a half of dozen OSDs appointed by the Governor. When Devendra Fadnis was Chief Minister of Maharashtra, he had appointed eight external aides - as officers on special duty (OSDs) in the Chief Minister's Office (CMO).

As per the norms, there are two Aides-de-Camp to the Governor, one from Armed Forces and other from Indian Police Force.

Kerala Governor Arif Mohd Khan has two OSDs while Odisha Governor Ganeshi Lal has also two OSDs. The website of Chhattisgarh Raj Bhawan also shows two OSDs deputed with the Governor Anusuya Uikhey. Jharkhand governor has two OSD rank officers.

Continued on Page 6

Opp: Land fraud by Ram temple trust

AAP, SP charge Ayodhya trust of multi-crore shady purchase deals

PRABHA SHANKAR ■ LUCKNOW

In a serious allegation that raised the political temperature in Uttar Pradesh, AAP and Samajwadi Party leaders, in different press conferences, levelled a sensational charge of financial irregularities in land purchase by the Ram Janmabhoomi Trust, which was set up by the Centre for the construction of the Ram Temple in Ayodhya.

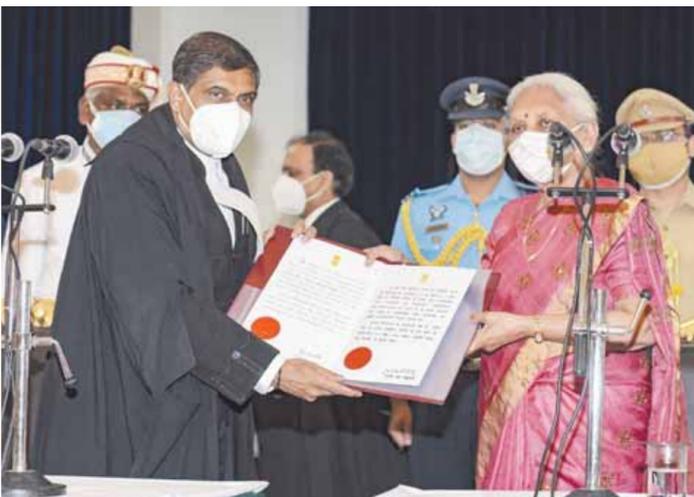
AAP MP Sanjay Singh held a press conference in Lucknow while former SP MLA and former Minister Pawan Pandey addressed reporters in Ayodhya. Ramjanmabhumi Tirth Kshetra Trust general secretary Champat Rai said that they will study the charges of land purchase anomalies and will then reply to the allegations. In a brief statement here on Sunday Rai said: "People had charged us with the killing of Mahatma Gandhi hence we are not afraid of such allegations. We will reply at the appropriate time after examining the entire matter."

Singh said a multi-crore scam was committed by the trust and its associates through embezzlement of funds with the cost of the land increasing by ₹5.5 lakh per second in a gap of five minutes between two different purchase deeds for the land.

He demanded PM Narendra Modi to set up a high-level inquiry into the alleged land scam by the Ramjanmabhoomi Tirth Kshetra Trust members for purchasing land in Ayodhya.

Presenting documents, Singh said the scam amounted to ₹16.50 crore and the illegal act came as a big onslaught on the faith of the millions of Ram bhakts who had given donation for the construction of the grand Ram temple at Ayodhya.

Continued on Page 6



Uttar Pradesh Governor Anandiben Patel administers the oath of office to Justice Sanjay Yadav, at Raj Bhawan, in Lucknow on Sunday.

Congress high command to take a final call on Punjab

MONIKA MALIK ■ CHANDIGARH

The Congress high command is expected to soon take a final call on the prevailing crisis in its Punjab party unit. Before that, the high command may again hold talks with Chief Minister Capt Amarinder Singh to settle down on an "all-acceptable" resolution.

Days after the party's three-member panel, set up to resolve the prevailing crisis, submitted its report to the party's interim president Sonia Gandhi, former party chief Rahul Gandhi on Sunday met the committee members — the Leader of Opposition in Rajya Sabha Mallikarjun Kharge, Punjab party affairs in-charge Harish Rawat, and former MP JP Agarwal.

What actually transpired in the hour-long meeting is yet to be known, but it has been learnt that Rahul was briefed by the panel members regarding the key recommendations of the report, besides the other findings.

Notably, the party high command has become active to resolve the intra-party conflicts simmering in several States, including Rajasthan. The Congress currently has its own Governments in just three States, while it is holding power in three other States in coalition with regional outfits.

Punjab being the only State which turned the tide when the entire country was swept by the Modi wave in 2019 polls, the Congress party did not want to affect its poll prospects because of the infighting. The high command has been making

Continued on Page 6

Naftali Bennett sworn in as Israel's new Prime Minister

PTI ■ JERUSALEM

Naftali Bennett was on Sunday sworn in as Israel's new Prime Minister, ousting Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu from power after an uninterrupted 12 years at the helm of affairs.

Bennett, the 49-year-old leader of the right-wing Yamina party, took oath of office after the Knesset (Parliament) elected him as the 13th Prime Minister of Israel by a 60-59 vote in the 120-member house. One lawmaker abstained.

His government has 27 ministers, nine of them women.

The new government — an

unprecedented coalition of ideologically divergent political parties drawn from the Right, the Left and the Centre, along with an Arab party - has a razor-thin majority in a 120-member house.

Mickey Levy of Yesh Atid party was elected as the speaker of Parliament with the support of 67 lawmakers.

Earlier, Bennett presented his new government's ministers in the Knesset (Israeli parliament) in a speech constantly interrupted by supporters of a 71-year-old Netanyahu.

Amid incessant heckling from rival bloc's lawmakers, Bennett said that he is proud "of the ability to sit with peo-

ple of different opinions".

"At the decisive moment we took responsibility," he said. "The alternative to this government was more elections, more hate, which would have broken up the country."

"It is time for responsible leaders from different parts of the nation to stop this madness," he asserted.

Agitated Likud, ultra-orthodox and ultra-nationalist lawmakers constantly jeered at Bennett during his speech calling him "a criminal" and a "liar".

In his speech, Bennett also said that Israel "will not allow Iran to arm itself with nuclear weapons."

'How can I get my grandson's ma back?'

BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■ LUCKNOW

Tales of despair PART IV

When will ma come," enquires seven-year-old Montu (name changed), as he sits in the lap of his dadi (paternal grandmother). She keeps quiet, but when Montu persists with his query she replies, almost in a whisper, that his mother will come soon.

The elderly lady faces similar queries from Montu almost the whole day. He along with his elder brother Rajesh (name changed) lost their parents within a span of five days in May. Though 13-year-old Rajesh understands what had happened, the little boy, Montu,

still yearns for his mother. "From where do I bring my mother back", asks Janved Singh, a resident of a village in Agra and the grandfather of the two boys. "How long can we placate him by telling him that his mother has gone to school and will come back soon," he says in a voice choked with emotion.

Singh, 71, is a security guard in a private company in New Delhi. His 41-year-old son was employed in a private construction company and his

daughter-in-law was a Shiksha Mitra. His life was getting along despite his wife being a cancer patient and the younger son, 38, being mentally challenged.

Once in a week he used to go to his village, Gudi Rampuri just to spend time with his grandsons. "Now, the thought of going to the village sends shivers down my spine. I feel scared. What will I tell Montu when he asks me about his mother," Singh tells this reporter on the phone from Delhi.

Singh's life changed suddenly in May. His daughter-in-law, 37, was deployed on duty for the Panchayat election.



Soon she developed fever and cough but the family initially treated it as a viral fever. "On May 12 her condition deteriorated and she was taken to a private hospital. The doctors asked for exorbitant fees. Still we continued with the treatment in that hospital.

Continued on Page 6

Sabse Pehle Life Insurance

Your key to a bright future

GUARANTEED

LIC's BIMA JYOTI

Plan No.:860 UIN: 512N339V01
(A Non-Linked, Non-Participating, Individual, Savings Plan)

Also Available Online

Get Guaranteed Additions* every year

- ✓ Age Eligibility: 90 days - 60 years
- ✓ Basic Sum Assured: ₹1 Lakh - No Limit
- ✓ Policy Term: 15 to 20 years
- ✓ Premium Paying Term: Policy Term minus 5 years
- ✓ Loan Available

Call Centre Services (022) 6827 6827

*Guaranteed additions @ ₹ 50/- per thousand Basic Sum Assured will be added at the end of each policy year till maturity/death in case of inforce policies.

For details, contact your Agent/Nearest LIC Branch/visit www.licindia.in or SMS YOUR CITY NAME to 56767474

Follow us: [YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/) [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/) [Instagram](https://www.instagram.com/) LIC India Forever | IRDAI Regn No.: 512

BEWARE OF SPURIOUS PHONE CALLS AND FICTITIOUS / FRAUDULENT OFFERS. IRDAI is not involved in activities like selling insurance policies, announcing bonus or investment of premiums. Public receiving such phone calls are requested to lodge a police complaint. For more details on risk factors, terms and conditions, please read sales brochure carefully before concluding a sale.

LIC
भारतीय जीवन बीमा निगम
LIFE INSURANCE CORPORATION OF INDIA

Har Pal Aapke Saath

Covid cases continue to decline in UP

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Fresh COVID-19 cases in Uttar Pradesh continued to decline on Sunday with 468 persons testing positive for novel coronavirus infection across the state during the last 24 hours and 1,221 patients recovering during this period.

There are now 8,986 COVID-19 patients in the state with the recovery rate touching 98.2 per cent and positivity rate being just 0.1 per cent.

The daily fresh COVID-19 cases were under 500 on March 21 last and after two and a half months this figure has again come down to under 500.

In Lucknow, 42 people tested positive for coronavirus infection while 40 patients recovered and one succumbed. The active cases dropped to 455.

Additional Chief Secretary (Information) Navneet Sehgal said here on Sunday that the overall positivity rate in the state was 3.1 per cent. He said on Saturday, 2,89,943 samples were tested for COVID-19 infection and with this the number of total tests in the state went up to 5,33,45,463.

On the Covid front, the state has vaccinated 2,29,35,815 people so far. On Saturday, 4,58,810 people were vaccinated in the state, including 2,35,683 in the 18+ age category.

By implementing measures such as intensive 'Trace, Test & Treat' and prevention through vaccination and partial Covid curfews to decimate the pandemic, the government has adopted a multipronged approach to minimise the devastating impact of the coronavirus as a result of which the positivity rate has slumped to 0.1 per cent," Sehgal said.

Uttar Pradesh is the first state to have crossed the milestone of conducting five crore Covid tests out of which nearly 2.60 crore samples were from the rural areas.

"Twenty-five oxygen plants were already functional in the state before the government took the step of setting up more on a war-footing to ensure the availability of sufficient medical oxygen in view of any possible future requirement," Sehgal said and added that as many as 87 of the 427 oxygen plants had already been established and were functional while work on the rest was going on in Uttar Pradesh.

Guv administers oath to CJ Sanjay Yadav



Governor Anandiben Patel administering the oath of office and secrecy to Chief Justice Sanjay Yadav of the Allahabad High Court at Raj Bhawan

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Uttar Pradesh Governor Anandiben Patel, on Sunday, administered the oath of office and secrecy to Chief Justice Sanjay Yadav of the Allahabad High Court at the Gandhi Hall of Raj Bhawan.

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, Law and Justice Minister Brajesh Pathak, Chief Secretary RK Tiwari, Additional Chief Secretary to Governor Mahesh Kumar Gupta, family members of the chief justice and senior judges and registrars of High Court and senior officials were present.

Chief Justice Sanjay Yadav was presently serving as Acting Chief Justice of Allahabad High Court since April 14. President Ram Nath Kovind appointed him as the chief justice of the Allahabad High Court.

A notification in this regard was issued by the Union Law Ministry on Thursday. The appointment will be effective from the date of taking oath and taking charge. However his tenure is only for 13 days as he is to retire on June 25, 2021. Chief Justice Sanjay Yadav was born on June 26, 1961. He was registered as an advocate on August 25, 1986. He practised in the Jabalpur High Court in civil, revenue

as well as constitutional matters. He worked as a government advocate from March 1999 to October 2005. He was also the deputy advocate general of Madhya Pradesh.

On March 2, 2007, he was appointed as additional judge of the Madhya Pradesh High Court and became a permanent judge in January 2010. He was also acting chief justice of Madhya Pradesh High Court twice. On January 8, 2021, he was transferred from Madhya Pradesh High Court and became a judge of the Allahabad High Court. After this, from April 14, he was working as the acting chief justice of the Allahabad High Court.

CM directs officials to clear all bills of advocates on priority

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

In a major move to give respite to the legal fraternity affected by COVID-19, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has instructed the officials to expedite the payment of all the lawyers engaged by the government, including the government as well as private lawyers. "Taking note of the extreme difficulty faced by the lawyer community, the chief minister has ordered officials concerned to immediately clear the payment of bills of the advocates by completing the process soon," a government spokesman said.

He said the work in courts across the state had slowed down owing to the COVID-19 pandemic and it had severely affected the lawyers as they had no steady income.

"In last four years, Rs 5 crore was sanctioned as corpus fund to provide financial assistance to young advocates. Also, a proposal for an amount of Rs

20 crore was made for the construction of advocate chambers and development of other infrastructure facilities in various districts of the state," he said and added that besides this the government had made a budgetary provision of Rs 10 crore for young advocates to facilitate purchase of books and magazines. The Uttar Pradesh government in the 2021-2022 budget decided to set up National Law University in Prayagraj while Rs 450 crore was allocated for buildings of courts in districts. An amount of Rs 100 crore is proposed for construction of houses for judges of the high court. A provision of Rs 150 crore has been made in the budget for construction of Lucknow Bench of Allahabad High Court and Rs 450 crore for Allahabad High Court. Besides, Rs 20 crore received from the sale of welfare stamps is proposed to be transferred to the trustee committee of Lawyers Welfare Fund.

ATS arrests six accused running illicit gun factory

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The Anti-Terrorists Squad arrested six miscreants running an illegal gun manufacturing factory and sale of illegal firearms in Pratapgarh on Sunday. Those arrested were identified as Shalal Alam aka Chhotu, Mohammed Sarfaraz Alam and Mohammed Azad, all three of Munger in Bihar, Tirupati Nath Verma aka Guddu Gandhi of Gorakhpur, Sawline Ansari aka Bablu and Akhlin Ansari, both of Pratapgarh. They were arrested from Lalganj police station area in Pratapgarh.

After gathering this information, the ATS, in a joint operation with Pratapgarh police, raided Asrahi village under Lalganj police station area and nabbed the accused

As per an official communiqué, the ATS was tipped-off about a gang which was involved in sale and manufacturing of illegal firearms. The team developed the information and it surfaced that the gang was hiring gunsmiths from Munger to manufacture firearms in the factory. It further surfaced that they used to sell the firearms in UP.

After gathering this information, the ATS, in a joint operation with Pratapgarh police, raided Asrahi village under Lalganj police station area and nabbed the accused.

The team recovered 300 cartridges of .32 bore, two pistols of .32 bore, two country-made pistols, 17 semi-finished pistols, a huge quantity of semi-finished country-made pistols, equipment, lathe machines, turners, furnaces to melt iron and other equipment from the illegal gun factory. The ATS will take them in police remand after presenting them in court. The accused will be quizzed to extract information about the persons to whom they sold the firearms and the places where they were operating.



PUBLIC NOTICE

VIMLESH SINGH YADAV S/o Shri Sonelal Yadav residing at vill -Nausara P.O.- Yaquitganj Distt. Farrukhabad (UP) Have changed my wife name from Kunti Yadav to Kunti Devi in my Document vide affidavit dated 10 June 2021 before Court Fetehgargh (UP).

BSP pins hope on SAD alliance

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The growing clout of Chandrashekhar 'Ravan' led Bhim Army in north India prompted Bahujan Samaj Party to expand its base outside UP and forge alliance with Shiromani Akali Dal for the Punjab assembly elections next year. By forging alliance with Shiromani Akali Dal, the BSP hopes to leverage its position in UP assembly elections in 2022. BSP chief Mayawati is four-time former chief minister of UP.

Chandrashekhar is considered close to the Congress and has been meeting the grand old party's general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra in the recent past. Bhim Army is likely to forge electoral understanding with the Congress for the 2022 UP assembly elections. Barring in 1993, alliance in UP or outside the state has never paid electoral dividends to the BSP, and this time the party is confident that it will rebound in Punjab and that will make a positive impact on its political fortunes in north Indian states.

In 1993, BSP had entered into an alliance with the Samajwadi Party and formed the government, in which it was junior partner and Mulayam Singh Yadav was the chief minister.

The alliance lasted for 18 months and ended in a disaster with the state guest house incident in Lucknow in June 1995, where an attempt was



made by the SP cadre to physically harm the then BSP general secretary Mayawati.

Political watchers, however, say the alliance, while good for optics, will not yield much electoral equity for either of the two parties.

Of the 117 seats in Punjab assembly, the BSP will contest in 20 seats and SAD will contest in the remaining seats. The two parties were in alliance before parting ways in 1996. Punjab gave the BSP its first MP in 1989 when Harbhajan Lakha won from Phillaur constituency.

BSP founder Kanshi Ram also hailed from Punjab where Dalits constitute 32 per cent of the population. But the BSP has never been a serious contender in Punjab. Its highest tally in the state was in the 1992 assembly elections, when it won nine seats and secured 16.32 per cent of the vote share. Since then, it has been all downhill. "The alliance will have no

impact either in Punjab or Uttar Pradesh as the objective of the alliance is only to weaken the Congress in Punjab. BSP chief Mayawati had been consistently working to weaken the Congress in all Hindi states like Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh. During the July 2020 crisis in Rajasthan due to rebellion of state Congress president Sachin Pilot, Mayawati had taken a rabid anti-Congress stand and had supported the rebel who wanted to topple the Ashok Gehlot government," said Dr Ravi Kant, a Dalit ideologue and assistant professor in Lucknow university.

The BSP had 19 MLAs in UP legislative assembly but after nine lawmakers, including Ramvir Upadhyaya, Anil Singh, Aslam Raini, Aslam Ali, Mujtaba Siddiqui, Hakim Lal Bind, Hargovind Bhargava, Sushma Patel, Vandana Singh rebelled and recent expulsion of Lalji Verma and Ramachal Rajbhar, the party's effective strength has been reduced to seven MLAs. The BSP however remains unfazed by depletion in its strength in the UP assembly.

"Elections are round the corner and in an election year the current strength of parties in assembly has little relevance as defections are common in election year. We are concentrating on our core strength and we are confident of a turnaround in our electoral fortunes in 2022 both in Uttar Pradesh and Punjab," said a senior BSP leader.

Man duping car buyers arrested

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The Barabanki police on Saturday arrested a man for duping people by offering to sell cars and recovered 32 four-wheelers from his possession.

The accused, Rajiullah Khan (32) of Bahraich, was arrested from the Roadways bus staff colony in Barabanki.

"Khan deals in tours and travels business and has an office in Hazratganj in Lucknow. He used to lure people to give their car for travel business in lieu of a monthly payment ranging from Rs 10,000 to Rs 50,000. He then used to prepare fake papers for the agreement," SHO, Barabanki Kotwali, Pankaj Singh, said.

"To appear genuine, he used to make monthly payments to the car owners for two-three months after which he stopped taking their calls and used the vehicles to dupe other people by offering to sell them. He also duped the buyers by taking 80 per cent of the car price from them and asking them to pay the remaining amount after they got the papers of the vehicle," Singh said.

"In this way, he neither transferred the vehicle in the name of the buyer nor did he return the vehicle to the owner," the SHO said, adding that efforts were on to nab the other members of the gang.

Akhilesh making irresponsible statements: Suresh Khanna

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Uttar Pradesh Finance Minister Suresh Khanna said former Chief Minister Akhilesh Yadav was ignorant of the political economy of the state and so he was making irresponsible statements.

"Akhilesh Yadav has become habitual offender only to see his name and photo in local newspapers everyday and makes statements without understanding the issue," Khanna said and added, "The Yogi Adityanath government has earned global acclaim from WHO and other international organisations." Khanna claimed that the UP government has taken special measures to protect the interests of small traders, pavement hawkers and businesses in the unorganised sector. He said to strike a balance between lives and livelihood, the state government had imposed only partial Covid curfew instead of lockdown and had also extended material assistance to the poor people.

"This is beyond the comprehension of Akhilesh Yadav as he lacks the basic understanding of trade, industry and economy or the hardships faced by the small traders, yet he continues to make irresponsible statements."

"Samajwadi Party is known for gunraj where the mafia ruled the roost during the



"This is beyond the comprehension of Akhilesh Yadav as he lacks the basic understanding of trade, industry and economy or the hardships faced by the small traders, yet he continues to make irresponsible statements"

tenure of the SP government led by Akhilesh Yadav. He is ignorant about the nitty-gritty of trade and business and he is anti-trade and anti-businesses," Khanna said here on Sunday. He added, "UP has so far received investment proposals worth over Rs 4 lakh crore and it will be in the interest of Akhilesh Yadav to keep his mouth shut and stop making comments about trade and industry."

"Investors and entrepreneurs were scared of coming to UP for investing and doing

business and the state was in the grip of gunraj while the Yogi Adityanath government has created a congenial environment for investment and top industrial houses have made a beeline for investing in UP," Khanna claimed. Ridiculing the statements of Akhilesh Yadav, the minister said, "Despite being a three-term member of Lok Sabha and chief minister for five years, Akhilesh Yadav lacks practical wisdom. He is scared of venturing out of his residence during the time of pandemic."

CITYBRIEFS

RLD LEADER ASKS PEOPLE TO TAKE VACCINE JAB



Rashtriya Lok Dal national secretary Anil Dubey and his wife took the Covishield vaccine jab at Apollomedics Hospital on Sunday and appealed to the people to take the Covid vaccine. Dubey said the vaccine was safe and it protected people from the deadly novel coronavirus and people should not hesitate going for vaccination. He said the vaccine was for the good of the people and it had nothing to do with politics.

LDA PARKS TO REOPEN FROM TODAY

All the parks under Lucknow Development Authority will reopen for public (7 am to 5 pm) from June 14, according to a communiqué issued here on Sunday. There would be no entry for people without masks while proper COVID-19 guidelines would be adhered to in the parks. People will not be allowed to move in groups.

LITERARY EVENT

The two-day 4th Dr RU Singh Memorial National Level Virtual Literary Event 2021 was organised by the Faculty of Law, Lucknow University. The valedictory ceremony was organised in the presence of Justice Manish Kumar from the Allahabad High

Court, head and dean of the Faculty of Law Prof CP Singh, senior advocate Sudip Seth, organising secretary of the event Harish Chandra and Prof Mohammed Ahmed. Speaking on the occasion, Justice Manish Kumar said: "According to Rigveda, if we all perform our duties carefully, we are definitely on the path of prospects." Deep Seth said most of the statutes can be drafted in one go if the draft prepared is handed over to a panel of eminent lawyers and judges giving their inputs instead of a section of government departments.

CMS STUDENTS GRAB TOP HONOURS



Ten students of City Montessori School have won all the three top positions while competing with thousands of students from seven countries at the International Mathematics Olympiad, organised online by the Mathematics and National Science Academy located in Burgas, a prominent city in Bulgaria. Students from Bulgaria, Philippines, Kazakhstan, Vietnam, Indonesia, Mongolia and India participated in the competition in which Harsh Kumar Singh & Megha Gupta of RDSO Campus secured first position in their respective categories while Pranay Agarwal & Vaibhav Sharma of RDSO Campus, Rishith Raj Raizada of Gontinagar Campus I, and Aditya Pratap Singh Negi, Pranab Pandey and Apoorv Mishra of Rajajipuram Campus I secured the second position in their respective categories. Chitrakshi Singh of Gonti Nagar Campus I and Kanishk of Gontinagar Campus II secured third position in their respective categories.

RLD leader takes jibe at PMO

Lucknow (PNS): Taking a dig at the Prime Minister's Office (PMO), Rashtriya Lok Dal national spokesperson Anupam Mishra said it was ironic that the PMO did not know whether Prime Minister Narendra Modi went to jail for the independence of Bangladesh or not.

Mishra played a part of the speech given by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Bangladesh's National Day on March 26, 2021, in which he said that he not only sat on satyagraha for the independence of Bangladesh but also had to go to jail for it.

The RLD leader said he had sought information from the PMO about the prime minister under the right to information (RTI) after he failed to get any satisfactory reply from many intellectuals, politicians and social workers.

Mishra said his queries were when and under what charges Narendra Modi was arrested for staging satyagraha for the independence of Bangladesh, name of the jail where he was kept after his arrest and for how long he was kept in jail for the above.

The RLD leader said that without giving any answer to his queries, the PMO advised him to go through the speech-

NORTH EASTERN RAILWAY

E-Tendering Tender Notice No. 27/2021
Divisional Railway Manager (Engg.) N.E. Railways Iztanagar For and behalf of president of India invites "OPEN" e-tender through on Line (E-tendering) for the following work. SN : 1. Description of works: Rebuilding of Substructure of Major Bridge no. 104 (5 x 45.70 mtr.) on well foundation of permanent diversion at Km. 487/49/1 between Bazpur-Hempur (small station of Lalkuan-Kashipur section. (Under sanctioned work Rebuilding of bridge no. 104 (10 x 24.4M) span in km-48/9-49/1 between BPZ-HPIL station). Approx Value: Rs. 7,72,64,722.78. E.M.D. Money: Nil. Cost of Tender Form: Rs. Nil. Completion time/period from the date of issue of acceptance letter: 16 Months. 1. On line e-tender can be submitted up to 15.00 hrs. of dated 06.07.2021. 2. For Full details and submission of bid please see the Indian Railways IREPS website www.ireps.gov.in
Divisional Railway Manager (Engg), CPROW-61 Iztanagar
About any passenger amenity complaint SMS on Mob. No. 09794845955
Do Not smoke Bid/Cigarette in train

उत्तर प्रदेश के अल्पसंख्यक महाविद्यालयों में बी एड (द्विवारिक) पाठ्यक्रम हेतु प्रवेश परीक्षा का कार्यक्रम-2021-2023

आयोजक : बाबू युगराज सिंह सेवा संस्थान
पता : 709, चंद्रमा हाउस नई बाजार, खामा फतेपुर (उ०प्र०) 212655
संयुक्त तथा घटक महाविद्यालयों में शैक्षणिक सत्र 2021-23 में प्रवेश हेतु निर्देश
शैक्षणिक वर्ष : 01. विज्ञान/सांख्यिक/सांख्यिक-विज्ञान/मानविकी वर्ष में सामान्य एवं प्रशिष्ट वर्ग हेतु न्यूनतम 50% (पाठ्य प्रश्नपत्र) अंकों के साथ विधि द्वारा स्थापित किसी विश्वविद्यालय की स्नातक उपाधि अथवा स्नातकोत्तर उपाधि। शैक्षणिक वर्ष 2021-23 में प्रवेश हेतु न्यूनतम 50% (पाठ्य प्रश्नपत्र) अंकों के साथ अथवा उपाधि के समतुल्य कोई अन्य उपाधि प्रवेश परीक्षा में स्वीकारित होने हेतु आई है।
02. अनुसूचित जाति एवं अनुसूचित जनजाति के उम्मीदवार हेतु विधि द्वारा स्थापित किसी विश्वविद्यालय की स्नातक/स्नातकोत्तर उपाधि अथवा उपाधि के समतुल्य कोई अन्य उपाधि प्रवेश परीक्षा में स्वीकारित होने हेतु आई है।
03. विशेष वर्ग के उम्मीदवारों को न्यूनतम शैक्षणिक अंकों में पूरुत उत्तर प्रदेश शासन के शासनादेश के अनुसार प्रवेश की जाएगी।
● प्रवेश परीक्षा हेतु आवेदन की प्रारंभ तिथि 16/06/2021 मंगलवार
● प्रवेश परीक्षा हेतु आवेदन की अंतिम तिथि 15/07/2021 सोमवार
● प्रवेश सूचना जारी आदेश की अंतिम तिथि 22/07/2021 सोमवार
● प्रवेश परीक्षा की समाप्ति तिथि 29/08/2021 उषितार
● प्रवेश परीक्षा परीक्षा की समाप्ति तिथि 25-30/09/2021
● प्रवेश हेतु काउंसिलिंग की समाप्ति तिथि 01/10/2021 से 09/10/2021
शैक्षणिक सत्र 2021-23 में प्रवेश हेतु निर्देश
संकेत : किसी विशेष परीक्षा/विषय में शैक्षणिक प्रवेश परीक्षा 2021 से संबंधित विषयों में परिवर्तन का अधिकार बाबू युगराज सिंह सेवा संस्थान के पास होगा। यदि कोई एक (द्विवारिक) प्रवेश परीक्षा 2021 से संबंधित कोई विधि परिवर्तित होती है तो इसकी सूचना संबंधित वेबसाइट पर प्रकाशित की जाएगी।
संकेत सूत्र - 774080714, 869003030, 9864459262, 93833190 89
website: www.abhay group.com

3rd wave likely to be less severe than 2nd Girl student found murdered

SHARMILA KRISHNA ■ LUCKNOW

The third COVID-19 wave, which is expected to hit the country in October, is expected to be less severe than the second and much like the first in March last year. According to Prof SP Ambesh from SGPGI's Anaesthesiology department, the second wave was severe because all the coronavirus variants were active and in the attack mode.

"The first wave was not severe because it only had the alpha variant of the virus but in the second wave, there were four variants prevalent, including delta, alpha, beta and gamma, and were more virulent. Nearly 60 per cent of the cases were caused by the delta variant and that was why the second wave was so strong," he pointed out.

Dr Ambesh said the alpha, beta and gamma variants of the coronavirus are already down and won't be that effective when the third wave strikes. "These three variants have already lost their bite to an extent. However, the delta variant will remain active during the third wave and one or two more new variants of coronavirus may also be prevalent, making it much like the first wave," he added.

He further pointed out that it is the law of nature that



A passenger being tested for Covid at Charbagh railway station on Sunday

Pioneer

when the first wave is weak, the second is bound to be stronger.

"The coronavirus variant which came after the alpha variant was much stronger. The beta variant was much stronger than the alpha variant and attacked those who were left out in the first wave. Nature keeps changing the sequencing of the virus. The coronavirus has 30,000 pairs of amino acids and the sequencing of these pairs keeps changing. It could be more or less virulent. If it becomes less virulent, it dies down. But if it becomes more virulent, it becomes more dangerous. There were other variants which came along but they

went unnoticed because they did not do anything," he added. "There are also other factors which would make the third wave less dangerous. We have started understanding the virus and we know what works and what does not. We have better preparations from the point of view of treatment as well. In the first wave, there was some complacency towards the end and it was assumed that the second wave was unlikely," he pointed out.

Meanwhile, talking about the treatment of children to be impacted in the third wave, Dr Ambesh said oxygen therapy is unlikely to be prescribed for

children below 12 years and they would have to be shifted to hospitals unlike the adults.

"If the oxygen saturation level of children dips below 94 or 93, they have to be hospitalised. Oxygen is not only a therapy but also a drug and if the children are given an excess amount of oxygen it can lead to toxicity. There is a likelihood of people increasing the amount of oxygen being given to patients and it could be counterproductive. It can make the underdeveloped eye lens of the children opaque and solidify it, thus increasing the chances of cataract," he explained. He said that oxygen

has to be given in calibrated manner to children and it could be done at hospitals. He added that excessive oxygen could also lead to growth retardation and affect red blood cell formation.

About the challenges of treating children, he said the system of children is less compliant, so the changes which come are extremely drastic.

"In the adults, the systems are developed and fully automated and if the blood pressure falls, the veins constrict. In children though, the oxygen level drops rapidly to 60 or even 40, for which we cannot wait," he said. Asked about the kind of challenges that the anaesthesiologists are preparing for, he said that children below 5 years

face a lot of anxiety when separated from their parents. "There is a lot of difference between children and adults. A child of 5-6 years cries when separated from parents, which is not the case with a child who is 12-15 years old. Incidentally, parents also face separation anxiety and for this both the parents and children have to be counselled," he said. The high-risk category includes those suffering from diabetes, autoimmune disorder, or kidney problems. These diseases could be in children by birth or in the first year after birth. If these children have Covid, it could be problematic.

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

A missing BSc (I) girl student, who worked as a sales girl at a jeweller's showroom, was found murdered in the forest cover in Sarojininagar on Sunday morning. Police recovered a rope, paan masala and water bottle from the crime scene. A dupatta was tied around her neck and there were wounds on the body. The police suspected that she was first attacked with a sharp-edged weapon and then strangled to death.

DCP, Central, Somen Berma said the police were on the right track in terms of the investigation. He said the autopsy report would make it clear if the girl was subjected to sexual assault and if she died of strangulation. The body was spotted by a milkman, who passed on the information to Sunil Singh, who is the caretaker of a private school. Later, police were informed.

An empty liquor bottle, a butt of cigarette, an empty plastic glass and a pair of

shoes were also recovered from a few metres away from the crime scene. The grass was also found trampled. It later surfaced that the girl was a native of Sitapur staying with her family in Sarojininagar. She was reported missing after she left the house around 8 pm on Saturday. Her mother had left for Sitapur two days back and her father, who works as a security guard at a shop in Alambagh, was at his workplace.

The identity of the girl was ascertained in the evening after her father reached the police station and was shown the photograph of the girl. He was later taken to the mortuary. He said he reached the house after the night shift and did not find his daughter there. He contacted some of his acquaintances and later searched for her at different places. He later reached the police station where he came to know about her death.

The crime scene is located in the Gaharu forest cover on an unconstructed road leading to a farmhouse situated in a lane opposite Navodaya

Vidyalaya. The dog squad failed to give any conclusive lead to the police while forensic experts collected samples from the crime scene. Four teams were formed to crack the case and the police were scanning the footage of CCTV cameras installed at different places around the crime scene.

LEKHPAL BOOKED FOR CORRUPTION

The Vigilance department registered an FIR under the Prevention of Corruption Act against Atar Singh Yadav, who is posted as a lekhpal in Noida. The probe revealed that Singh, with an income of Rs 51 lakh, had property worth Rs 1.71 crore. Vigilance officials said that Atar Singh Yadav was posted as a lekhpal in the Dadri tehsil in GB Nagar. A probe was conducted in which it surfaced that in his service as the lekhpal got him Rs 51 lakh but during the same period, he amassed property to the tune of Rs 1.71 crore. "No satisfactory explanation of expenditure and assets acquisition was given by the lekhpal," a senior vigilance officer said.

10-year-old girl taken to secluded place, raped

Lucknow (PNS): An unidentified youth made a 10-year-old girl sit on his bike and then took her to a secluded place where he raped her on Sunday afternoon. The victim, along with her cousin (brother), had gone to a mango grove when she fell into the trap of the accused.

As per reports, the girl was picking up mangoes from under a tree which her cousin had climbed. The accused reached there on a blue bike and called the girl. He told her that he was acquainted with her father. He also told her that her father had asked her to bring tree leaves used in serving chaat and asked her to show him the way. He also lured her by offering pani puri.

As per the victim, the youth made her sit on the bike and started speeding off. She said as she objected sensing foul play, he

gagged her with his *gamchha*. He took her to a forest cover near a petrol pump in Indrajeev Kheda, where he raped her and fled the scene. The girl, who was bleeding through her private parts, somehow reached the main road and was spotted by some commuters. On being informed, her father reached the scene and she narrated her ordeal to him. Her father later lodged a case against the unidentified accused.

Police registered a case in this connection and sent the girl for a medical check-up. The police said they scanned the footage of a CCTV camera installed at a petrol pump behind which the crime took place and also another one installed at a school near the crime scene. However, the police were yet to get any clue about the accused.

Kali Bari temple to reopen from today

Lucknow (PNS): The Kali Bari Temple in Ghasiyari Mandi, which was closed due to lockdown, is set to reopen from Monday.

President of the managing committee Gautam Bhattacharya said the temple would open twice in a day.

In the morning, the temple will open from 7 to 11 and in the evening from 5 to 6:30. However, the temple will remain closed on Saturday and Sunday in view of the weekend corona curbs.

"The COVID-19 protocols, as per guidelines issued by the Uttar Pradesh government, will be followed by temple trust as well as devotees entering the premises for puja and darshan of Goddess Maa Kali," Bhattacharya said.

Covid underlines need to keep diabetes in check

Lucknow (PNS): COVID-19 has raised serious concerns regarding the monitoring of diabetes and change of lifestyle because a majority of the patients who died had diabetes as a comorbidity.

Dr Shrikesh Singh from Ram Manohar Lohia Institute of Medical Sciences said it is a wake up call for the control of diabetes and change of lifestyle in the general public. He said diabetes has been a leading cause of comorbidity deaths and also the most common factor for the post-Covid complications,

including mucormycosis (black fungus). "There is a rationale that if the Covid patients are not diabetic, they are more likely to recover faster and with lesser intervention as compared to their diabetic counterparts. In severe and moderate cases, steroid has a definite role but it leads to increase in blood sugar levels. If a patient is already diabetic, the sugar levels shoot up due to steroids. It's high time that people indulge in physical activities and monitor their blood sugar levels. Those with a family history of diabetes need to

more careful," Dr Singh said.

About the increase in the number of diabetes patients, he said it is thanks to the sedentary lifestyle. "The use of refined food and fast food is increasing the number of diabetes patients. People must understand that they can eat anything they want in moderation but it should be home-cooked. It is the single most important thing which can protect people from many diseases. Even if people restrict themselves to eating out only once a week, the problem would be solved to a very extent," he

explained. Dr Singh said they are having regular sessions of diabetes control and diet control and patients are also being encouraged to follow a proper routine.

President of People's Health Organisation Dr Ishwar Gilada said it is being said for long and Covid has underlined it. "People tend to believe nothing would go wrong and it is only when they take ill that they wake up, but it is too late by then. Uncontrolled diabetes, obesity and hypertension are all comorbidities and if there is more than one co-mor-

bidity, it could lead to several problems," he said. He added that it was important to follow a physical exercise regimen like cycling, yoga and walking, eating less oily & less spicy food. Keeping the weight in check is also important, he said. "One should not have refined sugar but go for potatoes, rice, wheat, bread and flour. One should also remember that the stomach is an elastic sack and whatever you keep in the sack, it will keep expanding. And, if it gets expanded to a certain level, it will not contract," he added.

PM lauds Elderline project of UP govt

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has appreciated the Elderline project of Uttar Pradesh government in which senior citizens are given assistance amid the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. In a tweet, Modi called the Elderline project a very good initiative and tagged Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath in that tweet.

This appreciation comes amid speculation of a rift between the prime minister and the chief minister. "In order to address the concerns and grievances of the people aged above 60 years of age, the Yogi government through this initiative has reached the vulnerable section and homeless elderly citizens in times of crisis to help them in terms of health concerns, emotional

support and legal aid," a government spokesman said.

He said a toll-free helpline facility was made operational in Uttar Pradesh on May 14 to extend complete support to the elderly citizens in all 75 districts of Uttar Pradesh.

The helpline - 14567 -- is being cited as a critical step to reach the elderly in need during the prevailing pandemic in the state, as it receives as many as 80 to 90 actionable calls on a daily basis from various districts of Uttar Pradesh, from Noida to Ballia.

Amid the prevailing pandemic, UP became the first state in the country to extend emotional care and support, health and legal assistance to the elderly through the call centres which remain functional from 8 am to 8 pm. The Yogi government, in collaboration

with the Union Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, has effectively implemented the scheme throughout the state.

All queries pertaining to information on old age homes, physiotherapy units, related to health and mental health and legal issues are being addressed promptly, thereby ensuring quick redressal of grievances as directed by the state government. The Elderline facility has been operationalised with the assistance of Tata Trusts and the NSE foundation.

Through Elderline, a hungry and homeless 70-year-old elderly woman in Kasganj district was provided comfort in an Old Age Home. Some people had informed about the plight of the woman by dialing the COVID-19 toll free helpline 14567, after which the field

response leader reached the spot and with the help of the local police and tehsildar, the elderly woman was taken to an old age home, thereafter, her antigen test was conducted which was negative.

Elderline also helped a 70-year-old ex-serviceman stranded and stuck at the Chandausi bus station for almost one and a half months, reach his home.

The elderly man, identified as Mahesh Kumar Rastogi, an ex-serviceman who had come to meet his daughter from Khatima, Uttarakhand, was refused by the daughter to enter her house, after which he had no option but to remain at the Chandausi bus station. He was helped by the Elderline team in going back to his home and was also provided food.

Southwest monsoon reaches UP

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The southwest monsoon hit Uttar Pradesh on Sunday morning. According to Met director JP Gupta, the monsoon arrived at the eastern parts of the state and also some western parts.

As for Lucknow, the southwest monsoon is expected in the next 48 hours. However, the state capital received pre-monsoon showers on Sunday. Lucknow received light showers from afternoon, bringing the temperature down by 9 degree Celsius at 29.9 degrees.

The local forecast is generally cloudy skies with rain and thundershowers at some places. The maximum and minimum temperatures are expected to be 30 degree Celsius and 26 degree Celsius, respectively. The state forecast is rains and thundershowers at many places. There is warning for heavy rains in eastern UP and gusty winds with rains and



Women seem to be enjoying the pleasant weather near Ambedkar Park in Lucknow on Sunday

Pioneer

thunderstorms at isolated parts of the state. Bahrach received the maximum rainfall (66 mm), followed by Prayagraj (42.8 mm) and Sultanpur (36.6 mm).

The weatherman said that the southwest monsoon has further advanced into some more parts of Madhya Pradesh,

entire Chhattisgarh, Odisha, West Bengal, Jharkhand and Bihar besides most parts of east UP and some parts of west UP, entire Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir, Ladakh, Gilgit-Baltistan, Muzaffarabad and some parts of north Haryana, Chandigarh and north Punjab.

City park to have 10 more mango varieties

Lucknow (PNS): The Central Institute for Subtropical Horticulture (CISH) will be adding 10 more mango varieties at a park in Gomtinagar which already has 25 varieties contributed by the institute.

CISH director Shailendra Rajan said that the unique part of the park is that many mango varieties are grafted on each tree one can savour Chausa and Amrapali from the same tree. On Sunday, the CISH director visited the park and had discussions with the residents.

He said that growing mango trees in cities like Lucknow is difficult due to the limited amount of land available. "To meet the needs of the surrounding community, this hobby can be pursued by utilising land in the local parks. The Virat Khand-2 Association has developed such a park. The efforts of the residents' association and CISH bore fruits and the park was transformed into a collection garden of over 25 varieties. Arunika, Ambika and even older varieties such as Langda, Dussehari, Amrapali, and Chausa are doing well," he pointed out.

Tall seedling trees in the park were top-worked (the art of converting trees to different varieties) with CISH varieties.

Mayor pays tributes to Maharana Pratap

Lucknow (PNS): Mayor Sanyukta Bhatia paid rich tributes to freedom fighter Maharana Pratap on his birth anniversary by garlanding his statue at Hussainganj crossing on Sunday.

She expressed displeasure over his broken spear and directed Municipal Commissioner Ajay Kumar Dwivedi to get it repaired.

Paying tributes to the freedom fighter, she said that the mere mention of his name or his

memory fills one with a patriotic feeling. "A persons gets a strong feeling of patriotism just by standing near his picture or statue," the mayor said. She said the name Maharana Pratap is synonymous with bravery and is a sacred oath.

"He will always be remembered as one of greatest freedom fighters. I bow my head in front of a great soul who sacrificed his life in the service of his motherland," Bhatia said.

विश्व रक्तदाता दिवस
14 जून 2021

"GIVE BLOOD AND KEEP THE WORLD BEATING"

हमने किया रक्तदान? और आपने?

आप भी करें रक्तदान

बनाए रखें किसी जरूरतमंद के दिल की धड़कन

रक्तदान से किसी भी प्रकार की कमजोरी नहीं आती और 24 से 48 घंटे में पुनः रक्त बन जाता है।

चार बातों का ध्यान रखकर रक्तदान करें

एक नहीं बल्कि चार मरीजों की जान बचाने का सौभाग्य पाएँ

- 1 18 से 65 वर्ष की उम्र हो
- 2 कोई असाध्य रोग न हो
- 3 हीमोग्लोबिन 12-5g/dL से अधिक हो
- 4 45 किग्रा. से ज्यादा वजन हो

रक्तदान के बाद कृपया ध्यान दें

- कम से कम 15 मिनट तक आराम करें
- नूस और पानी का सेवन अधिक करें
- 6 घंटे बाद बेडने निकाल दें
- किसी भी प्रकार की असुविधा हो तो काइ बैंक से सम्पर्क करें

समस्त जानकारियों हेतु सम्पर्क करें 104

आइए, ऐसी लहर चलाएँ, उचित व्यवहार से कोविड को हराएँ

सफाई भी - दवाई भी - कड़ाई भी

जय अखिलेश चंद्र

BJP is ready for 2022 assembly poll, says state BJP chief

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

State Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) president Swatantra Dev Singh criticised the opposition parties for misleading the people by spreading rumours during the corona pandemic period. However, he said despite increasing problems by the rivals, it was due to the foresightedness and efficient guidance of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the strong management of the Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, the situation created due to the second wave has been controlled within a short span of time.

State BJP chief was in the city to pay tributes to many party workers who lost their lives during the pandemic recently. According to him, always working on the mantra of 'Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas', both the Central and state governments have brought the maximum development in the state and today every worker of the party is ready for the 2022 Vidhan Sabha elections. He called upon the party workers to take the election of district panchayat presidents and block pramukhs seriously and expressed hope that the joint efforts of the party's organisation and public representatives would definitely bring good results.

'The BJP is a worker based



State BJP chief Swatantra Dev Singh paying floral tributes to a party worker at Sudhia in Varanasi on Sunday

party and every worker of the party is priceless and an integral part of our family,' he said. Paying tributes to departed souls, he added 'the contributions of the party workers who died during the corona period can never be forgotten' while talking to the reporters in an informal chat here on Sunday. According to him, the pandemic has created a terrible crisis in the entire country as apart from many of the party workers, we've lost many lives. 'In this hour of crisis, the party has decided that ministers, MPs, MLAs and other senior leaders will go to the homes of departed party workers to pay homage and express condolences to their bereaved families,' he said.

Praising the CM, he said that Yogi Adityanath, despite being infected himself, served 24 crore people of the state by working hard 24/7 by visiting various districts and solving every problem being faced by the people during the pandemic period. 'Adequate beds, oxygen, medicines etc were made available in each district, as a result of which corona was controlled in a short time,' he said. During his stay in the city, Singh offered prayer at Kashi Vishwanath and Kal Bhairav temples. He visited the houses of many people who had lost their lives due to Covid. He first reached the house of coordinator of Namami Gange project

Markandey Verma at Sudhia (Bulanala) and then went to the residence of Dr Ashwani Jain at Parvatipur Colony (Kamakchha, Gurubagh) and paid floral tributes. He also visited the house of eminent vocalist Padma Vibhushan Pandit Channulal Mishra to pay homage on the death of his wife and daughter and then went to the residences Ratnadeep Agrawal (Mahmoorganj), Nandan Verma (Ashutosh Nagar Colony, Sarayanandan Khojwan), Prof Reva Prasad Dwivedi (Mahamanapuri Colony near BHU), Mohitosh Narayan Singh (Nagwa near Ravidas Park), Poonam Pandey (Nagwa), Ravindra Kumar Patel 'Rinku' (Sujabad), Satendra Choubey (Cotton Mill Colony, Nati Imli) and Shivshankar Rajbhar (Bahoranpur).

During his hectic visit to the residences of several persons who had lost their lives during pandemic period, Singh was accompanied by Regional president Mahesh Chand Srivastava, District chief Hansraj Vishwakarma, City president Vidya Sagar Rai, MLA Saurabh Srivastava, Ashok Chaurasia, Dr Sudama Patel, Rakesh Sharma, Kedhar Singh, Regional Media In-charge Navratan Rathi and others.

Incessant rains lash Prayagraj

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ ALLAHABAD

Incessant rains on Sunday lashed the city throwing the normal life out of gear. As a result of which the traffic system came to a standstill. The non-stop rains throughout the day did provide much needed respite from the hot and sultry weather conditions which persisted for the past three days but affected the running of trains especially on Mumbai and Delhi-Howrah routes. The roadside dwellers had to face untold hardship due to waterlogging everywhere.

On the other hand, the tall claims made by the Allahabad Nagar Nigam (ANN) regarding comprehensive cleaning of the various drains of the city proved to be hollow as most of the areas in the city witnessed massive waterlogging due to downpour.

The biggest sufferers were the denizens belonging to the old city areas who faced the plethora of problems due to poor maintenance of the drainage system and digging of roads for laying of sewer pipe line. However, what to speak of the old city areas, even the posh ones were also adversely affected due to the same problems. Even the traffic at different parts of the city was adversely affected as people faced problems due to accumulation of water.

The areas which were



Waterlogging on a road in Prayagraj

Pioneer

adversely affected by waterlogged included Rami Mandi, Attarsuiya, Lukerganj, Atala, Mohtashimgunj, Clock Tower, Nakhas Kohna, Ahmadgunj, Dara Shah Ajmal, Subzi Mandi, Allahpur, George Town, Tagore Town, Chowk, Bahadurgunj, Kotha Parcha, Muthigunj and Batsba Mandi among others.

This caused problems to people due to flooding of roads in the low lying areas of Niranjani Dot Bridge, Civil Lines, Rajapur. However, the coolness in the atmosphere

provided some relief. This rain is said to be beneficial for farming.

Dr Shailendra Rai, Associate Professor and Meteorologist of the Centre for Atmospheric and Marine Sciences, said that the weather will remain the same till June 18. Sometimes there will be torrential rain and sometimes it will rain.

Due to heavy downpour there was waterlogging on the road as the drains are already choke. At some places, the markets were flooded to the

knees. Those who passed through that water from the vehicles had problems. Civil lines were also flooded near Dhoobi Ghat intersection, roads connected to Nawab Yusuf Road, Station intersection, Manmohan Park Katra and Laxmi Talkies intersection. LIC colony in Tagore Town, the road in front of Banshi Bhawan, Malaviya Road in Georgetown, Silent-Deaf Vidyalaya Road and Matiara Road in Allapur, Amitabh Bachchan Road in Allapur caused waterlogging.

Six held for PNB manager's murder

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

The police on Sunday claimed to have worked out the sensational and daring murder case of the branch manager of the Punjab National Bank (PNB) and arrested six criminals in this connection but the mastermind of this heinous crime is yet to be arrested.

It may be mentioned that the branch manager of Karkhiyan-Pindra Branch of PNB Phoolchand Ram was shot dead by a four-wheeler (Scorpio)-borne criminal late evening on June 9 last.

During the investigation, it came to knowledge that the branch manager withdrew ₹41 lakh from Mandiyahu branch of Jaunpur of the bank during day hours of the fateful day to deposit in Karkhiyan branch but without depositing the cash, the amount was shown as deposited in the voucher. The manager also took ₹6 lakh from cashier of his branch and left the branch between 5.30 pm and 5.40 pm along with one Sunil Patel with the cash kept in two bags, the ADG Brij Bhushan, IG SK Bhagat and SP-Rural Amit Verma informed the media persons on Sunday.

Thereafter, the branch manager along with Sunil got into a Scorpio which Sanjay



ADG (Zone) Brij Bhushan telling about workout of PNB manager murder case in Varanasi on Sunday

Patel was driving. Sanjay stopped the vehicle at Patel Dhaba near Kaitholi tri-junction after seeing his friends Mukesh and Atul Vishwakarma. There was also a Scorpio there and four people were on board it. These persons were called by Mukesh. The branch manager, Sanjay and Sunil held a talk with the persons sitting in another Scorpio.

Afterwards, two persons got off the other Scorpio and boarded on the Scorpio in which the branch manager was sitting. They sat on the back seat with Mukesh while the branch manager sat on the front seat beside the driver and also kept the bag containing the

cash near to him. Sunil and Atul boarded the other Scorpio. The branch manager instructed the driver to take the vehicle towards Jaunpur. Another Scorpio was behind it. The Scorpio of branch manager turned towards Jaunpur and when it reached at a dhaba near Pindrai turn, an unidentified youth sitting behind the driver seat of vehicle opened fire with point blank at branch manager. After shooting him, both unidentified youths got off the vehicle with a bag containing cash and boarded the other Scorpio by which they had come. They asked Sunil and Atul to get out of their vehicle and flee from the scene. The driver Sanjay and Sunil tried to

escape from the scene but after seeing the villagers and cops they returned to the ill-fated vehicle.

The police took both into their custody and during interrogation they confessed their involvement in the crime. Sanjay, Mukesh and Atul Singh have formed a gang to cheat the people in the name of doubling the money through CSR fund transactions. On the instruction of Atul Kumar Singh, they contacted the branch manager and lured him to double his money. Thereafter, they along with Alok Rai chalked out a conspiracy to loot the cash from the branch manager.

And as per plan, they shot dead the branch manager and looted a bag containing the cash but another bag containing ₹27 lakh remained in the vehicle in which the branch manager was travelling, the police informed, adding that the mastermind of the crime is Alok Rai.

The police teams succeeded in arresting Adesh Srivastava, Mukesh Pal, Atul Kumar Singh, Atul Vishwakarma, Sanjay Kumar Patel (driver) and Sunil Kumar Patel. Alok Rai will soon be in police dragnet and the remaining cash will also be recovered, the police claimed while producing the arrested criminals before the media.

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ ALLAHABAD

Action finally moved forward in the case of rape victim from Mirzapur who had been admitted to SRN Hospital before her death. The police recorded the statement of the medical staff on duty at the time of the alleged incident. However, the statement of all the staff concerned has not been made yet. The statement of the rest will also be recorded soon. After the girl's death during treatment on June 8, an FIR was registered at the Kotwali police station.

Till a day earlier, the police had maintained that their state-

ment could not be recorded to non-availability of information about the medical staff.

Whereas the hospital SIC Dr Ajay Saxena had said that along with the names of the staff, the investigation report has also been made available to the police. Finally, on Sunday, the police recorded the statement of the medical staff on duty.

Sources said that at present the statement of only two medical staff could be taken on Sunday. The statement of the rest will also be recorded soon. On the other hand, a note has also been sought from the litigant regarding the viral video

on social media and the alleged statement of the victim.

The police officer is not ready to divulge more in the matter. CO Kotwali Satyendra Prasad Tiwari said that the investigation is going on. Police have been pressed into service in other action including the collection of evidence.

In the SRN rape allegation case, SP leader Richa Singh has sought cooperation from the doctors in the investigation. He issued a letter in the name of Resident Doctors Association of MLN Medical College and Allahabad Medical Association in which the demand was raised that the doctors should

cooperate with the police in the gang rape allegation case.

She has also sent a letter to the SSP, in which she stated that even 12 days after the incident, the accused have not been apprehended. It is alleged that on June 3 itself, IG Prayagraj gave clean chit to the accused doctors from his official Twitter account at 8.08 am.

The basis of which was the investigation of CMO Prayagraj. Now without questioning the accused, they would not have been given a clean chit. In such a situation, the statement regarding the non-identity of the accused is misleading, she added.

Corona Mata temple demolished

ALLAHABAD (PNS): The administration demolished the Corona Mata temple built due to superstition in Juhu Shukulpur area under the Sangpur police station. After the death of three people of the village from Corona, the villagers were engaged in worshipping in the temple for five days.

On receiving a complaint about the construction of a temple on the disputed land, the police administration took action by putting up a JCB on Saturday night. The debris including the statue was dropped at Rajmatipur, five km away. A brother of the accused who set up the temple is being questioned by the police by taking him into custody.

Three people died of corona infection in Shukulpur Juhu village. After this, fear had spread among the villagers. On this, Lokesh Srivastava of the village decided to build a temple of Corona Mata. The donation was collected with the help of the villagers. After this, the Corona Mata temple was established on June 7 after preparing a platform under

the neem tree. A mask was also put on the face of the statue. Apart from the villagers in the temple built due to superstition, people from neighbouring villages also started reaching for worship.

Villagers would also offer water while worshipping Corona Mata by lighting incense sticks and offering prasad. A mask was also applied to the statue of Corona Mata.

The people of the village believed that worshipping would not spread corona infection. In this case, Lokesh's brother Nagesh, while complaining to the police, told that the temple of Corona Mata has been built on the land without partition.

Along with this, work was being done to promote superstition. On this, on Saturday night, a joint team of Sangpur police and Lalganj tehsil administration demolished the temple of Corona Mata with the help of JCB. It is discussed that on protesting, the brother of Lokesh, who built the temple, was taken into custody by the police. In the night itself, the statue was dropped along with

the debris from JCB at Rajmatipur, five km away. Sangpur police station said that the complaint was received. As a result, one person was taken into custody.

As soon as the news of the construction of a temple of Corona Mata in Juhu Shukulpur of Sangpur police station area became media headlines, people from far and wide started reaching there for worship. The people who came there were first hand washed. People used to worship only by wearing masks. According to the villagers, five days ago people started offering money at the temple.

People came to know about the demolition of Corona Mata temple built in Juhu Shukulpur on Sunday morning. A crowd of people gathered on the spot. They also came to know that the police administration itself had demolished the temple. But everyone kept silent for fear of action. People used to stay and leave for some time after coming to the spot.

PLOT OF LAND ATTACHED: Just a day after the attachment of landed prop-

erty of Zulfiqar alias Tota worth crores of rupees, yet another huge plot of land acquired by Majid, a close associate of Atique Ahmed, was attached near Bamrauli by the officers of Revenue department in the presence of huge police force.

Majid son of Anwarul Haq alias Bachchga Munshi is a resident of Mariyadeeh under Puramtufti police station. Dozens of criminal cases are pending against him under different sections of the IPC besides Gangster Act.

When property records of Majid were screened, this deal of huge plot of land worth ₹ 2.25 crore surfaced near Bamrauli. The same was reported to the administrative officers and the attachment order was procured.

Such attachment process against the gang members of Atique Ahmed is continuing for the past one week and is expected to go further as the police are busy tracing out property details of the hardened criminals in the district with special focus on the gang of Atique Ahmed.

Students' safety is our priority: UGC chief

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Chairman of University Grants Commission (UGC) Prof DP Singh said 'the safety of students during the coronavirus pandemic period is our priority'. He was addressing a webinar organised on the directives and guidelines of the UGC as the chief guest in Banaras Hindu University (BHU) here on Saturday. According to him, the mental health of the students is also very important to continue their studies smoothly, so that they can maintain their morale even in adverse situations and overcome anxiety. Prof Singh said that the UGC has offered about 123 courses of undergraduate (UG) and postgraduate (PG) levels through open online mode and the students would be given admissions in 83 UG and 40 PG courses. Speaking on the occasion, BHU's Vice-Chancellor Prof VK Shukla said 'we should be very careful during the Covid period so that we can remain healthy. During this, it is necessary to take special care of mental health so that unfavourable situations do not dominate us and we can remain happy.' Prof Shukla called upon the students to keep themselves free from psycho-social worries and contribute towards the progress of themselves as well as society

and country during the pandemic time. He also informed that on the instructions of the UGC, the university has constituted Covid Task Force Committee on Mental Health, Psychosocial Anxiety and Wellness. Presiding over the webinar, Coordinator of Stress Management and Counselling Centre and Chairman of the Covid Task Force Committee Prof Sanjay Gupta said 'there are many ups and downs in life but with time everything goes well. A disease like Covid is not long lasting but during the pandemic period we have to keep our health as well as mental conditions positively so that anxiety does not overwhelm us'. According to him, it is the effort of the committee to benefit the students through various programmes on mental health.

The keynote speaker and Head of the Computer Department Prof Vivek Kumar Singh, while highlighting the features of the SWAYAM platform, provided information about useful research journals. He also explained the complex topics like H Index, Impact Factor to the participants in simple language and pacified their curiosity. Dr Sanjeev Saraf conducted the function Prof KK Singh proposed the vote of thanks. On the occasion, among others who also participated in the webinar were

Chief Proctor Prof Anand Chaudhary, Prof Tara Singh, Prof Akhil Mishra, Dr Pushpa Kumari Malviya, Dr Amita, Dr Krishna Kumar Singh and Dr Harsha Singh.

VARANASI RECORDS POSITIVE CASES IN SINGLE DIGIT: In a major relief, the Varanasi district recorded the positive cases of COVID-19 in the single digit for the first time in the second wave of pandemic and also the active cases dropped to below 300-mark. A total of 5 people tested positive for novel coronavirus infection during the past 24 hours taking the tally of confirmed cases to 82,098, as per the figures released by the Health department on Sunday evening. With 3 COVID-19 deaths during the last 24 hours, the death toll increased to 767. As many as 31 COVID-19 patients recovered during the past 24 hours, 28 in home isolation and 3 in hospitals. With this, 81,053 COVID-19 patients have been cured in the district- 74,809 in home isolation and 6,244 in Covid hospitals.

In the first report of the day, 4 positive cases were found out of 2,858 test reports received and this figure increased to 5 out of 5,345 as per report provided by the Health department this evening. The total active cases dropped to 278 from 307 which was a day ago. On Saturday

evening, as many as 15 positive cases were recorded and the total number of cases was 82,093 and the number of total deaths was 764. Earlier, Out of a total 3,334 hotspots, 3,060 are green zones and 271 are red zones a day ago.

On Saturday, a total of 11,362 beneficiaries were vaccinated at 157 vaccination centres.

MURDER CASE OF YOUTH WORKED OUT: The rural police on Sunday claimed to have worked out the sensational murder case of a youth under the Rohania police station and arrested the killer with bike and sharp-edged weapon used in the crime. The hand of wife was found behind the killing. It may be mentioned that the villagers of Khanav village, under the Rohania police station saw a body of a youth on May 21 last behind the premises of a ruined hospital of Red Cross Society. The youth was strangled and his head was damaged badly. They informed the local police about this. The body could not be identified at that time. To identify the body, the police circulated the photo of the body through social media and also distributed it among villagers. After three days, the body was identified as Tarashankar Bind (25), resident of Chateri village, under the Mirzamurad police station.

NCR gears up for conversion of diesel loco shed into electric one

ALLAHABAD (PNS): North Central Railway is gearing up for the conversion of diesel loco shed into electric loco shed. In this connection Chief Motive Power Engineer presented a comprehensive plan through video conference. To contribute to Indian Railways' mission of becoming the largest green Railways in the world, NCR is not only moving towards electrification of its entire section, but has also envisaged the conversion of its diesel loco shed at Jhansi into electric loco shed. With increasing electrification, production of electric locomotives has been stepped up and an equivalent number of diesel locomotives are being withdrawn from service. This naturally give rise for the need of conversion of diesel loco sheds into electric one.

Diesel loco shed Jhansi is the only major diesel loco shed

on NCR catering to traffic needs of Mail/Express, Passenger, Goods and Shunting services. The shed has completed 46 glorious years in the service of nation. At present it maintains 74 Alco Loco, 13 Shunting Loco and 32 HHP Loco apart from 28 WAG-7 Electric Locomotives. It also maintains a 140T BD Crane and Accident Relief Train and Accident Relief Medical Van stationed at Jhansi. It imparts a classroom training for run-ins staff too with four classrooms for 100 trainees and a 80 bedded hostel.

Conversion of the loco shed from diesel to electric is a gradual phased exercise, which has already been started 11 months back in July last year, to be precise. The conversion has been planned in three phases with provision of additional facilities like OHE test-

ing facility, laying of OHE from Testing Shed to Trip shed, lifting of tracks etc. It is envisaged that by March 2024 electric loco holding of the shed will increase to 100 locos as against the holding of 25 electric locos in March 2021. While at present holding of diesel locomotives is 64 and 37 respectively for goods and coaching services, it will reduce to 17 for goods locomotives, while there will be no diesel locomotive for coaching services by March 2024. Diesel locomotives will remain for shunting purposes and for emergencies only.

While presenting the PPT in a video conference, Chief Motive Power Engineer NCR Anil Dwivedi explained, 'the most remarkable feature of this conversion exercise is that there is no major change in the overall lay out of the loco shed

and optimum utilisation of manpower is being carried out. Most of the working sections in the shed will remain common for both electric as well as diesel services thereby bringing economies in the entire planning'. General Manager NCR VK Tripathi informed that an integrated planning is being carried out to all over Indian Railways to make Indian Railways more efficient, economic and environment friendly mode of transport. As the number of AC locomotives will increase, we are committed to provide quick and best maintenance to these locomotives. The video conference meeting was attended by AGM NCR Ranjan Yadav, Principal Chief Electrical Engineer Satish Kothari, DRM Jhansi Sandeep Mathur and other divisional officers, informed the NCR CPRO Shivam Sharma.

DC assures Covid orphaned kids, their guardians of all possible help

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Divisional Commissioner Dr Raj Shekhar, on Sunday, held a virtual interaction with two orphaned children due to COVID-19 and their guardians. He assured the guardians that the UP government was committed to the safety, security and education of the orphaned children until they attained adulthood.

He was interacting with the guardians and the two children on the recently-launched Bal Swarajya portal.

The divisional commissioner said that under the UP Mukhyamantri Bal Sewa Yojana the guardians of Covid orphaned children up to the age of 10 years would receive a sum of Rs 4,000 per month in their respective bank accounts. He said in case of children between 11 and 18 years, they would be provided free education in Atal Awasiya Vidyalaya and Kasturba Gandhi Awasiya Vidyalaya. He said apart from this, during the three months vacation, the guardians would be sent Rs 12,000 in their accounts at the rate of Rs 4,000 per month in a year. He said similarly for the girls a sum of Rs 1,01,000 would be given for their marriage.

Dr Shekhar said during the COVID-19 pandemic a large number of families were badly affected and the disease had left a big number of children orphaned who were either dependent on natural guardians or their close ones.



Divisional Commissioner, Dr Raj Shekhar, interacting with guardians on recently launched portal 'Bal Swarajya' from his office.

He said the Bal Swarajya portal had been launched so that all such orphaned children and their guardians could connect with the government, which would provide them all possible help in the times to come.

He said currently 148 orphaned children were registered on the portal and there were 14 children who had lost both their parents. He said out of the remaining either the father or mother had died of COVID-19 and majorly were those who had lost the bread earner.

The divisional commissioner said the UP government had taken up this issue on priority and the officials had been directed to take feedback and work out modalities on helping

these children in the present circumstances. He added that a project had been worked out for safety, security and arrangements for the education of such children.

He said a special team had been set up at the division level which included IGP, Kanpur Division, police commissioner, Kanpur Nagar, deputy director probation, additional health and family welfare director, joint director secondary education and several other officers.

Dr Shekhar said a constant review would be arranged and for such children free health check-up would be done out at the nearest community health centre (CHC) or public health centre (PHC) by the month end and later it would be done six

monthly. He said such children would be entitled to free health cards.

He said if such children were studying in private schools, the administration would take up the issue of fee relief.

The divisional commissioner directed the director probation to ensure that all benefits of the welfare schemes were extended to these children and said the process should be completed by June 16, 2021. He said the issues would be heard by a special committee to be set up and if there was any complaint, it would be settled through the helpline number. He issued a directive for setting up committees to carry out proper follow-up of the directives.

Youth killed by wife's paramour

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

A youth was killed by his wife's paramour at Bahihara village in Akbarpur Kotwali area of Kanpur Dehat.

The body of the youth, who was missing for the past one week, was recovered from Noan river on Saturday.

Police arrested three persons, including the wife of the deceased, while one of their accomplices is absconding.

According to reports, Shiv Govind (32) went missing from his house on June 6 evening. After failing to trace him, Shiv's elder brother Bal Govind informed the police on June 10 about his disappearance.

During investigation, police learnt about the involvement of Shiv's wife in the killing of her husband and took her into custody. On being grilled, she confessed the crime.

She disclosed that Shiv Govind was killed by her paramour Deepak alias Lalla of the village. Police immediately arrested him and recovered the body of Shiv Govind from the Noan river.

Police also arrested Aman of the village for his involvement in the incident while another accused, Nikhilim, is still absconding.

Kotwali Incharge Tulsiram Pandey said as Shiv Govind's wife Rita was not worried about the disappearance of her husband and was seen roaming in the village with full makeup, the family members and villagers became suspicious.

During investigation, it transpired that as Shiv Govind used to object to his wife's illicit relations and the couple often had heated arguments over it, Rita decided to eliminate him. On June 6, Deepak alias Lalla took Shiv to the Noan river on the pretext of cutting wood for laying the roof of his house. On reaching the river he axed Shiv to death and dumped the body in the river.

Shiv was married to his sister-in-law Rita of Binaur, Sachendi, in 2014 after the death of his eldest brother Har Govind in a road accident in 2012. She has a three-year old daughter. Shiv Govind was employed in a private factory in Rania (Kanpur Dehat).

Gorakhpur-LTT summer special to run on June 16

CORRESPONDENT ■ GORAKHPUR

The railway administration keeping the convenience of the people in mind will for one trip run the 05401 Gorakhpur-Lokmanya Tilak Terminus summer special train from Gorakhpur on June 16 and 05402 Lokmanya Tilak Terminus-Gorakhpur summer special train from Lokmanya Tilak Terminus on June 18. All the coaches in these trains will be of reserved class and passengers travelling in them will have to follow the Covid-19 prevention guidelines. Chief Public Relations Officer (CPRO) Pankaj Kumar Singh said.

GORAKHPUR - LTT SPECIAL: The 05401 Gorakhpur - Lokmanya Tilak Terminus summer special train

will on June 16 depart from Gorakhpur at 19.00 hrs, from Khalilabad at 19.42 hrs, from Basti at 20.11 hrs, from Gonda at 21.45 hrs, from Aishbagh on the second day at 00.50 hrs, from Kanpur Central at 02.50 hrs, from Bharuwa Sumerpur at 04.17 hrs, from Raigaul at 04.34 hrs, from Banda at 06.00 hrs, from Chitrakootdham at 07.02 hrs, from Satna at 08.50 hrs, from Katni at 10.05 hrs, from Jabalpur at 11.25 hrs, from Itarsi at 17.10 hrs, from Bhusawal at 21.20 hrs, the third day from Nashik Road at 01.03 hrs, Kalyan at 03.55 hrs and reach Lokmanya Tilak Terminus at 05.00 hrs.

LTT-GORAKHPUR SPECIAL: In the return journey, the 05402 Lokmanya Tilak Terminus - Gorakhpur summer special train will on June

18 leave Lokmanya Tilak Terminus at 07.50 hrs, from Kalyan at 08.38 hrs, from Nashik Road at 10.58 hrs, from Bhusawal at 14.25 hrs, from Itarsi at 18.50 hrs, from Jabalpur at 22.40 hrs, from Katni at 23.55 hrs, the second day from Satna at 01.20 hrs, from Chitrakootdham at 03.35 hrs, from Banda at 05.30 hrs, from Raigaul at 06.12 hrs, from Bharuwa Sumerpur at 06.30 hrs, from Kanpur Central at 08.55 hrs, from Aishbagh at 11.05 hrs, Gonda at 13.35 hrs, Basti at 14.53 hrs, from Khalilabad at 15.22 hrs and reach Gorakhpur at 16.15 hrs. A total of 21 coaches, including two of generator-cum-luggage van, four of general second class, seven of sleeper class, six of AC third class and two of AC second class coaches will be attached in this train.

SP inspects police station

CORRESPONDENT ■ MIRZAPUR

Superintendent of Police (SP) Sajan Kumar Singh conducted a surprise inspection of Lalganj police station on Saturday. During it he inspected the records, computer room, Mahila help desk, lock-up room, barracks, residences, store room, ur-

drive and a close watch should be kept on places and persons. He directed the cops to continue patrolling in the area and it should be reviewed regularly. In view of Covid-19 he directed to follow the norm of social distancing and use gloves and sanitisers. He directed to keep the premises clean and



SP Sajan Kumar Singh inspecting Lalganj police station on Saturday

was declared as brought dead. On getting information about it the Padari police reached the spot and completed the necessary legal formalities.

KIDNAPPER ARRESTED: The Madihan police recovered a kidnapped girl and sent the kidnapper to jail recently. As per a named first information report (FIR) lodged on February 5 the applicant had alleged that the accused had enticed his daughter away. Acting on the case the police personnel were investigating the matter when they were tipped off by an informer about the presence of the accused at Dadara market. On that information the police raided the place freed the kidnapped girl and arrested the accused identified as Ashwini alias Vikki, a resident of Baghaura village under Madihan police station. Meanwhile another report said that the Padari police recently arrested one person who was accused of raping a minor girl. It is learnt that earlier a man had lodged a named FIR alleging that the accused had entered his house and raped his minor daughter. Station House Officer (SHO) of Padari Venkatesh Tiwari nabbed the accused, Arun Agrahari, a resident of Putariha village under Padari police station under Tedha Sabji Mandi recently and sent him jail.

nals, visitors' room etc. The SP took a feedback of the area from the staff concerned and directed the cops to remain alert in view of the tension due to the recently-held panchayat elections and remain updated with the activities in the area. On the occasion he made it clear that illegal activities like illicit trade of liquor should not be ignored with the conclusion of the

sanitised. The cops were directed to get the Covid-19 protocol enforced in the area.

YOUTH DIES: One person died of electric shock under Padari police station on Saturday. As per the reports received here, Awakesh Maurya (26), a resident of Gaura Vishen village, was trying to start his submersible pump when he suffered an electric shock. He was taken to a doctor where he

Child labour can be countered by free education: Maurya

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Uttar Pradesh Labour Minister Swami Prasad Maurya said that child labour could be countered by free education.

Addressing a function at the labour commissionerate here, Maurya said there was no doubt that in UP, child labour was comparatively more and the reason for this was poverty and this aspect should also be taken into consideration. He said it was the duty not

only of the government but also the people to motivate children to take up education and improve their economic conditions in the times to come.

The minister said the high level of poverty and unemployment coupled with a lack of adequate social security compelled parents to prefer their children to work, compromising with their learning which they considered an exercise in futility.

He said in Uttar Pradesh, due to extreme poverty, parents

allowed their children in the age group of five and six years to work.

He said over decades, poverty forced poor families to send their children to work, which resulted in a serious child labour problem the world was facing nowadays.

He spoke of several consequences of child labour, saying that when children worked, it did not necessarily mean that they supported their families economically but the truth was that all such children were

paid very low wage or they worked as bonded labourers. He said these parents were least concerned about the physical health of their children.

Maurya said the UP government had framed strong laws but despite all the efforts, child labour was rampant.

He distributed financial help to such families.

Others present on the occasion included MLC Arun Pathak, Pankaj Shukla, Rajiv Shukla, Akanksha, Aajay Hajela and several others.

Rudransh, Ashi win declamation contest

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Dr Rajaram Jaipuria Memorial Virtual Inter-School English Declamation Contest was held with the objective to hone the oratorical skills but also inviolable development of linguistic skills of the students. The school has always provided a platform to the students to not only hone their latent talents but also to develop confidence to speak before the audience.

The panel of judges comprised Dr Reeta Khetrapal, head of English department,

Frank Anthony Public School, New Delhi; Abhishree Swarup, alumnus and founder of Jaipuria MUN, St Stephen College, New Delhi.

Dr Khetrapal said the purpose of such events was to inculcate in students the skill of public speaking and the ability to address the audience with confidence and enthusiasm. She said it helped them put up forceful expressions which were essential elements of an impressive speech and the participants had to mimic the original piece during the declamation contest. Abhishree said selecting

good topics, which few or no one would have heard, could be a noticeable effort to bring forth something worth knowing about or understanding. She appreciated the efforts of the organisers and participants and hoped the institution would ensure more such events in future as well.

Prominent among those present were Director, Jaipuria Education Group, Harish Sanduja, vice-president of the group, Anjali Khanna, HR Sushma Raturi and a few more.

The declamation contest was divided into two groups, first comprising students between classes 6 and 8 and the second comprising students of classes 9 and 10.

The winners in the first group were 1st Rudransh Singh, Shelling House; 2nd Satvik Sachan, VSEC and 3rd Aradhna Albert, St Mary's Convent High School.

In the second group Ashi Srivastava, VSEC emerged first, Vihan Kumar, Shelling House was at second position and Huda Fatima, St Mary's Convent High School came third.

AKSS hails election of Anurag Pandey as UPBC member

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Members of Adhivakta MKalyan Sangharsh Samiti (AKSS) have hailed the election of young lawyer Anurag Pandey of the city as a member of Uttar Pradesh Bar Council.

Addressing a virtual meeting on Sunday, AKSS convenor Pt Ravindra Sharma said Anurag Pandey, son of Mayor Pramila Pandey, was a practising lawyer both in Kanpur courts and Allahabad High Court.

He has always struggled for implementation of advocates' welfare schemes. Due to the death of UPBC member VK Srivastava (former chairman of the Council), the post was lying vacant. In the election, Anurag Pandey polled 14 out of 25 votes and emerged victorious. Dheeraj Srivastava was on the second place by securing 10 votes.

Kanpur Income Tax Bar Association secretary Devendra Dung said with the victory of Anurag Pandey, the Uttar Pradesh Bar Council now had three lawyers of the



Anurag Pandey, newly elected member of UP Bar Council

(president, Ubbhokta Bar Association), Shailesh Trivedi, Ramasrey Tripathi, Mohd Quadir Khan, Naman Gupta, SK Sachan, Ashutosh Shukla Tinu, Monu Tewari, Ambrish Misra, Navneet Pandey, Samir Shukla, Vijay Sagar, Anoop Shukla, Sanjiv Kapoor, Ankur Goel, Mohit Shukla and KK Yadav.

IIT-K PROFESSOR APPOINTED MEMBER OF GAPH-TAG: Dr Mukesh Sharma, professor in the civil engineering department of the Indian Institute of Technology, Kanpur, has been appointed honorary member of World Health Organisation (WHO) Global Air Pollution and Health Technical Advisory Group (GAPH-TAG).

IIT-Kanpur Director Prof Abhay Karandikar congratulated him on this occasion.

The members of GAPH-TAG are selected from across the globe and appointed by the WHO director-general.

TAG is an advisory body

to the WHO which provides technical guidance and inputs to support the latter's efforts and work in air pollution and health issues, including how member countries can achieve the air pollution and health-related Sustainable Development Goals. The Sustainable Development Goals, or Global Goals were adopted by the United Nations in 2015 as a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure that by 2030 all people enjoy peace and prosperity.

Prof Sharma, an air quality expert, has melded rigorous research with policy engagement. He has been associated with WHO, Geneva, International Council for Clean Transport, Clean Air Asia, United National Environmental Programme, Bangkok, and the World Bank.

He will be part of the WHO advisory group on interventions/policies for air pollution control in 194 member states, the IIT Kanpur said in a statement.

Blood donation camp to be organised today

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Kanpur Nagar District Magistrate Alok Tiwari said a blood donation camp would be organised in association with the Red Cross Society on Monday.

He appealed to people to donate blood in the camp to be organised in Onkareshwar Saraswati Vidya Niketan at Jawahar Nagar on Monday, saying it was the noblest donation. He said all those who were healthy and below 60 years should donate blood as it saved several lives. He said the Indian Red Cross Society had decided to give certificates of merit to those who donate blood. He said the blood donation camp would be held between 10.00 am and 2.00 pm.

He said it was a matter of concern that even today blood donation was a taboo and a majority of people refrained from donating blood. He said on account of this the mercenary donors were still surviving and were a big health threat to the person who was administered the blood.

Honorary secretary of IRCS, RK Saffad, said the objective of the blood donation camp was not only to arrange blood to save lives but also to make people understand that as human beings it was their duty to save lives and spread awareness to blood donation. He said it was a myth that blood donation led to massive physical weakness. Saffad said donating blood reduced harmful iron stores in the blood and said donating blood lowered the risk of heart attack. He said by donating blood at least once a year one could reduce risk of a heart attack by 88 per cent. He said the amount of blood donated was recovered in six hours and the fresh blood was healthier. He appealed to the people to reach the camp in large numbers for blood donation.

Shopkeepers motivated to wear masks

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

In order to ensure that people do not become careless in view of the reduced rate of coronavirus infection and are not apathetic towards following social distancing guidelines besides use of masks even after vaccination against it, the shopkeepers of Sabzi Mandi were made aware by running a massive public awareness campaign in Banaras Locomotive Works (BLW) premises. On the occasion they were motivated



to wear masks properly, ensure social distancing and take care of hand hygiene. Moreover those shopkeepers

who were not wearing masks were told about their usefulness and importance. Besides, masks were distributed among them. The said campaign was carried out under the leadership of Public Relations Officer (PRO) Rajesh Kumar. Besides, a similar campaign is being run by the Safety and Personnel departments, Railway Protection Force (RPF), Civil Defence and St John's Ambulance Brigade continuously.

One killed in road accident

CORRESPONDENT ■ MIRZAPUR

One person died in a road mishap which took place under Madihan police station on Friday night. As per the reports received here, Rambabu (22), a resident of Patehra, was on the way on Lalganj-Kalwari road on a motorcycle along with his cousin, Arun. Suddenly their motorcycle was hit by an unknown vehicle at Maurya Chauraha whose driver managed to flee taking advantage of the darkness along with it. The injured were

brought to the Nadiyan community health centre (CHC) from where the doctors referred them to the trauma centre in Varanasi for treatment. However, Rambabu died on the way. On the other hand, Arun was undergoing treatment and his condition was reported to be stable. It is learnt that the deceased was married to Preeti, a resident of Bhawaan village under Madihan police station, on June 9.

On the other hand, an earlier report said that one person

had died in a road accident which took place under Padari police station recently. Ramashrey Yadav (47), a resident of Chappahna village was going on his motorcycle on Mirzapur-Chunar road when it collided with a truck at Mohanpur Pahadi. On getting information about the matter the police personnel reached there and brought him to a hospital where the doctor on duty declared him as brought dead. Police took the body of the victim into custody for completing the legal formalities.

Vaccination programme organised

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

A Covid-19 vaccination programme was organised at the Indian Institute of Carpet Technology (IICT), Bhadohi, recently in which a large number of people above 18 years of age along with their family members participated enthusiastically and got themselves vaccinated. This vaccination pro-

gramme was organised under the guidance of community



health centre (CHC) Bhadohi's Dr Ramashish, Rachita

Mishra and Mukesh Mishra. While expressing his views on the occasion, Director Professor Alok Kumar describing the vaccine as the only way for protection against Covid-19 infection emphasised on rapid vaccination. On the occasion Dr SK Pal, Siddharth Shukla, Dr Jayant Deshpande along with officers and employees were present.

BJP leaders persona non grata in Lakshadweep

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

BJP leaders, activists and supporters have become persona non grata in Lakshadweep islands since Saturday. Most of the shops have started displaying boards stating that leaders, activists and workers of BJP would not be offered goods.

Though some of the islanders blamed the Islamists for the 'social boycotting' of the Hindutwa party, Sayed Mohammed Koya, a BJP leader in Lakshadweep said the move was the fall out of the Island Administration's move to make drastic changes in the lifestyle of the local population.

"A P Abdullakutty, the national vice president of the BJP and K P Muthukoya, the party's in-charge of the Islands are responsible for the state of affairs. The move by BJP activists to file cases against a hitherto film model who made some unprintable comment against the Government of India has boomeranged on the party," Koya told *The Pioneer*.

He said the proposal by the Lakshadweep Development Authority to widen the roads was an inn-conceived proposal. "We do not need such roads in these islands because the length of each island is about four to five km," said Koya who

was the BJP's candidate in the 2014 Lok Sabha election.

Though he could poll only 182 votes, he said the party had popularity in the islands. The 2019 Lok Sabha election saw Abdul Khaer Haji, the BJP candidate polling 125 votes. When asked what was the total strength of the BJP in the islands, Koya said: "Please do not count the popularity of a party by the number of votes polled by it in elections." Koya had left the party the moment LDA launched its reform moves. Vernacular media in Kerala say that thousands of BJP workers have left the party over the last one week.



Clouds hover over Taj Mahal as monsoon approaches the city, in Agra on Sunday

Mother of Kerala woman languishing in Afghan jail hopes Modi Govt will pardon, bring her back

Thiruvananthapuram: The mother of Nimisha Fathima, a Keralite woman who landed in a jail in Afghanistan following the killing of her IS fighter husband in an attack there, hopes that the Narendra Modi Government will pardon her daughter and bring her back to India.

"I've heard that Prime Minister Narendra Modi is a very kind-hearted person. I have full faith in him," Bindu Sampath, Fathima's mother told PTI. She was reacting to reports that the Central government was not interested in bringing back her daughter and three other IS widows of Indian origin, now lodged in a Kabul jail.

Sampath said no communication has been received from the Government on the issue

and reports about the Government's disinterest could be one view of the Centre.

"But I am very positive because there will be other views also in the government. I am banking on that. I believe in God. I am sure that God will create a situation for her return," she said.

Sampath said she wanted to meet Modi and submit a memorandum, seeking the return of her daughter.

"But no one is there to help me out," she said.

The mother said she would seek the legal route to get her daughter back home if all efforts with the Government failed. "I have consulted some lawyers of the Supreme Court. They have said there is a legal option," Sampath said. Nimisha Sampath was a Hindu before

embracing Islam. She changed her name to Fathima Isa.

She married an alleged Islamic State (ISIS) operative from Kerala and both were reported missing, along with 19 others from the southern state in June 2016 before reaching an ISIS-controlled territory in Afghanistan. Fathima gave birth there. She and three other women had surrendered to the Afghanistan Government in 2019 after their husbands were killed in the fight with the forces there.

When reports about the government's disinterest appeared in the media on Saturday, Sampath had said she feared that her daughter would fall into the hands of Taliban once the US troops withdraw from Afghanistan in September this year. **PTI**

Bhoomi poojan of Sri Venkateswara Swamy temple in Jammu

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

Jammu popularly known as "City of temples" on Sunday added address of another "architectural grandeur" in its long list of 'historic' temples after Lt-Governor Manoj Sinha performed 'Bhoomi Poojan' ceremony for construction of Sri Venkateswara Swamy Temple by Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) in Majeen village of Sidhra.

The temple complex with various amenities for pilgrims and other allied infrastructure is expected to be ready in 18 months on a piece of 62.10 acres of land at a cost of 33.22 crores in two phases.

Union Ministers G Kishan Reddy, Dr Jitendra Singh, OSD in the Commerce Ministry and former Chief Secretary BVR Subrahmanyam, Chairman TTD Board, Y V Subba Reddy, Ram Madhav,

Member, National Executive, RSS, and several other dignitaries also attended the ceremony.

The ambitious project when completed is also expected to boost pilgrim traffic in the region.

Before Covid-19 pandemic jammed wheels across the nation an estimated population of 70-80 lakh pilgrims were arriving here to perform Mata Vaishno Devi and Amarnath pilgrimage. The local economy is also expected to gain with the creation of huge infrastructure alongside the famous temple complex.

While speaking on the occasion, the Lt Governor said that the magnificent divine temple when completed will be a centre of faith as well as destination of spirituality.

He further informed that the Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams Board will

establish a Gurukul/Veda Pathshala to promote the Sanskrit language and ancient culture of Vedic teachings and learning. The board has also agreed to set up centres of excellence in the field of health-care on the lines of its excellence centres in Andhra Pradesh. Terming the occasion as a historic and proud day for J&K, the Lt Governor expressed gratitude towards Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams Board and the Union Government for fulfilling the long pending wish of people of J&K and North India for establishing the temple of Lord Balaji on the land of Shri Mata Vaishno Devi.

"Lord Balaji's divine blessing is a state of inner celebration. Ved Pathshala in the second phase will strengthen the foundation of Indian culture. The construction of the temple will also open up opportunities

across sectors and it will certainly change the economy of the region," observed the Lt Governor. The temple will become a major religious and pilgrimage destination attracting a lot more tourists, which will ultimately give boost to the religious and pilgrimage tourism, besides providing ample livelihood opportunities, and socio-economic upliftment of the people of the region, added the Lt Governor.

The Lt Governor said that except for the main pujaris of the temple and the core supervision team, it will also have a large number of local people for the management, thus providing direct and indirect opportunities to the people of the region.

The prestigious project will include a host of pilgrimage facilities and other Educational & Developmental infrastructure like Veda Pathshala- class-

rooms, hostel building & staff quarters; pilgrims' amenities complex, Kalyanamandapam, Vahanamandapam etc.

The government of Jammu and Kashmir on March 31, 2021 had granted the state land measuring 62.10 acres under Khasra number 243 in Village Majeen of Jammu tehsil in favour of TTD for building of a temple and its allied infrastructure on lease basis for a period of 40 years on payment of nominal ground rent of Rs 10 per kanal per annum without charge of any premium.

An amount of Rs 1.98 lakhs was paid to Government of Jammu and Kashmir towards lease charges for a period of 40 years. The possession of the land was taken into the fold of TTD on April 19, 2021 from the government of J&K, duly concluding lease agreement.

Mumbai monsoon blues: Well swallows parked SUV, efforts on to retrieve it

T N RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI:

A video clip showing an SUV being sucked into a sinkhole that had developed after an RCC slabs covering a well gave way in a suburban housing society following heavy rains, went viral in Mumbai and other parts of the country on Sunday.

The freak incident took place at around 8.30 am in Ramnivas Society on Cama Road at Ghatkopar in north-east Mumbai. The owner had parked the vehicle on the RCC slabs covering a community well.

Following the heavy incessant rains witnessed during the past four days that had led to inundation in the housing society, the slab either apparently were swept away or they fell into the well, causing the huge sink-hole. The residents



noticed the unusual sight when the vehicle was beginning to cave into the well through the sinkhole.

The video that went viral shows the rear half of the vehicle getting completely sucked into the well through a large sink-hole.

Kiran Doshi, the owner of the vehicle, came to know about the incident, when his cleaner told him that the vehicle was tilting and going under the ground. Even the driver had not realised that the vehicle was being sucked into the well through the well. "When I ran out of my

home to check, the vehicle got sucked into the well in front of my eyes. Everything happened in a few seconds. It took a few minutes before I realised what had happened," Doshi told local police.

Before long, the incident - thanks to the video that had gone viral - became talk of the town. On its part, the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) rushed its team with pumps to empty swollen water in the well. The police also rushed to the scene.

On its part, the society management requisitioned a crane to lift the vehicle from the bottom of the well, which is nearly 50 feet deep. Efforts were on till late in the night to retrieve the vehicles from the bottom of the well.

Fortunately, there was no one in the vehicle when it sank into the well.

FROM PAGE 1

'WORK AS ONE TO MEET CHALLENGES'

Harish said the G-7 leaders underlined their commitment to a free, open and a rules-based Indo-Pacific and resolved to collaborate with partners in the region.

India's participation at the G7 sessions reflected understanding within the bloc that resolution to "the biggest global crisis of our time" is not possible without India's involvement and support, he said, in a reference to the coronavirus pandemic.

The leaders of the world's advanced economies held a summit in Cornwall in the UK from June 11-13. It is for the first time that the leaders of the grouping met in person since the coronavirus pandemic began.

Modi spoke in two sessions on Sunday on topics of climate change and open societies. On Saturday, he exhorted the international community to come together as "one earth one health" in fighting the corona pandemic.

Giving details of the three-day summit with special focus on Modi's participation, Harish said there was also widespread support at G-7 deliberations for text-based negotiations on proposals by India and South Africa for patent waiver on Covid vaccines.

Moreover, the Prime Minister's participation highlighted the understanding within the G-7 that resolution to the biggest global crisis is not possible without India's involvement, he said.

Britain was heading the summit this year and Prime Minister Boris Johnson had invited Modi to take part in the outreach session of the G-7.

Given the corona situation at home, Modi preferred to participate virtually. Australia, South Korea and South Africa were the other countries invited for the outreach sessions this year.

Johnson conveyed to the Indian Government that he was disappointed for not being able to welcome Modi in person at the G7 summit, Harish said. Johnson, however, was understanding and supportive of Modi's decision to attend the G-7 summit virtually, reported news agency ANI.

On the issue of climate change, Modi called for collective action, recognising that this challenge cannot be addressed in silos. He also pointed out that India is the only G-20 country on track to meet its Paris commitments.

As regards the ongoing fight against the pandemic, the G-7 was in consensus to provide capacity in various regional hubs manufacturing vaccines by providing finance and technology transfer.

In fact, French President Emmanuel Macron on Saturday urged the G-7 countries to make efforts to provide raw material to India for manufacturing vaccines in large numbers. Harish said India's engagement with G7 and other guest countries stands on its own, and, for the first time, India has engaged in ministerial and working-level tracks as a guest country.

He further added that India's engagement was fruitful, productive and the Government hopes to take forward the engagement in various initiatives, including in the run-up to the 2021 United Nations Climate Change Conference, also known as COP26, scheduled for November.

The G-7 summit focussed mainly on three issues, including vaccines and recovery

from the pandemic, the environment and climate change, open societies and open economies.

The main theme for the summit was 'Build back better' in the backdrop of the pandemic over the last 18 months. Harish said leaders of the G-7 grouping and guest countries including India had a detailed discussion on the need for reforming global health governance. India has been actively engaged with the international community at the level of G-20 and G-7 on various aspects related to dealing with the current pandemic, he added.

OPP: LAND FRAUD BY RAM TEMPLE TRUST

He demanded an ED and CBI probe should be done to punish the guilty members of the Ramjanmabhumi Tirth Kshetra Trust who are behind this scam and were playing with the religious sentiments of crores of people.

Elaborating his point, Singh said as per the documents, including land agreement and stamp duty papers, the entire scam was committed on March 18, 2021 evening.

Singh alleged that on March 18, 2021, at around 1910 hours, one Sultan Ahmed and Ravi Mohan Tiwari purchased Gata number 243/244/246 from Kusum Pathak and Harish Pathak for Rs 2 crore while the market value of the above said land was around Rs 5.80 crore.

"Within five minutes, the land was sold to the Ramjanmabhumi Tirth Kshetra Trust for Rs 18.50 crore and immediately Rs 17 crore was transferred to the owners Sultan Ahmed and Ravi Mohan Tiwari through RTGS," he said.

He said the land (an area of 12080 sq meter or 1.208 hectare) in question was located at Baghijasisi village under Havelli Awadh Pargana and in Sadar tehsil of Ayodhya.

"The interesting part of both the purchase deal was that witnesses in both the deals were Trust member Anil Mishra and Ayodhya mayor Rishikesh Upadhyay," he said.

The AAP MP further alleged that it was surprising to note that the stamp duty by the Trust of Rs 1.2949860 crore was purchased at least 10 minute earlier than the stamp duty purchased for the first deal of Rs 4.23920 lakh.

"The Trust purchased the stamps at 1711 hrs on March 18, 2021 while Sultan Ahmed purchased it at 1722 hrs on the same day. It is clearly a case of money laundering when a property whose market value was Rs 5.80 crore was first purchased at Rs 2 crore and then it was sold at Rs 18.50 cr. PM should punish the guilty people so that the faith of the people in Lord Ram remains," he said.

Singh also said that the purchase seemed to be a shady deal as it was beyond comprehension that the Board of the Trust gave its approval in just five minutes after the purchase of the land.

Questioning the sanctity of the land deal, Singh said how in both the sale agreements, Anil Mishra, who is the Trustee of Ram Mandir Trust, and Rishikesh Upadhyay, who is Mayor of Ayodhya, were present as witnesses. "Nowhere in the world, the cost of land inflated with such a rocket speed, so much in just 10 minutes," he said.

"The money was collected from donations of Ram Bhakto who included poor farmers as well as industrialists who had great reverence for Lord Ram. But they are feeling cheated now" he said.

Meanwhile, Mahant Raju Das of Hanumangarhi temple in Ayodhya has also demanded a high level probe into the allegations. "It is a serious issue and a proper investigation is required. The guilty should not be spared as it is related to the sentiments of crore of Hindu who have faith in Lord Ram and VHP," Mahant said.

The seer also announced that if the charges of AAP leader Sanjay Singh prove false, he will file a Rs 50 crore defamation suit against the leader for defaming the Hindu community.

CONGRESS HIGH COMMAND TO TAKE A FINAL CALL ON PUNJAB

efforts to prevent winds of dissidence from eroding the party in Punjab. Not only Sonia, but also the Gandhi siblings - Priyanka and Rahul - had apparently taken upon themselves to carry out parallel sessions with the State party leaders in an attempt to save the House from being pulled down by the swirling storm inside.

While the Kharge panel was holding parleys with the State leaders, the Gandhians were also holding meetings, or telephonic or video-conferencing sessions with them.

Notably, Rahul had held telephonic session with more than a dozen party leaders from the State, which included disgruntled partymen too, to get hold of the entire situation.

As a part of the same, the committee members explained its recommendations in a sequential manner to Rahul, besides the role it has suggested for the Chief Minister, his bete noire Navjot Singh Sidhu and his close aide Pargat Singh, and also the Punjab Congress chief Sunil Jakhar.

It has been learnt that a detailed discussion was held on all recommendations, especially about the role of Sidhu, Pargat Singh, the State party president Sunil Jakhar. It was stressed that Sidhu could play a very significant role for the party and thus should be suitable accommodated.

Sources informed *The Pioneer* that even though Rahul heard all the recommendations of the committee, including regarding Sidhu, he did not give any reply or any response to the same.

The panel also informed Rahul regarding the complaints against the Chief Minister and his style of functioning and the urgent need to correct the same, coupled with fulfillment of all pre poll promises, including sacrilege.

The members also reportedly apprised Rahul about the recent statements by the party MLA and Olympian Pargat Singh despite the instructions to all party leaders to not to air their grievances in the public.

It has also been learnt that Pargat has been reprimanded by the party State affairs in-charge Harish Rawat for his public statements against the Chief Minister. Pargat has reportedly been warned that strict disciplinary action could be taken against him if he does not stop. Meanwhile, indications are that Capt Amarinder will remain in the driver's seat while his bete noire Sidhu will sit pillion with Punjab moving towards the Assembly elections. A change in party's organisational structure is also expected.

Amidst all this, the senior Congress leaders, including his critics, have started approaching the Chief Minister not only to get their

incomplete works done, but also to show their support amidst the prevailing crisis within the State party unit.

Even as the party high command is yet to take the final call regarding the party affairs in Punjab, the report submitted by the three-member panel has reportedly suggested that Capt Amarinder should remain Team Punjab's captain, while Sidhu should play an important inning after being "suitably accommodated". However, it has been learnt that the panel has left it on the party high command to decide what could be the "suitable accommodation" for the former cricketer.

'HOW CAN I GET MY GRANDSON'S MA BACK?'

She died on May 14," Singh recalls. A few days later his son also showed similar symptoms and was also shifted to the same private hospital where he died five days later on May 19.

There was a long pause when Singh was asked whether the Panchayat election was responsible for the spread of coronavirus infection among families. "I do not know... whom to blame now. Yes, my daughter-in-law had gone for some training and after a few days she reported sick. She died and a few days later my son died too. I am left with the enormous responsibility of my grandsons," he says.

Rajesh is a student of Class 9 and Montu of Class 5. Both study in a school near their village.

"I will ensure good education to my grandsons. We are not rich. I work as a security guard in Delhi. If a 71-year-old is working as a security guard you can understand his compulsions. When my son and daughter-in-law were working we were comfortable. They used to take care of our daily needs. They were also giving me money for the treatment of my wife and the other son. Now, what will happen? I am left alone in this world," says Singh.

He continues: "Now, their dadi is taking care of the kids. But how long will we live? My wife is already a cancer patient and my son is mentally challenged and is getting treatment from AIIMS, Delhi. I do not want people to call my grandsons orphans. I have to live till they grow up."

The family desperately needs financial help. Singh has heard that the Government is giving financial support to such children who have lost their parents to Covid. The SDM of the area had met him a few days ago. "If we get the money it will be a great support. This will help us to continue their studies. But, I still have no answer to Montu's questions about his mother. How can I tell that poor child that his ma will never come again," Singh says before he breaks down in tears and disconnects the call.

BENGAL GUV HAS SIX OSDs, RAJ JUST ONE

According to Rajasthan Raj Bhawan website, Govind Ram Jaiswal is the OSD to Governor Kalraj Mishra, while Jammu and Kashmir's Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha has also one OSD namely Prashant Jankar. Uttarakhand Governor Baby Rani Maurya has one OSD rank officer and two ADCs. Delhi Lieutenant Governor has no OSD, only staff officers to his office.

NGT directs UP Govt to specify Hastinapur Wildlife Sanctuary boundary within 6 months

New Delhi: The National Green Tribunal (NGT) has directed the Uttar Pradesh Government to issue notification specifying the Hastinapur Wildlife Sanctuary boundary within six months.

A bench headed by NGT Chairperson Justice Adarsh Kumar Goel noted that a status report has been filed on behalf of Uttar Pradesh to the effect that steps have been taken and proposal was pending consideration before the Na "It is stated by the counsel for the State that delay has taken place due to pandemic and the Rationalisation Committee is now likely to complete its work within three months and thereafter the State Government will issue final notification within three months.

"We direct the Commissioner, Meerut to ensure that the rationalisation process is completed within three months and report submitted to the State Government and thereafter, the Additional Chief Secretary, Forest and Environment, UP, may ensure that further action is completed within next three months," the bench said.

The NGT made clear that in case of failure, it will be open to either party to move the tribunal after six months, seeking coercive measures against the erring officers. The counsel appearing for the State of UP submitted that after approval of the proposal by the Environment Ministry, a committee for rationalisation with the Commissioner, Meerut as Nodal Officer has been appointed on November 17, 2020.

The counsel for the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF) confirms that the proposal received from the State was duly approved in 59th meeting of the National Board for Wildlife.

Protection of wildlife species in Hastinapur Wildlife Sanctuary is not possible unless it is kept free of human interference, NGT had said in 2019 and directed the central and the Uttar Pradesh governments to issue notification specifying the habitat's boundary within six months. Inordinate delay in the notification under Section 26 (A) of the Wildlife Protection Act is unacceptable and because of this reason a large number of industries are flourishing within the sanctuary adversely affecting various wildlife species, it had said. **PTI**

Mizoram: Head of world's largest family dies at 76

Aizawl (PTI) The patriarch of the world's largest family, Ziongaka aka Zion-a, died at a hospital here on Sunday, sources at the medical establishment said.

He was 76 and is survived by 39 wives, 94 children and 33 grandchildren.

"Zion-a was suffering from diabetes and hypertension. He was undergoing treatment at his residence in Baktawng village for three days. But his condition deteriorated and he was rushed to the hospital, where doctors declared him brought dead," Hospital Director Dr Lalrintluanga Zahau told PTI.

Since then, his family lives in Baktawng village, around 55 km from Aizawl. Khuangtuaha was succeeded by his son Chana, who was the father of Zion-a.

Around 400 families are members of the sect that allows polygamy for its male members. Zion-a's four-storey mansion at Baktawng is a major tourist attraction. The family has been featured twice by 'Ripley's Believe it or not' in 2011 and 2013.

Chief Minister Zoramthanga, state Congress chief Lal Thanhawla and Zoram People's Movement (ZPM) leader Lalduhoma have condoled Zion-a's death.

"With heavy heart, Mizoram bid farewell to Mr Zion-a (76), believed to head the world's largest family... Rest in Peace Sir," the chief minister tweeted.

Private hosps see lack of clarity in new job policy



Lowest number of cases after 71 days

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India reported 80,834 fresh Covid-19 cases, the lowest after 71 days and below one lakh for the fifth day in a row, while the daily positivity rate further dropped to 4.25 per cent, according to the Union Health Ministry data updated on Sunday.

The country's tally of cases has climbed to 2,94,39,989 while Covid-19 death toll surged to 3,70,384 with 3,303 daily deaths, the data updated at 8 am showed.

The active cases further declined to 10,26,159 com-

prising 3.49 per cent of the total infections, while the national COVID-19 recovery rate has improved to 95.26 per cent.

A net decline of 54,531 cases has been recorded in the Covid-19 caseload in a span of 24 hours.

Also 19,20,477 tests were conducted on Saturday taking the total cumulative tests conducted so far for detection of COVID-19 in the country to 37,62,32,162 while the daily positivity rate has further dropped to 4.25 per cent.

It has been less than 10 per cent for 20 consecutive

days, the Ministry said, adding the weekly positivity rate fell below 5 per cent and was recorded 4.74 per cent.

About vaccines, the Ministry said that more than 26 crore (26,64,84,350) vaccine doses have been provided to States/UTs so far. "More than 1.53 crore (1,53,79,233) COVID Vaccine doses are still available with the States/UTs to be administered," it said adding that furthermore, more than 4 lakh (4,48,760) vaccine doses are in the pipeline and will be received by them within the next three days.

Meanwhile, in a recent communication to the Union

health ministry, Prakash Kumar Singh, Director,

Government and Regulatory Affairs at SII, is learnt to have

written, "As per your direction, we are not accepting any further orders/payment from any private hospital in the country. We await your further direction with regard to the roadmap for future supplies to private hospitals."

SCL Gupta, medical director, Batra Hospital said, "The problem is that there is no clarity on how we will be procuring the vaccines. When we ask the state government officials, they say wait till June 21 stating that the policy is not yet clear."

"The central government also has asked us to wait. We have approached the companies too, but they are also not clear on the methodology of procurement," he said.

In the whole process, Gupta said, vaccination of people is getting delayed. "With fear of a possible third wave hitting India, we want to vaccinate as many people as possible. Also several people and many of our healthcare workers who

The vaccinations at most of the private hospitals are on hold and the public, especially those patients who need to get the second doses, are at the receiving end

have taken the first dose are waiting for their second dose," he said.

P K Bhardwaj, Chief Executive Director and Head of Department of Surgery, Saroj Hospital also said that nothing has been clearly spelt about procurement by private hospitals and how much vaccines will be given to each private hospital.

"The vaccinations at most of the private hospitals are on hold and the public, especially those patients who need to get the second doses, are at the receiving end."

Sarvesh Saran Joshi, president, Rajasthan Doctors' Association and also Managing Director of Shekhawati

Hospital, Jaipur said, "We have spoken to manufacturers of both Covishield and Covaxin and they said the government has asked them not to supply the vaccines directly to private hospitals. So, the majority of medium to small hospitals are suffering the most."

"At a service charge of Rs 150, we can provide vaccination only at our centre. We had started to go to RWAs and private sector companies, but now organising such sessions at this rate will not be possible."

Capping the price at Rs 150 will also impact the entire vaccination drive. So a mechanism needs to be worked for this too," Gupta said.

Under the revised guidelines, which will come into effect from June 21, the Centre will procure 75 per cent of the COVID-19 vaccines being produced by manufacturers while private hospitals can procure the remaining 25 per cent directly from the manufacturers.

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In the absence of any clear direction from the Centre and the State governments about the Covid-19 vaccine availability under the new national job policy, several private hospitals across the country are a confused lot. Some of them have also flagged the service charge for vaccination being capped at ₹150, saying it may not be feasible for them to organise sessions outside their own centres at that rate. The hospital managements

said they were clueless on procuring Covid-19 jabs under the new policy announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and that it has led to the vaccination being put on hold at their centres.

They have now sought a proper mechanism and a single-window system to be put in place for procurement of vaccine doses. They also claimed that they had approached both the vaccine manufacturers, Bharat Biotech and Serum Institute of India (SII) -- and also state governments, but to no avail.

Chinese researchers find virus in bats similar to Covid-19



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Chinese researchers have claimed they have found a batch of new coronaviruses in bats including one -- Rhinolophus pusillus -- virus that may be the second-closest yet (genetically) to the Covid virus that has swept the world since it was identified in December 2019, claiming lakhs of human lives.

In a report published in the journal Cell, the Chinese researchers from Shandong University said they had assembled 24 novel coronavirus genomes from different bat species including four SARS-CoV-2 virus and have found the new batch of virus.

The discoveries in a single, small region of Yunnan province in China indicate just how many coronaviruses can exist in bats and how many have the potential to spread to people and a wide range of domestic and wild animals, including pigs, cattle, mice, cats, dogs, and chickens, as per the CNN News.

The researchers collected 283 fecal samples, 109 oral swabs and 19 urine samples from small, forest-dwelling bats in a tropical botanical garden and adjacent areas in a county in Yunnan province between May 2019 and November 2020.

The Chinese researchers said one of the viruses was very similar, genetically to the SARS-CoV-2 virus that's causing the ongoing pandemic.

"It would be the closest

strain to SARS-CoV-2 except for genetic differences on the spike protein, the knob-like structure that the virus uses when attaching to cells," they said.

The researchers further said, "Together with the SARS-CoV-2 related virus collected from Thailand in June 2020, these results clearly demonstrate that viruses closely related to SARS-CoV-2 continue to circulate in bat populations, and in some regions might occur at a relatively high frequency."

Now researchers are trying to locate the original source of SARS-CoV-2. The researchers said it's quite likely that the virus infected an intermediary animal. The SARS virus that caused the 2002-2004 outbreak was traced to an animal called a civet cat.

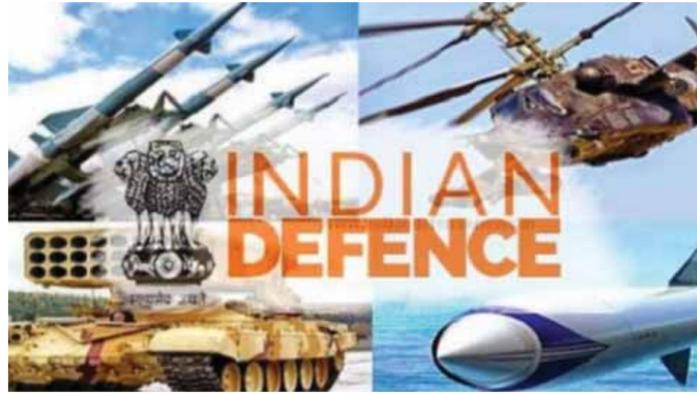
It would be the closest strain to SARS-CoV-2 except for genetic differences on the spike protein, the knob-like structure that the virus uses when attaching to cells, they said.

"Together with the SARS-CoV-2 related virus collected from Thailand in June 2020, these results clearly demonstrate that viruses closely related to SARS-CoV-2 continue to circulate in bat populations, and in some regions might occur at a relatively high frequency," they wrote.

"Our study highlights the remarkable diversity of bat coronaviruses at the local scale, including close relatives of both SARS-CoV-2 and SARS-CoV," they wrote.

The bat species they sampled are common across Southeast Asia, including southwest China, Vietnam, Laos and elsewhere.

Rajnath OK's ₹499 crore for innovation in defence



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In an effort to encourage new ideas and concepts, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Sunday approved a ₹499-crore budget for innovations in defence manufacturing. This step will help the small and medium scale enterprises and start-ups with India aiming to become a major hub for weapon production.

The ₹498.9-crore budgetary support to Innovations for Defence Excellence (iDEX) - Defence Innovation Organisation (DIO) is for the next five years. The budgetary support will provide a big boost to the 'Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan' as iDEX-DIO has the primary objective of self-reliance and indigenisation in defence and aerospace sector of the country, the defence ministry officials said here.

The creation of the iDEX framework and establishment of the DIO by the Department of Defence Production (DDP) is aimed at creating an ecosystem to foster innovation and technology development in defence and aerospace by



engaging Industries including MSMEs, start-ups, individual innovators, research and development (R&D) institutes and academia and provide them grants to carry out R&D development which has good potential for future adoption for Indian defence and aerospace needs.

The scheme is aimed at providing financial support to nearly 300 start-ups/MSMEs/individual innovators and 20 partner incubators under the DIO framework. It will support increased awareness in the Indian innovation ecosystem about defence needs and, conversely, in the Indian Defence establishment about the potential of the Indian innovation eco-system to deliver innovative solutions to meet their needs, officials said.

The DIO, with its team, will enable the creation of channels for innovators to engage and interact with the

The scheme aims to facilitate rapid development of new, indigenised and innovative technologies for defence sector

Indian Defence production industry. The long-term effect to be realised by the group is the establishment of a culture, where enlisting the effort of innovators by the Indian military is commonplace and frequent.

The scheme aims to facilitate rapid development of new, indigenised and innovative technologies for the Indian defence and aerospace sector to meet their needs in shorter timelines, create a culture of engagement with innovative start-ups to encourage co-creation for defence and aerospace, empower a culture of technology co-creation and co-innovation within the defence and aerospace sector and boost innovation among the start-ups and encourage them to be a part of the ecosystem.

Left to stage protest against hike in fuel prices

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Left parties on Sunday announced nationwide two-week-long protests (June 16-30) demanding a roll back of fuel price hike and controlling of prices of essential commodities and drugs. The five Left parties in a joint statement accused the Central Government of increasing petrol and diesel prices "at least 21 times" since the Assembly elections ended on May 2.

"More assaults on people's livelihood are being mounted by this relentless rise in prices of all essential commodities. Instead of helping people to combat the ravages of the Covid health catastrophe, the Modi government hiked the prices of petroleum products by at least 21 times after the announcement of results of the recent assembly elections on May 2, 2021. This is leading to a cascading inflationary spiral with the Wholesale Price Index (WPI) rising to a eleven year high, said the joint statement signed by Sitaram Yechury, D.Raja, Debabrata Biswas, Manoj Bhattacharya and Dipankar Bhattacharya, the general secretaries of the five Left parties CPI(M), CPI, Forward Bloc RSP, CPI(ML) Liberation.

The Left leaders pointed out that the prices of food articles have raised by nearly 5 per cent in April. Primary commodities saw a rise of 10.16 per cent and manufactured products have risen by 9.01 per cent. By the time these commodities reach the retail markets, the consumers are charged much more.

This is happening while the economy is witnessing a deep recession, galloping unemployment, collapsing purchasing power and rising levels of hunger, they said.

U'khand Cong leader Indira Hridayesh dies of heart attack in Delhi

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Veteran Congress leader and Leader of Opposition in Uttarakhand Assembly Indira Hridayesh passed away in the national Capital on Sunday. She breathed her last at Uttarakhand Sadan after suffering a heart attack. The 80-year-old prominent leader of Congress was in Delhi for meetings to review the party's preparation for the next year's assembly elections in Uttarakhand.

Hridayesh, who was an MLA from Haldwani in the Nainital district, was always a contender of the party's CM face in the state.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi expressed condolence on the death of Hridayesh. "Dr Indira Hridayesh Ji was at the forefront of several community service efforts. She made a mark as an effective legislator and also had rich administrative experience. Saddened by her demise. Condolences to her family and supporters," the prime minister posted on Twitter.

Congress president Sonia Gandhi and party leader Rahul Gandhi said the demise of a tall leader is a huge loss to the party. Sonia said that Dr Hridayesh served the Congress till her last breath and leaves behind a legacy of public service as an MLA, MLC, Minister, Leader of Opposition in Uttarakhand, and above all as a dedicated lifelong Congressperson.

She was particularly popular amongst her colleagues for her knowledge of legislative processes and procedure as well as her performance as an able



administrator. Her contribution to the Congress party will be treasured and cherished by all, Sonia said in her condolence message.

Rahul mentioned that Indira Hridayesh remained active for the social service and the Congress till her last breath. "Her social and political contributions are inspiring," Gandhi tweeted.

Condoling her demise, AICC general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra said the Congress has lost a brave leader and popular public representative.

Uttarakhand Chief Minister Tirath Singh Rawat and Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath also expressed condolences.

Congress general secretary and former state Chief Minister Harish Rawat said it is an irreparable loss for the country and the state.

Hridayesh was a member of the legislative council in undivided Uttar Pradesh for five times. She was elected MLA in Uttarakhand in 2002, 2012, and 2017. She served as a cabinet minister in the governments of ND Tiwari, Vijay Bahuguna, and Harish Rawat. "She had a great organisational and administrative capability. She had the legislative experience of 50 years," said senior Congress vice-president Suryakant Dhasmana.

Chand Bai a fighter against Covid vax hesitancy in her village

DEEPAK KUMAR JHA ■ NEW DELHI

At a time when instances of wastage of vaccine in Rajasthan hog limelight and when 'vaccine hesitancy' is being reported from different places in the country, the non-descript Khatauti village in Bansur development block of Alwar village has stood out. Each one of the 723 villagers above the age of 18 years has either received the first dose or both. And it has been made possible by a 48-year-old woman, Chand Bai, whose persistent efforts ensured that the villagers shed their initial inhibitions and apprehensions to get inoculated.

Chand Bai is a nominated Common Service Centre (CSC) Village Level Entrepreneur at the remote village of Rajasthan.

A few weeks ago when the Central Government roped in the CSCs, a Special Purpose Vehicle under the Ministry of Electronics and IT, for registrations for vaccines in rural areas, Chand Bai, who was just a semi-literate housewife till a year ago before opening her CSC, started contacting people



CSC VLE Chand Bai at her CSC Kiosk at Khatauti village in Alwar, Rajasthan Pioneer photo

of her village for registrations. But seeing the resistance from

residents of her villagers because of various myths sur-



Awareness programme being conducted by CSC in the village which has all eligible people vaccinated

Pioneer photo

rounding the vaccines, she decided to dedicate her full time to the vaccination drive.

"As part of the CSC awareness drive for the vaccination,

I launched a door-to-door campaign in my village. I had a tough time to convince people, particularly the senior citizens, about the urgent need for

getting the vaccine. After initial resistance, people started getting registrations done through my CSC. But another challenge was to make them

visit a vaccination centre which was a few kilometres away from my village," she said.

With the help of local CSC officials, she then contacted her block's health authorities who agreed to send their special medical vans for carrying out the vaccination drive in her village. "In the first phase, I got all the 210 residents -- 86 in the 45-60 age group and 124 in the above 60 years segment -- registered for the vaccination. Soon, all of them got their first jab. And out of these, 74 have got their second dose also," she pointed out.

When the second phase of vaccination for the 18-45 age group commenced, Chand Bai immediately started getting the remaining villagers registered. Last week the vaccination of 513 residents between 18-45 years of age also got completed. "I am very happy to have got all my residents' receive their first dose of vaccine. I have a record of all my residents who have got vaccinated and I am keeping a tab on when to give them the second dose too. It gives me great satisfaction to see that I have been able to give protection from Covid-19 to the people with

whom I live and share my social bonding," she added.

Chand Bai's efforts are not just confined to her village. She is also getting registrations for vaccination done in her neighbouring villages of Dheerpur and Harnath ki Dhani in her development block. "Vaccination drives in my neighbouring villages are also going on smoothly and within the next few days all its around 1000 residents will get their first dose of vaccine," she said with a sense of happiness.

Stating that VLEs like Chand Bai were an inspiration for lakhs of her counterparts across the country, CSC Managing Director Dr Dinesh Tyagi said: "VLEs like Chand Bai, who is a true social worker, will make India's vaccination drive a big success. Our 3.7 lakh VLEs who run CSCs in all the states are carrying out the registration process and organizing massive awareness drives. So far, we have registered over 14.5 lakh residents for vaccination drives. We have already stepped up our drive and within a few weeks we hope to register crores of residents, particularly in rural areas, across India."



www.dailypioneer.com

facebook.com/dailypioneer | @TheDailyPioneer | instagram.com/dailypioneer/

PAPER WITH PASSION

Opening up

The Government is quite right in deciding to declassify details of all of India's wars

The Government has taken a welcome step in deciding to declassify, on a case-to-case basis, details of the wars fought by India. The new policy for archiving, declassifying, compiling and publishing such records is going to be put in place. The modalities for taking up declassification one by one are being worked out. For a country that has fought as many as six wars since Independence but has managed to declassify the operations of just the 1948 Jammu and Kashmir operations, this is a giant step in transparency. The new policy says records should ordinarily be declassified in 25 years and transferred to the National Archives of India once the war or operations histories have been compiled. The policy statement alone should mean that the official records of the 1962, 1965 and 1971 conflicts, Operation Pawar of the IPKF in Sri Lanka (1987-1990) be declassified right away. The Kargil affair still has over a couple of years of secrecy left. There are two issues with this policy. First, the implications of opening secret details of the past. In a country like India where political leaders and their actions are assessed not in terms of their times but by current political standards, the declassification can become a Pandora's box. Take the Henderson-Brooks-Bhagat report on the 1962 India-China war, for instance. Technically, the report is yet to be made public though a foreign journalist did just that with part of the report he accessed. That section of the report has some startling revelations about India's



Forward Policy adopted by then Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru.

One can well imagine the implications of judging Nehru's thinking at that time by today's standards. The BJP, which till early 2014 was demanding release of the report, made a U-turn once it came to power. If much of any war report is to be kept hidden either on ground of military relevance or political sensitivity, the purpose of the new policy will be lost. Two, there is a clear case for the bull being taken by the horns and past war records being declassified at once. A Defence Ministry official rightly said: "Timely publication of war histories would give people an accurate account of the events, provide authentic material for academic research and counter unfounded rumours." Even though the United States faced condemnation for its reasons for the war on Iraq, it did declassify records in 2013 to mark the 10th anniversary. The documents showed how ineptly it caused and handled the war, but the country did not hide the secrets from the American public. Secrecy is also redundant because it has no place today when technology has turned war into an algorithm and where every military moment can be recorded live and strategies assessed and analysed in real time. At best, old files can muddy the records of individuals — political or military — who made controversial decisions. Unclassified records can at best keep the past hurts buried.

PICTALK



Clean Ganga Mission workers spray bioremediation solution in the river, at Dashashwamedh Ghat in Varanasi

Compassion

The world froze in prayers for a good half hour when Christian Eriksen collapsed during a UEFA match

The past weekend had barely tiptoed into infancy when the entire world suddenly went numb and stood still. Apart from praying lips, the only other thing that moved were zillions of nimble, and concerned, fingers on Twitter and other social media sites. No, it wasn't because of a hallucination-inducing party drug but because Denmark's ace attacking midfielder Christian Eriksen had suddenly gone down. For no apparent reason. Inexplicably. Right there on the field, near the touchline, just four minutes before the referee would have blown his whistle to indicate half time. The boisterous Copenhagen stadium suddenly went into mute mode; not only the home crowd but even the visiting Finnish spectators were taken aback by the sudden turn of events as millions of pairs of palm after palm pierced through the evening air in its hurry to clasp the unbelieving eyes and quivering lips. The palpitation in the hearts is an altogether different story. In sadness, in wonderment, in care, in concern, in poignancy, it was an emotional union of the two rivals and their spectator fans in the face of the fear of the unknown. As a dark hush fell down upon the stadium, clamorous as hell only a few seconds ago with the hosts dominating the on-field proceedings and the Finland natives egging their team on to put some spirit into the game, the Finnish fans also fell quiet with discernible distress.



For their part, the Finland players — who had been getting the short shrift in the exchange of affairs thus far — also now stood as heroes, shoulder to shoulder with their Danish counterparts to shield Eriksen from the view of the public and roving television cameras so that he could receive immediate medical attention in relative peace and privacy. It reminds one of several similar incidents where competing players and the spectators immediately forged into one entity, a solid mass of humanity, in the face of unanticipated adversity; the most notable being in the 1982 FIFA World Cup when West German goalie Toni Schumacher deliberately thudded into French player Patrick Battiston and knocked him down unconscious. But Saturday night's scene was a tad more touching, perhaps a reminder as it were in these trying times of the COVID-19 pandemic that whatever our nationality, religion, gender or belief, we are one race, one people: Humans, first of all and after everything else!

MPLADS: A boon or necessary evil?

The fund allocated to all MPs for local area development is hardly utilised for above-board projects that would really benefit the locals

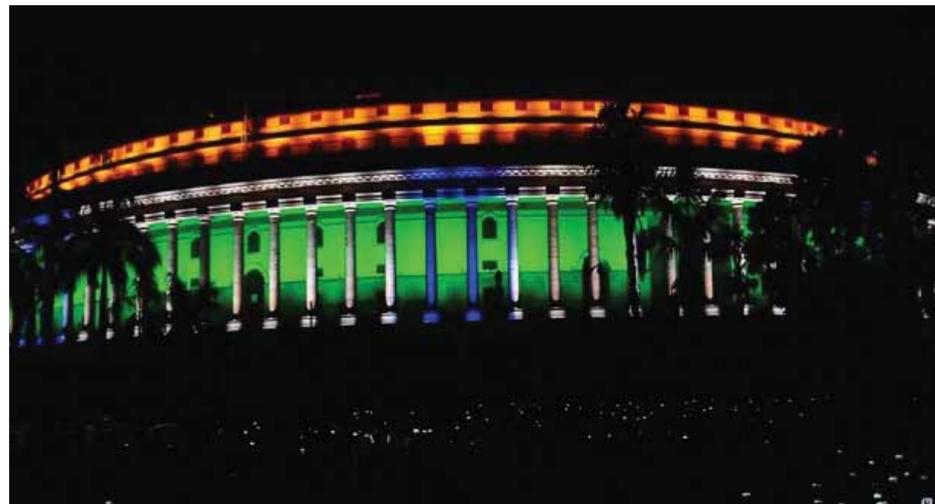


PRAFULL GORADIA

Members of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme, or MPLADS, which allots ₹5 crore annually to every MP, was suspended for 2020-21 and 2021-22, and for good reason. But several MPs feel the scheme should be revived. There are 543 Lok Sabha and 250 Rajya Sabha MPs, a total of 793. Each was last entitled to ₹5 crore for this purpose. If fully utilised by every member, the Government of India would spend ₹19,825 crore over five years (the Rajya Sabha's term is six years but let us ignore the sixth year for the time being). Over five years, the Government's outlay would total up to ₹99,125 crore or nearly ₹1 lakh crore on account of MPLADS.

Individual MPs are not accountable to anyone regarding what they have done with their ₹25 crore during their terms. There is no audit at all. At its most practical, it is money for jam. At its inaction, it remains unspent. It was introduced by Prime Minister Narasimha Rao, in my view, to keep the MPs happy as his Congress Government was some 50 MPs short of a majority. The figure then was ₹2 crore annually; Manmohan Singh increased the figure to ₹5 crore, again to keep the MPs happier. In both cases, this scheme was a *baksheesh* to every MP in exchange of support, present or future, to the Government — as cynical as that.

Rather than comment, let me give my own experience of the ₹4 crore allocable to me for my two-year membership. My party allocated to me Vadodara, the city as well as the district. We are talking of the period towards the end of 2000. The party held a meeting of local workers, of whom some 30 persons turned up. They warmly applauded my coming and garlanded me. I had never before been so honoured. In my brief speech, I thanked them but asked jocularly whether their warmth



was out of regard for me or in expectation of our spending ₹4 crore. The audience laughed, which eloquently meant the latter. I said we would meet again to decide what development works we should do and where.

The next day I went to see the District Collector, who was warm and friendly. My request to him was to help me implement this scheme as I had no machinery. I went on to say that I did not wish to mix it up with my business. His advice was that I should set up an NGO and get the scheme implemented through it.

Another wise man I consulted advised me to get my party MLAs together and a few active workers, and then verbally distribute the total fund amongst them. That meant that if an MLA was to get ₹20 lakh, up to this figure, whatever work he recommended in his constituency, I would sign on. He would do the rest and I would ask no questions, except go to inaugurate his work if he invited me. The wise man went on to say: "Then you see how these people work for you at elec-



INDIVIDUAL MPs ARE NOT ACCOUNTABLE TO ANYONE REGARDING WHAT THEY HAVE DONE WITH THEIR ₹25 CRORE DURING THEIR TERMS. THERE IS NO AUDIT AT ALL. AT ITS MOST PRACTICAL, IT IS MONEY FOR JAM. AT ITS INACTION, IT REMAINS UNSPENT

tion time in case you contest for the Lok Sabha next time."

Meanwhile, someone non-political suggested that I should build as many Sulabh Shuchalayas as possible on Vadodara's streets. The common people, especially the women, would bless you. This suggestion not only gave me confidence but also a reliable, known and professional implementer.

It took two odd years to get all the piece of land too for 10 bus stops in the city. In the rural sector, 88 brick and mortar bus stops were built, fortunately obliged by the same agency. Medical equipment for Ahmedabad's public hospital Sheth Vadilal Sarabhai, a computer system in a school in Vadodara city and several *anganwadis* in a few villages were also set up. Imagine the amount of work that could be done with a mere ₹4 crore!

In many cases, the MP finds it difficult to implement projects. In my time, no particular item could entail more than ₹10 lakh. This meant that I had to spend my total grant on at least 40 small projects.

Therefore, some MPs have a go at a few projects and leave the remaining funds unspent. Some distribute the money among local MLAs and others. Others use their own NGOs. The whole scheme is so clumsy that it is wasteful. It was comprehensively useful if the purpose was only to distribute perquisites to the MPs.

In spite of these shortcomings, if there be a parliamentary consensus for resuming the grants to MPs, be it so. But a change in procedure is necessary; let a keen MP apply to the Finance Minister giving what s/he proposes to do and how, within how much time. If an earmarked joint secretary finds the proposal viable and useful for the particular area, an approval could be given but subject to audit by a licensed auditor empanelled for MPLADS. The result would be beneficial to the area's people, executed economically and with a degree of uprightness.

(The writer is a well-known columnist and an author. The views expressed are personal.)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

COVID: ACCURACY IN FIGURES NEEDED

Sir — The official COVID-19 toll so far in India is around 4 lakh lives. However, experts are of the opinion that this is not an accurate figure. They think that the real figure will be much higher. It is assumed that over a million people may have lost their lives due to COVID-19, which is considered the second largest cause of death in the country. It is worrisome that COVID-related data is not properly collected and maintained. Recording of accurate data helps understand the enormity of the disease and the steps to be taken to combat it. Further, demographic and geographical data will help combat the third wave.

As any kind of death is a great loss to the families concerned, the families of COVID victims too deserve to be treated fairly by the Government. However, unlike railway accidents or industrial disasters, the families of COVID victims are not compensated. Just as the Government holds the responsibility to compensate those rendered jobless or destitute, it has the responsibility to compensate the families of COVID victims.

A number of factors have contributed to India's underreporting of COVID death data. As a consequence, it has raised doubts about India's real COVID-related death toll. In fact, many countries have not reported accurate COVID death toll.

Venu GS | Kollam

ECOLOGY MORE PRECIOUS THAN ECONOMY

Sir — This decade has been designated as the "decade of ecosystem restoration" by the UN. The ongoing pandemic must serve as a wake-up call for humanity to revisit the concept of GDP as a true measure of a country's growth. In fact, economic parameter alone does not present the true picture of a nation's growth and development, even as half of the world's GDP is dependent on natural resources alone.

But several developed and developing countries, in the guise of developing natural areas, resort to commercial plantations and designate them as forested areas, which goes against the tenets of natural law. It is no wonder then that the UN has declared

Revised vax policy makes sense



The Government's revised vaccination policy has brought fresh hope to students eyeing admission at foreign universities, job offers and also for the States that have faced difficulties in procuring vaccines and managing funds. Changing the previous policy of making the States procure 25 per cent of the doses through open market to vaccinate the 18-44 age group, now the States will have no role in procurement and the Centre will distribute vaccines to States for free, who will inoculate their populations.

From June 21, every Indian citizen will receive free vaccination at the Centre and State

Government-run centres. Earlier, the Centre provided free vaccination only to three priority groups: Healthcare workers, frontline workers and people aged above 45 years. Else, for the 18-44 age group, the vaccines were free only at the State-run centres. As the Centre moved to a centralised procurement mechanism, the Union Government said that both the State and Central centres will administer vaccines to all free of cost.

The vaccination at private centres will not be free; they can charge up to the maximum price as set by the Centre, besides a service charge. The Centre will directly procure three-fourth of the doses that the vaccine makers manufacture to distribute among States and administer doses. The number of doses allocated to a State will be based on three factors: Population, the progress of vaccination and degree of the spread of infection and the degree of wastage of vaccines. A number of measures in the revised policy will help smaller private centres based at remote locations to procure vaccine supply. From June 21, all centres will start on-site registration.

Bagwan Thadani | Mumbai

the (2021-2030) decade a time for ecosystem restoration, and called on the world to restore at least 1 billion hectares (2.5 billion acres) of degraded land in the next decade.

It is also an alarming situation that if the ecosystem services decline at a steady rate, an estimated \$10 trillion in global GDP may be lost by 2050. In this context, Uttarakhand, also called the Dev Bhumi (god's paradise), has become the first State in the country to assign monetary value to natural resources like air, water, forest and soil to arrive at Gross Environmental Product (GEP) in evaluating the GDP.

Vijay Singh Adhikari | Nainital

GST COUNCIL AND COVID-19 RELIEF

Sir — The GST Council meeting has turned its back on COVID-19 relief. The lone decision we might be satisfied with was the waiver of the tax levied on two critical drugs against COVID-19 and mucormycosis, Tocilizumab and Amphotericin B.

Instead of reducing tax on Remdesivir and anticoagulants like heparin, medical grade oxygen, oxygen concentrators, ventilators, BiPAP machines, pulse oximeters and testing kits from 12 per cent to 5 per cent, and from 18 per cent to five per cent for hand sanitisers, temperature checking equipment, gas or electric furnace for crematoria and from 28 per cent to 12 per cent for ambulances and keeping the tax on COVID-19 vaccines unchanged at five per cent, the GST Council should have made all COVID-19 related products, technologies and service tax-free.

It is inconceivable that the Government is insisting on raising revenue by taxing what is needed to fight the battle against the pandemic. Why on earth should any Government with compassion and empathy tax electric/gas furnaces used in crematoria?

G David Milton | Kanyakumari

SOUND BITE

Stalin had opposed the opening of Tasmac shops under the AIDMK Government. Now in power, the DMK-led Government is opening these liquor shops.



Tamil Nadu BJP president — L Murugan

Historically, the people of Mongolia and we Tibetans have been like twin brothers and sisters.

Tibetan spiritual leader — Dalai Lama

Buzzed Asymmetry. #HairMajesty #supershort #oneside #love. Few people know, I had a boy cut for a large part of my childhood.

Singer — Sona Mohapatra

This (English) battling line-up is fragile. We have to now start looking at players and wondering if they are good enough.

Former England skipper — Michael Vaughan

We will observe the situation of the markets and restaurants for one week. If the cases do not increase, we will continue with the phase-wise unlock.

Delhi Chief Minister — Arvind Kejriwal

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com



FIRST COLUMN

HONOUR SANCTITY OF ECOLOGY

Disrupted ecology invites virulent viruses; India must cut dependence on scant natural resources



KOTA SRIRAJ

As a result of rapid industrialization, the ever-hungry industrial nations consumed natural resources at an alarming rate. The collateral damage became evident through adverse impacts on environment - air and water pollution of air and water to the global problem of climate change. Today every nation is suffering contamination of ecology due to anthropogenic intervention. Issues like dwindling groundwater or soil erosion apart, the world faces serious consequences of 'development' virulent viruses such as the novel coronavirus SARS-COV-2 for example.

Covid-19 has unleashed unimaginable fury on people's lives and livelihoods. The Scientific Reports (Nature research) Journal said an astounding 20,507,518 life years have been lost worldwide including India due to the pandemic. Statista Data figures show that the world lost over \$4 trillion in economic output. These consequences are a direct result of overzealous human activities that have disrupted normal ecological conditions causing rare virus strains to surface. Sixty per cent of the world's ailments stem from animals, of which 72 per cent is from wild animals. Usually referred to as the 'reservoir' species they do not infect humans directly; the infection happens through an 'inter-



mediary animal' or the 'carrier animal' because the virus in the latter undergoes mutation and becomes contagious. Virus mutations are normal processes in the evolution of a virus and occur at gene level and, therefore, cannot be avoided.

Various studies point out that intact ecosystems and bio-diverse nature hotspots are supremely successful in drawing the crucial line of separation between humans and animals. But insatiable human hunger for natural resources-driven economic prosperity means that mankind is crossing the invisible line and driving into the 'prohibited' sphere of the wild plant and animal world that are replete with hitherto unknown viruses that quickly latch on to the 'human hosts'. This trespass into nature's domain has its own set of penalties and associated costs.

The breakage of ecosystem integrity usually occurs when deforestation, change in land use and mining sort of activities abound. These activities triggered by human intervention have an irreversible impact of the ecosystem biodiversity as they forever alter the indigenous specie population and density. This helps viruses to spill over, mutate and multiply finally leading to more toxic and contagious phenotypes against which humanity has no known remedy or protection available.

Given these conditions, it is easy to comprehend that restoration of lost ecosystems and ensuring preservation of existing ones is a primary priority for mankind. India must understand that the biodiversity of the ecology is irreplaceable and that the disruption of the same means inviting certain death and destruction. Towards that end, India must take immediate measures to preserve the sanctity of its ecology by first gently encouraging the population to adopt environmentally friendly lifestyles which are less and less dependent on precious natural resources.

A resource-exploitative lifestyle that is intensely dependent on harvesting precious natural assets of the environment is also unable to develop and retain natural immunity against common infections and viruses. This is due to over dependence on medicine regimes. An eco-friendly lifestyle will ensure resurrection of biodiversity which in turn will help revive the natural immunity that humans are born with.

(The author is an environmental journalist. The views expressed are personal.)

India gets poorer, investors richer

Imagine if all of ₹2100,000 crore under Atmanirbhar package had been distributed among 40 crore workers in the informal sector; it would have boosted demand



UTTAM GUPTA

The Corona pandemic may have brought about sharp deceleration in India's economic growth - the sharpest ever during the last four decades or so - but has yielded a bonanza for the investors.

The wealth of investors in the stock market as represented by the market capitalization of Indian equities (market value of shares multiplied by their number) almost doubled from around Rs 113 trillion (a trillion equals 100,000 crore) as on March 31, 2020 to Rs 226 trillion as on March 31, 2021. In contrast, India's GDP at current prices declined from Rs 203 trillion during 2019-20 to Rs 197 trillion during 2020-21. As a result, the market capitalization to GDP ratio almost doubled from 56 per cent during 2019-20 to 115 per cent during 2020-21.

Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of a country is the total value of goods and services produced during a specific time frame say a quarter or a year. Used worldwide, it is the most crucial economic indicator for reflecting on the economic health of a country. For developing countries such as India, a high year-on-year GDP growth should result in increasing prosperity for its people and vice versa.

During 2020-21, when the Corona pandemic destroyed economic activity on a mammoth scale, annihilated millions of micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs), took away jobs of tens of millions and severely impacted earnings of others, one section that went unscathed was the corporate sector in particular, the investors who made huge gains from their shareholdings in corporate entities across all categories such as large-caps, mid-caps, small-caps etc. So, what explains this anomalous situation?

The market value of a share depends on the demand or investors' interest which in turn, is a function of the company's current profitability and their assessment of how this is expected to be in the years to come.

During the year, profitability of majority of the listed firms increased despite decline in revenue. This was made possible due to higher prices of their products on the one hand and reduction in expenditure (that included expenses on wages and salaries, other fixed costs, interest outgo, etc.) on the other. As regards expectation for the future, investors including foreign investors have confidence in the fundamentals of firms and their ability to deliver good returns in the medium to long-term. This is vindicated by a record FPI (foreign portfolio investment) of about US\$37 billion during 2020-21.

Even the measures announced by the Union Government and the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) purportedly to revive growth, boost aggregate demand and promote 'inclusive' development with emphasis on reinvigorating MSMEs ended up adding to the fortunes of the corporate sector.

The steep reduction in the corporate tax rate to 15 per cent for new enterprises set up after October 1, 2019 and to 22 per cent for existing entities (subject to their foregoing exemption and deductions available under existing dispensation) meant leaving an additional about Rs 150,000 crore in the hands of corporate in a full year. The corporate entities also benefited from the reduction in the policy rate (interest rate at which RBI lends money to commercial banks) by 1.15 per cent during 2020 over and above a total cut of 1.35 per cent delivered during 2019.

Of the much trumpeted special package of Rs



TO SUM UP, THE HIGHLY INEQUITABLE OUTCOME DURING 2020-21 WAS DUE TO THE GOVERNMENT RELYING TOO MUCH ON MONETARY SUPPORT WHICH WAS AVAILED MOSTLY BY CORPORATE ENTITIES AND TOO LITTLE FISCAL SUPPORT (FREE FOOD, SUBSIDISED LPG, PM-KISAN ETC) WHICH BARELY HELPED TENS OF MILLIONS LOW-INCOME EARNERS KEEP THEIR HEAD ABOVE WATER

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



2100,000 crore announced by the Finance Minister, Nirmala Sitharaman (May, 2020) under the 'Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan', a mere about Rs 200,000 crore was spent on catering to food and other bare basic needs such as higher subsidy on LPG, hike in wages under MGNREGA (Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act), financial assistance to farmers under PM-KISAN, ex-gratia to Jan Dhan (JD) account holder etc. under PM Garib Kalyan Yojna (PM - GKY).

The rest Rs 1900,000 crore was given as (i) liquidity support by RBI (measures announced by Governor, Shashikant Dason March 27 and April 17, 2020) injected close to Rs 500,000 crore followed by another Rs 300,000 crore on May 22; (ii) increasing resources of banks and other financial institutions (FIs) to enable them on-lend; (iii) releasing pending dues to agencies tasked with implementation of welfare schemes of the Union Government. A big slice of these funds either landed with corporate entities or remained un-utilized.

For instance, out of the Rs 100,000 crore auction of targeted long-term repo operations (TLTRO - 1) of three-year tenor by the RBI, Rs 75,000 crore went to the big corporate. The apex bank tried to rectify this anomaly when under the TLTRO 2.0 (April 17, 2020) it reserved 50 per cent of additional liquidity injection Rs 50,000 crore for small and mid-sized non-banking financial companies (NBFCs) and micro-finance institutions

(MFIs). One wonders whether this reserved quota of Rs 25,000 crore actually went to small players.

Consider Rs 300,000 crore meant for MSMEs or identified stressed sectors under the Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme (ECLGS). As against a target of eight million MSMEs beneficiaries, only four million got loan aggregating to Rs 150,000 crore. Even today, the money available under the scheme remains un-utilized; this has prompted the Government to extend the scheme till September 30 and even relaxed the conditions to allow firms with outstanding up to Rs 50 crore (up from existing Rs 25 crore) avail of the facility.

Look at the payment of Rs 65,000 crore to fertilizer manufacturers (in addition to Rs 71,000 crore allocated in the budget for 2020-21) towards subsidy dues being carry forward from previous years. These payments went towards bolstering their bottom-line. Likewise, Rs 90,000 crore given to power distribution companies (PDCs) (amount since raised to Rs 130,000 crore) eventually landed with power generation companies being former's pending dues to the latter. As for food subsidy, the Government paid to the Food Corporation of India (FCI) Rs 350,000 crore (as per RE) over and above the budget provision of Rs 116,000 crore for 2020-21. A good chunk of this was used by the FCI for clearing dues to its creditors/companies.

Thus, contrary to the stated

intent of the Atmanirbhar package to provide succor to MSMEs and millions of workers in informal sector etc., on ground zero, the money was given mostly by way of tax cuts, reduction in interest rate, loans, liquidity support and clearance of dues which contributed to enrichment of those (read: corporate) who were already well-off. The latter also gained a lot from the reckless spending by governments in developed countries (a gargantuan US\$9 trillion was pumped in) even as a lot of that money found its way to emerging market economies including India.

To sum up, the highly inequitable outcome during 2020-21 was due to the Government relying too much on monetary support which was availed mostly by corporate entities and too little fiscal support (free food, subsidized LPG, PM-KISAN etc) which barely helped tens of millions low-income earners keep their head above water. In contrast, imagine if all of the Rs 2100,000 crore under the Atmanirbhar package were to be distributed among 40 crore workers in the informal sector. This would have given the much-needed boost to demand across all sectors and resultant fillip to inclusive growth, but that was not to be.

Even as the pandemic continues to bite during the current year as well (though, to a lesser extent), will the Government give a big fiscal push directed at these most vulnerable people? Going by Finance Minister's stance thus far, it seems unlikely.

POINT COUNTERPOINT

DIGVIJAYA SINGH TELLS A PAKISTANI JOURNALIST THAT IF CONGRESS COMES TO POWER, THEY WILL RECONSIDER THE DECISION ON ARTICLE 370. — BJP IT CELL CHIEF AMIT MALVIYA



CERTAIN UNEDUCATED PEOPLE MIGHT HAVE NOT UNDERSTOOD THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN "SHALL" AND "CONSIDER". — SENIOR CONGRESS LEADER DIGVIJAYA SINGH

India-UK trade talks: Case for tariff optimisation

A notion worth dispelling is that Scotch whiskies are costlier to produce; it is 50 per cent more expensive to produce it in India than in Scotland

In wake of the Indo-UK trade discussions, many experts' argue for reduction in tariff, particularly slashing custom tariffs on imported Scotch and on 'intermediate' products which they say are nothing but high-strength, potable, undenatured ethyl alcohol used for bottling and blending in India.

They argue on three main grounds. One, that India has a large trade surplus in the category and can afford greater imports; two, customs duty reduction on intermediate products will encourage 'Make in India'; and three, even if tariff is reduced the bulk of consumption will remain locally produced whiskies -- so why bother.

This industry contributes nearly Rs 250,000 crore in taxes



VINOD GIRI

(The author is Director General of the Confederation of Indian Alcoholic Beverage Companies. The views expressed are personal.)

and for most states it constitutes 15-30 per cent of revenue. Customs duty is not even Rs 5000 crore in comparison. Second, this industry uses agricultural products as primary raw material and nearly 50 lakh farmers depend on it. It provides employment to 20 lakh people. Any disruption will have widespread ramifications for the government, farmers and labour market.

The problem with the first argument is that it hides the true balance of trade on alcoholic beverages using a wider head of 'Food and Drinks'. If one separates alcoholic beverages/products for human consumption from the wider clubbing of Food and Drinks, a very different picture emerges.

As per DGFT data for

2018-19, India exports only Rs 5 crore worth of alcoholic products/beverages to the UK, against import of Rs 1300 crore. Clubbing alcohol under a much bigger Food & Drink category to claim favourable balance of trade is highly misleading.

The second argument is also a misconception. Scotch whisky goes through two major stages of production -- distillation and bottling. The 'Intermediate' Scotch whisky is actually the output of the first stage, it has been produced and matured in Scotland. What happens in India is only bottling. Therefore, while incentivising Intermediate products through reduced or zero duty will lead to an increase of usage of bottling plants in India, which will be a big loss for



Indian farmers and manufacturers.

The third argument misses out on three vital points. One, in product categories with multiple price segments like whisky, consumers seamlessly shift to the next category up or down depending on affordability.

So, when a Scotch whisky is sold at a lower price it takes away consumers from products in the price segment, starting a

domino effect that makes the domestic industry the net loser. Two, introduction of Scotch whisky at lower price attacks the profit driving end of portfolio of Indian companies, thus jeopardising their viability. Third, Indian premium whiskies like Amrut, Paul John or Rampur are now regarded amongst the best in the world but are unable to make the same headway in the domestic market due to an unsupportive regime and reducing customs duty further just will not help.

Another notion worth dispelling is that Scotch whiskies are costlier to produce. Rather, it costs at least 50 per cent more to produce a whisky of similar quality in India than in Scotland. This is primarily on account of a higher cost of cap-

ital and higher taxes in India, interstate restrictions and higher evaporation losses.

Also, many states offer concessionary taxes on imported products, but reduction in customs tariffs cannot be done without removing compensatory state-based concessions as otherwise it will create a hugely discriminatory tax regime against Indian products.

If we talk about reciprocal duty concessions, the problem is that barriers put up by the UK are not tariff based but non-tariff ones. India, being a sugar producing country, has evolved whisky recipes based on spirit distilled from molasses. The UK does not accept this as it is not 'recipe standards'. The result of these non-tariff barriers is that of the 70 lakh cases of whisky

exported from India every year, the whole of the EU including the UK accounts for less than 30,000!

Indian industry is not against reducing customs duty on alcohol, but it should be in a phased manner and up to a point where it creates a level playing field.

Accordingly, it has put forward its recommendation to reduce import taxes, aggregate of customs duty and AIDC, from 150% to 100% now and to 75% in five years' time. It has also recommended a threshold import price for taxation at \$5 per bottle, and reciprocal concessions from the UK allowing whiskies from India to be allowed in the UK market as 'Indian Whisky' without minimum maturity conditions.

Cong-ruled States should cut tax on petrol, diesel: Pradhan

MINISTER MUM ON HIGH TAXES IN BJP-RULED STATES

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

With petrol and diesel prices climbing to record high, Oil Minister Dharmendra Pradhan on Sunday asked Congress Governments in Rajasthan and Maharashtra to cut sales tax if the party was concerned about fuel price burden on common man, but did not say if BJP-ruled States like Madhya Pradesh and Karnataka, where petrol has crossed ₹100 mark, would do the same.

Petrol and diesel have risen to an all-time high across the country after fuel rates rose by ₹5.72 to ₹6.25 per litre in less than six weeks. This is due to a combination of rising international oil prices and record-high central and State taxes.

Talking to reporters on the sidelines of an event organised to inaugurate the oxygen plant set up by Indraprastha Gas Ltd at Maharaja Agrasen Hospital, he said central and State Governments need additional money from the taxes on petrol and diesel to meet expenses for fighting pandemic as well as development work.

"I accept that fuel prices are pinching consumers," he said, adding the government is spending ₹1 lakh crore on providing free food grains to

poor this year alone besides spending money on vaccines and healthcare infrastructure.

Asked about Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's repeated attacks on the Modi government for skyrocketing fuel prices, Pradhan said, "Why is fuel expensive in Maharashtra, Rajasthan and Punjab (which are ruled by the party)?"

"If Rahul Gandhi is concerned about the poor being hit by fuel prices, he should ask chief ministers of Congress-ruled states to cut taxes. He should ask (Maharashtra Chief Minister) Uddhav Thackeray to reduce taxes," he said.

He, however, did not say if BJP-ruled states like Madhya Pradesh and Karnataka, which have seen petrol price cross Rs 100 a litre mark due to local taxes, would follow suit.

Fuel prices differ from state to state depending on the incidence of local taxes such as VAT and freight charges. And because of this, petrol retails at over ₹100 per litre mark in seven states and union territories -- Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Karnataka and Ladakh.

Of these states, Congress is in power in Rajasthan and is a coalition partner with Shiv Sena and NCP in Maharashtra. BJP rules Madhya Pradesh and Karnataka and Ladakh too is under central rule. Andhra Pradesh has YSR-Congress in power while TRS rules in Telangana.



Rajasthan levies the highest value-added tax (VAT or sales tax) on petrol and diesel in the country, followed by Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and Karnataka.

Petrol, diesel prices remain unchanged on Sunday

New Delhi: Fuel prices which have been rising over the past one month remained unchanged in the national Capital on Sunday. In Delhi, petrol was sold for ₹96.12 while diesel was priced at ₹86.98 per litre, both at the same levels on Saturday. Fuel prices have increased in the last two consecutive days across the country. In the financial capital of the country, Mumbai, both petrol and diesel were sold for ₹102.30 and ₹94.39 per litre, respectively. PTI

Sharpening income inequalities telling story of uneven economic recovery amid pandemic: Ex-RBI Gov Subbarao

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Former RBI Governor D Subbarao has expressed concerns over "extreme unevenness" in economic recovery and "sharpening inequalities" between upper income segments and lower income households in the country, cautioning that the trend will hit growth prospects going forward.

Termining the uneven recovery "morally wrong and politically corrosive", he said liquidity in the domestic market and foreign fund inflows are leading to soaring of prices of stocks and other assets despite disruptions due to Covid pandemic.

The ex-central bank governor further said that earlier expectations of a sharp economic recovery this year have been dashed by the new pandemic wave.

"The economy contracted last year, for the first time in four decades, by as much as 7.3 per cent. That was less deep than we had first feared but still deep enough to have caused distress to millions of families in the informal sector. There was expectation of a sharp recovery this year but those expectations are now tempered by the impact of the second wave," Subbarao told PTI.

The RBI too reduced its growth forecast for the current fiscal by one percentage point, from 10.5 per cent to 9.5 per cent, he said adding that even 9.5 per cent growth might



seem impressive but note that this is coming on a very low base of last year.

"Even if we clock this growth rate, the output during this fiscal 2021/22 will still be less than the output two years ago before the pandemic hit us. Compare that with China which never fell below its pre-pandemic level and the US which is expected to recover to its pre-pandemic level this year," the former RBI chief said. Expressing concerns, Subbarao said that while the majority of people have lost jobs and saw reduction in their income, the wealth of some rich individuals have increased during the pandemic period.

"The positive wealth effect of the upper income segments juxtaposed with the negative income effects of the lower income households tells a story of a very uneven recovery and sharpening inequalities. This is morally wrong and politically corrosive," he said adding that it will also have a big impact on growth prospects going forward.

Discoms' outstanding dues to gencos fall 11.2% to ₹81,628 cr in April

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Total outstanding dues owed by electricity distribution utilities or discoms to power producers fell 11.2 per cent to ₹81,628 crore in April 2021 from a year ago.

Distribution companies (discoms) owed a total ₹91,915 crore to power generation firms in April 2020, according to portal PRAAPTI (Payment Ratification And Analysis in Power procurement for bringing Transparency in Invoicing of generators).

However, outstanding dues of discoms towards electricity producers have been increasing year-on-year as well as month-on-month for years showing perennial stress in the power sector till February this year. It has started tapering off from March 2021.

Total dues in April increased sequentially compared to ₹78,841 crore in March this year.

Total outstanding dues of discoms had dipped 3.4 per cent in March this year from ₹81,687 crore in the same month last year.

The PRAAPTI portal was launched in May 2018 to bring in transparency in power purchase transactions between generators and discoms.

In April 2021, the total overdue amount, which was not cleared even after 45 days of grace period offered by generators, stood at ₹68,732 crore as against ₹76,117 crore in the same month a year ago. The overdue amount stood at



₹67,656 crore in March this year.

Power producers give 45 days to discoms to pay bills for electricity supply. After that, outstanding dues become overdue and generators charge penal interest on that in most cases. To give relief to power generation companies (gencos), the Centre enforced a payment security mechanism from August 1, 2019.

Under this mechanism, discoms are required to open letters of credit for getting power supply. The Centre had also given some breathers to discoms for paying dues to gencos in view of the Covid-19-induced lockdown. The government had also waived penal charges for late payment of dues.

In May, the Government announced ₹90,000 crore liquidity infusion for discoms under which these utilities would get loans at economical rates from Power Finance Corporation (PFC) and REC Ltd.

This was a government

initiative to help gencos remain afloat. Later, the liquidity infusion package was increased to ₹1.35 lakh crore and further to ₹1.2 lakh crore. Under the liquidity package, over ₹80,000 crore has been disbursed.

Discoms in Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Jharkhand and Tamil Nadu account for the major portion of dues to gencos, the data showed.

Overdue of independent power producers amounted to 53.04 per cent of the total overdue of ₹68,732 crore of discoms in April 2021. The proportion of central PSU gencos in the overdue was 30.52 per cent.

Among the central public sector gencos, NTPC alone has an overdue amount of ₹5,167.11 crore on discoms, followed by Damodar Valley Corporation at ₹5,156.34 crore, NLC India at ₹3,416.18 crore, NHPC at ₹2,261.05 crore and THDC India at ₹1,134.17 crore in April 2021.

Exchanges to suspend trading in DHFL shares from Monday



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Leading exchanges BSE and NSE will suspend trading in the shares of Dewan Housing Finance Corporation Ltd (DHFL) with effect from Monday.

The move, aimed at avoiding "market complications", comes against the backdrop of the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) approving Piral Group's resolution plan for the bankrupt DHFL.

The resolution plan under the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC) was approved by the tribunal on June 7.

In separate but similarly worded circulars issued on Friday, BSE and NSE said they would suspend trading in the shares of DHFL with effect

from June 14. The approved resolution plan provides for delisting of equity shares of the company.

As per the circulars, the company made an announcement on June 9, saying that "no value was attributable to the equity shares as per the liquidation value of the company estimated by registered valuers appointed under the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (Insolvency Resolution Process for Corporate Persons) Regulations, 2016".

According to the circular issued by BSE, "to avoid market complications, trading in the securities of Dewan Housing Finance Corporation Limited will be suspended w.e.f June 14, 2021".

In November 2019, Reserve Bank of India (RBI) had referred DHFL -- then the third-largest pure-play mortgage lender -- for resolution under the IBC. It was the first finance company to be referred to the NCLT by RBI using special powers under Section 227 of the IBC.

WTO convenes key meeting of trade Mins on July 15 on fisheries subsidies



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The chief of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) has convened a meeting of all trade ministers on July 15 to iron out differences with regard to providing fisheries subsidies, sources said.

The aim is to conclude the negotiations soon and after that a text is finalised so that an agreement on fisheries can be reached in the forthcoming Ministerial meet of WTO in December in Geneva.

Hectic negotiations are going on in Geneva on the matter. The objective of these negotiations is to discipline under the IBC. It was the first finance company to be referred to the NCLT by RBI using special powers under Section 227 of the IBC.

subsidies contributing to overcapacity and overfishing. "It will be an online meeting of the Trade Ministers. WTO Director General Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala has called the meeting of the trade negotiating committee on July 15 on the matter," sources said.

While developed nations are pushing for prohibitions on subsidies, India wants an equitable and balanced outcome as the country provides support to its small and marginal fishermen who depend on the sector for sustenance.

Unlike rich nations which provide billions of dollars of subsidies to their fishermen, India's subsidy amounts to only about Rs 770 crore. The government provides subsidies on things like fuel and boats.

India wants that fishing activities in territorial waters should be completely out of the ambit of the agreement, while adequate time should be given to implement commitments of the agreement in EEZs.

For this, the country has asked for the necessity of an appropriate and effective special and differential treatment (S&DT) for developing countries and LDCs (least developed countries) in the negotiations.

Fishing communities of developed countries use highly mechanised boats for fishing, which are called mother boats wherein they have processing units also.

As India's subsidy is minimal and provided to small and marginal fishermen, it has sought more time to implement the norms or disciplines, which would be finalised after complete negotiations, on the prohibition of subsidies for fishing activities in Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs).

There are primarily three areas of fishing - territorial waters (12 nautical miles from the sea shore), EEZ (exclusive economic zones - 200 nautical miles), and high seas.

India wants that fishing activities in territorial waters should be completely out of the ambit of the agreement, while adequate time should be given to implement commitments of the agreement in EEZs.

For this, the country has asked for the necessity of an appropriate and effective special and differential treatment (S&DT) for developing countries and LDCs (least developed countries) in the negotiations.

Amazon India to impart core machine learning skills to make students industry-ready



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Amazon India on Sunday announced the launch of an integrated learning programme for students to learn applied Machine Learning (ML) skills, making them industry ready for careers in the new technology. The programme - ML Summer School - has been introduced to help train students in ML and address the growing demand for talent with this skill set across various industries.

Amazon India said in a statement. The curriculum will cover the fundamental concepts in ML, while linking them to practical industry applications through an immersive three-day course, it added. Participants of the ML Summer School will be identified through an online assessment.

It is open to engineering students in their pre-final/final year of Bachelors, Masters or PhD studies across select tech campuses in 2021, including Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Bombay, IIT Kharagpur, IIT Delhi, International Institute of Information Technology (IIIT) Hyderabad, Birla Institute of Technology (BITS), National Institute of Technology (NIT) Tiruchirappalli and Anna University among others.

NTPC invites EoI for hydrogen fuel cell-based pilot projects

New Delhi: State-run power giant NTPC has floated a global expression of interest (EoI) for setting up hydrogen fuel-based power backup system and a standalone fuel-cell based microgrid system, a statement said on Sunday.

Through these projects, NTPC is looking to further strengthen its footprint in green and clean fuel, the company said. NTPC will collaborate for implementation and further commercialization of the projects. This is in line with NTPC's initiatives towards adopting hydrogen technologies. The power PSU is exploring the use of hydrogen-based fuel cells-electrolyser systems for backup power requirement. Currently, the backup power requirement and micro grid applications are being met from diesel-based power generators. Looking at these as early adopter use case of hydrogen based technologies, NTPC is working towards creating solutions which are a green alternative to diesel generators. PTI

Axis Bank stake in Max Life likely to rise to 20% in 12-18 months



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

In line with the proposed deal, Axis Bank is likely to raise its stake in Max Life Insurance to about 20 per cent over the next 12-18 months, said the insurance company's CEO Prashant Tripathy said.

Currently, Axis Bank and its two subsidiaries - Axis Capital Ltd and Axis Securities Ltd - collectively own 12.99 per cent in Max Life Insurance post approval of the deal in April this year. With this, Axis entities have now become co-promoters of Max Life with three board seats. "Axis Bank is to increase to 19.99 per cent in tranches. Thirteen per cent is already done over the next two quarters, we will seek approval for the balance seven per cent. So, it will reach about 20 per cent and that will be the ownership of Axis Bank," Tripathy told PTI.

IPO pie set to grow as financial services players join the fray

PTI ■ MUMBAI

With payments major Paytm's board reportedly approving a bumper share sale plan running north of ₹22,000 crore, the IPO market is set for a big day as over a dozen financial services players, including fintechs, are set to mop up over ₹55,000 crore this fiscal from the market, according to investment bankers.

With more than a dozen insurance, asset management, commercial banking, non-banks, microfinance, housing finance and payment bank players already filing draft documents with the market regulator Sebi for public offerings, the financial services sector is set to dominate the primary issues or initial public offerings (IPOs) over the coming months.

Some of those who have already filed the draft red herring prospectus (DRHPs) with the Sebi include Aadhar Housing Finance (₹7,500 crore), Policy Bazaar (₹4,000 crore), Apts Housing Finance (₹3,000 crore), Star Health Insurance (₹2,000 crore), Aditya Birla Sun Life AMC (₹1,500-2,000 crore) Arohan

Financial Services (₹1,800 crore), Fusion Microfinance (₹1,700 crore), Fincare Small Finance Bank (₹1,330 crore), Tamilnad Mercantile Bank (₹1,000-1,300 crore), Medi Assist (₹ 840 crore) and Jana Small Finance Bank (₹700 crore), among others.

And the board of the biggest payments bank Paytm has reportedly cleared an over ₹22,000 crore IPO. Together, these financial services companies are set to garner around ₹55,000 crore from the public. If materialised, the Paytm issue will be the largest IPO ever in the country, eclipsing the hitherto largest issue - the ₹15,000-crore share sale by the government in national miner Coal India in October 2010, says investment bankers seeking not to be quoted. Investment bankers and analysts consider the IPO boom to be reflective of the ongoing bull run and thus advice retail investors to be cautious while parking money in new companies. VK Vijayakumar, chief investment strategist at Geojit Financial Services in Kochi, said the performance of the IPO market usually has a strong correlation to the performance of the secondary market.

CAIT fully geared up to fight Amazon & Flipkart



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

For more than five years, Amazon, Walmart-owned Flipkart and many other foreign-funded e-commerce companies have indulged into all kinds of unethical business practices with an objective of taking control of not only the e-commerce but even the retail business of India, the Confederation of All India Traders (CAIT) said.

Their sinister designs have greatly vitiated the e-commerce landscape of the country, the traders body said.

In view of such a situation, the Confederation of All India Traders (CAIT) has launched an "e-commerce purification week" from Monday to June 21, which is gaining massive support from thousands of trade associations across the country.

During the e-commerce purification campaign, the trade organizations across the country will handover a mem-

orandum to the District Collectors in all states in the Country. On the other hand, the trade delegations will meet the Chief Ministers and Finance Ministers of their respective States urging them to set up a monitoring mechanism for e-commerce trade in the State for ensuring strict implementation of FDI in e-commerce policy of the Government.

Simultaneously, the trade associations will send an e-mail to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal urging them for an immediate direction to the CCI for initiating an investigation of the business module of Amazon and Flipkart, issuance of a fresh Press Note removing the flaws of Press Note 2, and setting up of a Regulatory mechanism at the Centre to monitor e-commerce business in India. The CAIT has also declared to launch a digital signature campaign across the Country on this issue.

Baba Ramdev's Ruchi Soya files FPO document to raise up to ₹4,300 cr

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Edible oil firm Ruchi Soya, which is owned by Baba Ramdev-led Patanjali Ayurveda, has filed draft document with SEBI to launch a follow-on public offer (FPO) for raising up to ₹4,300 crore.

The FPO is being launched to meet the SEBI norm of minimum public shareholding of 25 per cent in a listed entity. Ruchi Soya filed the draft red herring prospectus (DRHP) with market regulator SEBI on Saturday, sources said, adding that the company plans to raise up to ₹4,300 crore through the share sale.

There has been no cyber breach into the email system of the government, maintained by the National Informatics Centre (NIC), an official release said on Sunday. The email system is "totally safe and secure", the Ministry of Electronics and IT said while dismissing a report claiming that data breaches in organisations such as Air India, Big Basket and Domino's had exposed email accounts and

Centre may front load capital provisioning for PSBs this year

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

As the Central Government draws a plan to privatise at least two public sector banks (PSB) this fiscal, it has also decided to front load capitalisation of State-owned banks so that the balance sheets of some of these entities are strengthened ahead of possible sale.

Sources said that PSBs may be provided this year just after their first quarter results before October. This would be a departure from the practice of previous year when bank capitalisation was undertaken late in the year and towards the end of fiscal.

Even in FY21, a substantial portion of capital was released right at end of the fiscal year in March. "Front loading of capital will help PSBs to strengthen their financials that may again get impacted this year with weak lending and stress coming back on a lot of their credit assets with Covid pandemic continuing to disrupt businesses. This could also help in taking out weak banks out of the PCA (prompt corrective action) framework that would be helpful in their possible privatisation this year," said an official source on the condition of anonymity.

address and used the same password as the one used in that email account. "NIC Email system has put in place several security measures such as two-factor authentication and change of password in 90 days. Further, any change of password in NIC Email requires mobile OTP and if the mobile OTP is incorrect then change of password will not be possible," it said, adding that any attempt of phishing using that particular email can be mitigated by NIC.

No cyber breach into NIC email system: Govt

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

There has been no cyber breach into the email system of the government, maintained by the National Informatics Centre (NIC), an official release said on Sunday.

The email system is "totally safe and secure", the Ministry of Electronics and IT said while dismissing a report claiming that data breaches in organisations such as Air India, Big Basket and Domino's had exposed email accounts and

passwords of NIC emails to hackers. "In view of this, it is important to clarify that...there has been no cyber breach into the email system of the Government of India maintained by the NIC. The email system is totally safe and secure," the release said.

It further noted that cyber security breach on external portals may not impact the users of Government email service, unless the Government users have registered on these portals using their official email

Gas blast kills 12 in China, 150 hurt

AP ■ BEIJING

At least 12 people were killed and 39 seriously injured on Sunday after a gas line explosion tore through a residential neighborhood in central China.



In this image taken from a video footage run by China's CCTV, a firefighter walks near the aftermath of a gas explosion in Shiyuan city in central China's Hubei Province on Sunday.

Responders to the early morning blast in the city of Shiyuan in Hubei province sent more than 150 people to the hospital, according to officials quoted by state media.

The cause of the explosion remains under investigation. Stall keepers and customers buying breakfast and fresh vegetables at a food market were the majority of victims when the explosion hit shortly after 6 a.m., according to the reports.

The Shiyuan explosion came a day after eight people died and three others were injured when toxic methyl formate leaked from a vehicle at a chemical handling facility in the southwestern city of Guiyang. The blast appeared similar to one that occurred in the northeastern port of Qingdao in 2013, in which 55 people were killed when underground pipelines ripped open following a leak.

Italy premier says talks on China dominated G7

AP ■ NEWQUAY (ENGLAND)

Italian Premier Mario Draghi says the dominant theme of the Group of Seven summit was how to respond to China and other autocratic governments.

Draghi said Sunday that China has the right to a great economy but that practices like coercive detention and using forced labour were out of step with the vision of the world's democracies.

He said the position taken wasn't particularly tough, but was rather realistic, in view of the necessity to cooperate on climate change, rebuilding the world after the coronavirus pandemic and other issues.

He also said his Cabinet would be reviewing the controversial 2019 trade and infrastructure deal Italy's previous government signed with Beijing. Over U.S. and other objections, Italy in 2019 became the first G7 country to sign onto China's "Belt and Road" initiative.

Erdogan and Biden meet at a tense moment for Turkish-US ties

AP ■ ANKARA

President Joe Biden and Turkish counterpart Recep Tayyip Erdogan have known each other for years, but their meeting Monday will be their first as heads of state. And it comes at a particularly tense moment for relations between their two countries.

The list of disagreements is unusually long for the two NATO allies: There's U.S. support for Kurdish fighters in Syria, as well as Turkey's purchase of a Russian weapons system. And in April, Biden infuriated Ankara by declaring that the Ottoman-era mass killing and deportations of Armenians was "genocide."

Previous U.S. Presidents had avoided using the term out of concern that it would complicate ties with Turkey, which is fiercely proud of its Ottoman history and insists that those killed in the early 20th century were victims of civil war and unrest.

However, besides blasting the decision in speeches, Erdogan didn't immediately hit back at Washington. The muted response suggests he wants a good relationship with Biden, said Rachel Ellehuus, an analyst at the Washington think tank Center for Strategic and International Studies.

"Not least because he needs that economic relationship with the U.S. And the appearance of a cooperative relationship in order to retain his base, which is very much built on a functioning Turkish economy that is tethered into the West," Ellehuus said.

However, before leaving Sunday for the NATO summit in Brussels where he will meet Biden, Erdogan described the president's comments on the killings of Armenians living in the Ottoman Empire as "very negative" and an "approach (that) has seriously upset us."

G-7 pledges 1 billion vaccines

AP ■ CARBIS BAY (ENGLAND)

Leaders of the Group of Seven wealthy nations staked their claim on Sunday to leading the world out of the coronavirus pandemic and crisis, pledging more than 1 billion coronavirus vaccine doses to poorer nations, vowing to help developing countries grow while fighting climate change and backing a minimum tax on multinational firms.

At the group's first face-to-face meeting in two years, the leaders dangled promises of support for global health, green energy, infrastructure and education.

The leaders wanted to show that international cooperation is back after the upheavals caused by the pandemic and the unpredictability of former US President Donald Trump. And they wanted to convey that the club of wealthy democracies — Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom and the United States — is a better friend to poorer nations than authoritarian rivals such as China.

Speaking at the end of the three-day summit in southwest England, US President Joe Biden, who was making his first foreign trip as leader, said it was an "extraordinary, collaborative and productive meeting."

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson, the summit's host, praised the "fantastic degree of harmony" among



the group.

Johnson said the G-7 would demonstrate the value of democracy and human rights to the rest of the world and help "the world's poorest countries to develop themselves in a way that is clean and green and sustainable."

"It's not good enough for us to just rest on our laurels and talk about how important those values are," he told reporters after the 3-day meeting on the Cornwall coast. "And this isn't about imposing our values on the rest of the world. What we as the G-7 need to do is

demonstrate the benefits of democracy and freedom and human rights to the rest of the world."

But health and environmental campaigners were distinctly unimpressed by the details in the leaders' final communique.

"This G-7 summit will live on in infamy," said Max Lawson, the head of inequality policy at the international aid group Oxfam. "Faced with the biggest health emergency in a century and a climate catastrophe that is destroying our planet, they have completely failed to meet the challenges of our times."

Despite Johnson's call to "vaccinate the world" by the end of 2022 the promise of 1 billion doses for vaccine-hungry countries — coming both directly and through the international COVAX program — falls far short of the 11 billion

doses the World Health Organization said is needed to vaccinate at least 70% of the world's population and truly end the pandemic.

Half of the billion-dose pledge is coming from the United States and 100 million from Britain. Canada said it also would give 100 million doses, and France pledged 60 million.

The vaccines are due to be delivered by the end of 2022, but Biden said the leaders were clear that the commitments they made to donate doses wouldn't be the end. The U.S. President said getting shots into arms around the world was a "gigantic, logistical effort" and the goal may not be achieved until 2023.

The G-7 also backed a minimum tax of at least 15% on large multinational companies to stop corporations from using tax havens to avoid taxes.

Biden takes subtle jabs at Trump at end of G7

AP ■ NEWQUAY (ENGLAND)

President Joe Biden is taking a series of subtle jabs at Donald Trump at the end of the Group of Seven summit, suggesting there was a "genuine sense of enthusiasm" among foreign leaders that the United States was engaged on world issues.

The president is highlighting very fundamental differences with Trump over climate change and national security at a news conference Sunday.

Biden says that he does not view NATO as a "protection racket." That's a contrast to Trump who said that foreign countries should pay for the presence of the U.S. Military abroad.

G7 leaders discuss Wuhan lab leak theory behind pandemic

PTI ■ LONDON

World leaders gathered at the G7 Summit in Cornwall discussed the possibility that a laboratory leak in central China's Wuhan city may have a connection with the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, with the World Health Organisation (WHO) chief saying all hypotheses behind the origins of the deadly disease remain in play.

UK Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab said that officials "compared notes" over the theory that the pandemic may have originated from a leak from a lab in Wuhan, calling for further investigations. However, he asserted that the UK's "best information" remained that it "jumped" from animals to humans but admitted they did not have "all the answers".

"That's why internationally we wanted the review to be able to go into China to get all the answers, so that we have the full picture rather than these possible, potential, plausible options," Raab told 'Sky

News' on Sunday when asked about the issue.

"But, on balance, we do not believe that it came from a laboratory. We think it is much more likely to have jumped from animal species," he said.

WHO Director-General Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus told reporters on Saturday that the theory was raised during a formal session at the G7 summit in Cornwall dedicated to health matters and that identifying the source of the pandemic was a core part of showing respect to the millions of people around the globe who have died from the deadly virus. "Yes, it was raised, and we discussed about the origins," he said in response to a question.

"The first phase of the origin study was not conclusive so there are four hypotheses, but [it's] not conclusive yet. So we believe that all four hypotheses should be open, and we need to proceed with the second phase, to really know the origins," said Dr Ghebreyesus.

China hits back at G7 summit

Days of 'small group' of countries dictating global decisions are long gone: Beijing

PTI ■ BEIJING

China on Sunday asserted that the days when global decisions were dictated by a "small group" of countries are long gone, hitting back at the G-7 summit where Beijing was at the centre of severe criticism over the COVID-19 origins, human rights violations and its mega Belt and Road Initiative.

As the leaders of G-7 -- Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom and the United States -- met in London where US President Joe Biden made a strong bid to rally the allies against China's economic clout, human rights besides its reluctance to agree for a probe into the COVID-19 origin, Beijing appeared defiant and firm questioning the relevance of the bloc.

While there is no direct response by the Chinese gov-

ernment here, state-run Global Times quoted statement issued by China's Embassy in London, rebutting G-7 criticism against Beijing. Answering a question on issues covered by the G-7 Summit on pandemic response, economy, trade and global supply chains and US efforts to "seizing" the opportunity to bond with other Western countries to safeguard the "rules-based international system", the Chinese embassy statement said there is only one system, the international system, which is led by the UN.

"We always believe that countries, big or small, strong or weak, poor or rich, are equals, and that world affairs should be handled through consultation by all countries," it said.

"The days when global decisions were dictated by a small group of countries are long gone," it said. "There is only one system and one order in the world, that is, the international system with the United Nations at the core and the international order based on international law, not the so-called system and order advocated by a hand-

ful of countries," it added.

To another question that an announcement will be made at the G7 summit on the provision of one billion doses of COVID-19 vaccine to countries in need, the statement listed about what China has done including providing free vaccines to more than 80 developing countries exporting vaccines to 43 countries.

"We have delivered 350 million doses to global partners, more than any other country in the world," it said. "China is fully implementing the G20 Debt Service Suspension Initiative for Poorest Countries and has so far deferred repayment of more than USD 1.3 billion worth of debt. This is the highest deferral amount among the G20 members," it said.

While Biden's efforts making headway to forge a consensus with other G-7 and EU countries came as a surprise to China, analysts here cautioned Beijing about the US successfully pushing its Build Back Better World (B3W) plan to counter Beijing's multibillion dollar Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

At an arms control crossroads, Biden & Putin face choices

AP ■ WASHINGTON

At a low point in US-Russian relations, President Joe Biden and Russian President Vladimir Putin appear to agree broadly on at least one thing — their first face-to-face meeting Wednesday is a chance to set the stage for a new era in arms control.

Whether that leads to actual arms negotiations is another matter, complicated by the

soured relationship and accusations by each country that the other has cheated on past arms treaties.

The fabric of arms control has been fraying, notably with the abandonment in 2019 — first by Washington, then by Moscow — of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, which had governed a whole class of missiles for more than three decades.

On Saturday, police arrested Tamara D vila, who was active in Unamos, a movement formed by former Sandinistas angered by Ortega's autocratic ways, nepotism and perpetual re-elections. Police said they arrested D vila on charges related to a recently enacted law that classifies as treason any support for sanctions against officials in the Ortega regime; the U.S. has slapped sanctions on dozens of officials.

Davila is also a central figure in the opposition coalition Blue and White Nationality Unity, which was formed following Ortega's repression of mass protests in 2018.

13 killed in hospital attack in opposition-held Syria town

AP ■ BEIRUT

Missiles have hit a hospital in a northern Syrian town controlled by Turkey-backed fighters, killing at least 13 people, including two medical staff, and putting the facility out of service, activists and an aid group said.

It was not immediately clear who was behind the shelling, which came from areas where government troops and Kurdish-led fighters are deployed.

The governor of Turkey's Hatay's province, across the border from Afrin, also said the

attack on Saturday killed 13 civilians and injured 27, adding that it involved rocket and artillery shelling of the hospital. The governor's office blamed the attack on Syrian Kurdish groups.

A war monitor, the Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, put the death toll at 18. The discrepancy could not be immediately reconciled.

The Syrian American Medical Society, or SAMS, an aid group that assists health centers in opposition areas, said al-Shifaa Hospital in the town of Afrin was targeted by

two missiles. The attack destroyed the polyclinic department, the emergency and the delivery rooms, the group said.

Two of the 13 people killed were hospital staff and two were ambulance drivers, said SAMS, which supports the hospital. Eleven of its staff were injured. The hospital has been put out of service and patients were evacuated, the group said.

SAMS called for an investigation into the attack on the hospital, one of the largest facilities in northern Syria that offered thousands of medical services each month.

Pope demands food aid for starving people of Tigray

Rome: Pope Francis demanded Sunday that humanitarian aid reach hungry people in the war-torn Tigray region of northern Ethiopia, where Ethiopian and Eritrean soldiers are blocking food deliveries and other assistance.

Francis called for an immediate end to the fighting in Tigray, the return of social harmony and for "all food aid and health care assistance to be guaranteed."

Speaking at his Sunday noon blessing, Francis said he was thinking of the people of Tigray who have been "struck by a grave humanitarian crisis that has exposed the poorest to famine."

Nicaragua arrests more Oppo leaders

AP ■ MANAGUA (NICARAGUA)

The government of Nicaragua President Daniel Ortega has arrested an opposition leader and police surrounded the home of another on Sunday.

The moves over the weekend suggest Ortega has moved beyond arresting potential opposition candidates in the Nov. 7 elections, and has begun arresting any prominent member of the opposition.

It's not just potential candidates any more, it's political leaders, said former general and Sandinista dissident Hugo Torres. This is not a transition

to dictatorship, it is a dictatorship in every way. On Saturday, police arrested Tamara D vila, who was active in Unamos, a movement formed by former Sandinistas angered by Ortega's autocratic ways, nepotism and perpetual re-elections. Police said they arrested D vila on charges related to a recently enacted law that classifies as treason any support for sanctions against officials in the Ortega regime; the U.S. has slapped sanctions on dozens of officials.

On Sunday, police surrounded the home of another prominent ex-Sandinista dissident, Dora Mar a T llez. Drones were seen flying over the property, where another opposition leader, Ana Margarita Vijil, is also staying. Any arrest of Tellez would be a major step: she was a leading Sandinista militant who led an assault on the National Palace in 1978, taking Somoza's congress hostage. Like many former guerrillas, she later split with Ortega. Ortega has already arrested four potential opposition candidates who might have challenged his bid for a fourth consecutive term, and

now many Nicaragua opposition leaders fear it is only a matter of time until police come for them, too. Torres said he has seen drones flying around his home in recent days, of the type used at Tellez's house.

This interview may be the last one I give, Torres said. I am here, waiting for them to come for me. Nicaragua's National Police have arrested four opposition pre-candidates this month. On June 8, they arrested pre-candidate F lix Maradiaga, a pre-candidate for the opposition coalition Blue and White Nationality, and Sebasti n Chamorro, a former director of the opposition coalition Civic Alliance.

Britain calls EU view of N Ireland offensive in Brexit spat

AP ■ FALMOUTH

Britain accused European Union leaders on Sunday of holding the "offensive" view that Northern Ireland is not fully part of the United Kingdom, as Brexit cast a shadow over the Group of Seven summit.

Britain and the EU are in a spat over post-Brexit trade arrangements that could see British sausages banned from entering Northern Ireland, the only part of the UK that borders the 27-nation bloc. The dispute is raising political tensions in Northern Ireland, where some people identify as British and some as Irish.

British media reported that Prime Minister Boris Johnson asked French President Emmanuel Macron when they met Saturday in the English seaside resort of Carbis Bay how he would feel if sausages from Toulouse could not be moved to Paris. They said Macron replied the comparison did not work because Paris and Toulouse were part of the same country.

The French presidency did not deny Macron had made the comments. It said he was explaining "that Toulouse and Paris were on a geographical unity of territory, Northern Ireland is on an island. The president wanted to stress that

the situation was quite different and that it's not appropriate to hold that kind of comparison."

UK Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab said the idea Northern Ireland was not an integral part of the UK was "not only offensive, it has real world effects on the communities in Northern Ireland, creates great concern, great consternation."

"Can you imagine if we talked about Catalonia, the Flemish part of Belgium, the northern Italy, Corsican France, as different countries?" he said on Sky News. "We need a bit of respect here. And also, frankly, an appreciation of the situation for all communities in

Northern Ireland."

Relations between Britain and the EU have soured since the UK made its final break from the bloc at the end of 2020, more than four years after voting to leave.

The EU is angry over the British government's delay in implementing new checks on some goods coming into Northern Ireland from the rest of the UK, as was agreed in the Brexit divorce deal. The bloc is threatening legal action if the U.K. Does not fully bring in the checks, which include a ban on chilled meats such as sausages from England, Scotland and Wales going to Northern Ireland beginning next month.



GREEN AT WORK

PARTHA NEOG makes out the case for environmentally sustainable offices

Corporate sustainability has become increasingly significant over the last few years. Lately, it has been observed that employees, especially from the millennial workforce, look out for companies focussed on environmentally sustainable practices and programmes. These programmes are crucial in building a positive brand image, retaining top talent, and driving profit for any organisation. Employers and leaders will be surprised to notice the sincerity and mindfulness of the workforce in perfecting sustainability initiatives. Moreover, involving employees in such practices leads to a more engaged and motivated workforce.

Sustainable practises for the workplace

Some simple but effective everyday practises add to building a sustainable workplace in the long run. Here are some steps that you can adopt:

■ **Keep recycling bins around the workplace** as a part of a recycling programme.

■ **Go paperless.** Opt for electronic files, cloud storage, and cloud-based collaboration options.

■ **Switch to motion-activated lights** that turn off automatically when no one is in the room.

■ **Replace disposable utensils** with reusable ones.

■ **Ask employees to keep computers and laptops in sleep mode** to save energy.

The practises mentioned above take little effort but go on to produce tangible, long-term results.

As one of the most populous countries, with a huge consumer base for any thriving business, India's role in sustainability cannot be undermined and many businesses and organisations are rising to the challenge already. They are doing so by integrating the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with their business strategies. Such mindful strategies will drastically ease the environmental costs resulting from the patterns in production, consumption, resource, and energy usage of a company.

It is high time for all businesses to be conscious about their environmental footprint. Employers and leaders must innovate ways to transform

their organisation into an eco-friendly and sustainable one. Many top companies have already started their journey in achieving environmental sustainability. If MNCs can implement sustainable policies at work, small and medium businesses will follow in their footsteps. Listed below are a few practical and effective sustainable practises that should be employed in every workplace.

Introduce and implement a recycling programme

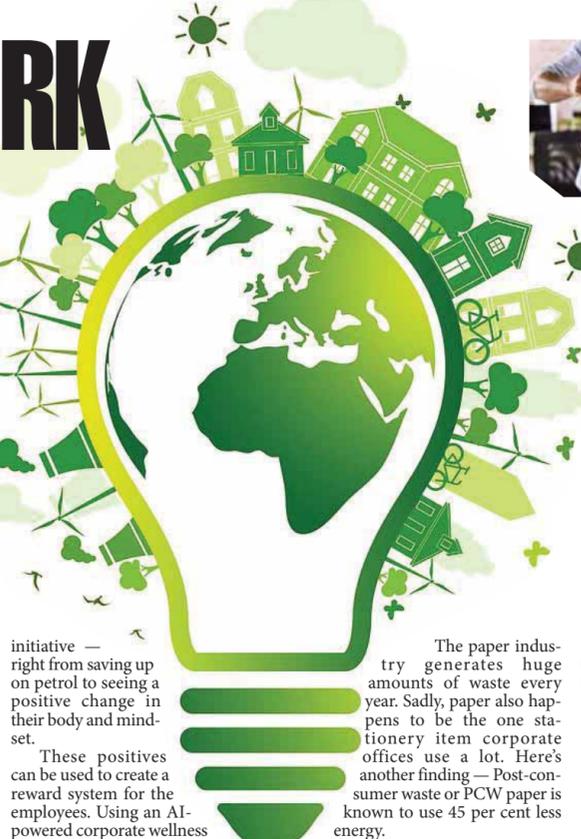
Recycling programmes in the workplace will give a head start to employees on their journey to sustainability. These programmes enable employees to learn about adequate waste disposal and the recycling process. There should be accurate signage for disposing of degradable, non-degradable, and recyclable waste.

Asking employees to recycle discarded paper or reuse the paper for photocopies can ensure optimal use of resources while generating minimum waste. Another way to go about this initiative is by using refillable pens only. These small steps have a rather positive impact on the waste management of the company.

Encourage employees to cycle to work

In a pre-Covid world, using public transportation could significantly contribute towards reducing CO2 emissions. Now, public transportation is out of the question due to the ongoing pandemic. But, if we were to talk about alternatives, employees can use eco-friendly modes of transport like cycles and e-bikes. Cycling to work reduces the carbon footprint and helps employees stay fit while increasing their savings.

Our organisation has always encouraged employees to cycle or even walk to work. We started this initiative as a sustainable practise on World Environment Day, 2018. Even after the nationwide lockdown eased last year, many employees continued cycling to work. The employees have often talked about the benefits of this



initiative — right from saving up on petrol to seeing a positive change in their body and mindset.

These positives can be used to create a reward system for the employees. Using an AI-powered corporate wellness solution in the form of a mobile application, weekly targets can be set for employees. The app can be designed to help employees achieve health and wellness through various activities and fitness challenges. Whenever employees reach their targets, these can be incentivised with redeemable rewards.

Recognising their effort helps motivate them and all corporate leaders should try something along similar lines. The results would not disappoint them.

Install eco-friendly lighting in the workplace

After conducting an employee survey sometime in May 2019, we switched to eco-friendly lighting to further enhanced our green practises.

Something as simple as changing a light bulb can have a considerable environmental impact. LED lights are also easier on the surroundings. Moreover, they produce far less toxic gases and use 75 per cent less energy as well.

Switch to PCW paper

The paper industry generates huge amounts of waste every year. Sadly, paper also happens to be the one stationary item corporate offices use a lot. Here's another finding — Post-consumer waste or PCW paper is known to use 45 per cent less energy.

So switching to PCW paper or recycled paper will drastically reduce waste generation. This is a common practise in our company and employees are more than happy to be active contributors in reducing waste generation as well as greenhouse gas emissions.

Encourage employees to volunteer in community environmental drives

Companies can either participate in or host environmental drives from time to time. Community participation and involvement are crucial to bringing about large-scale changes locally. These eco-friendly drives and programmes can be anything from cleaning up the locality to planting a few dozen saplings around the neighbourhood. Participating in such drives makes employees feel engaged and proud of the organisation they work in and the values it stands for.

Use solar energy

Using solar energy at workplaces and organisations can do wonders. This form of energy is not only



cleaner than others but is also inexhaustible.

Implementing this solution speaks volumes about a company's stance on sustainability and green practises. Installing solar panels will directly reflect an organisation's commitment to achieving sustainability in the workplace.

Organise employee awareness programmes

Employee awareness programmes should be a regular occurrence. Aware employees will become mindful employees who are conscious of the environmental impacts of their actions in their daily lives.

Hosting environmental awareness programmes, recommending educational documentaries can educate the employees and make them aware of the need for being extremely responsible about their actions and life choices. Moreover, they are more engaged in creating an eco-friendly and green workplace, ending up with a sense of satisfaction.

Keep indoor plants around the workspace

Indoor plants are known to reduce 87 per cent of indoor pollutants within 24 hours. It is recommended for all employers to invest in quite a few indoor plants for the workspace as this also eases anxiety to a great extent.

Time for mindful action!

Creating an eco-conscious workforce has become a top priority for corporations around the world. Such actions not only create a green and sustainable workplace but also drive business growth and profit. Research shows that 77 per cent of consumers want brands to be sustainable and environmentally responsible while 57 per cent are willing to change their purchasing habits to reduce the negative impact on the environment.

Building sustainable practises in the workplace is all about taking those seemingly tiny but meaningful steps on the ground level. Employers need to recognise the beauty and power of an eco-friendly workplace and take initiatives to achieve the same every day of the year.

(The author is co-founder and CEO of a leading employee engagement solutions company.)

WEBBED



LUCA

One young boy in a seaside town on Italian Riviera experiences an unforgettable summer filled with gelato, pasta and endless scooter rides. Luca shares these adventures with his newfound best friend, but all the fun is threatened by a deep secret. It releases on June 18 on Disney+.



PUNCCH BEAT S2

Two years after you were introduced to the students of Rosewood High, they are back with new friendships, new rivalries and a rush of adrenaline along with a dark twist. It releases on June 27 on ALT Balaji.



K.G.F CHAPTER 2

The blood-soaked land of Kolar Gold Fields (KGF) has a new overlord now — Rocky. Bloodier battles and darker days await as Rocky continues on his quest for unchallenged supremacy. It releases on July 16 on Amazon Prime.



Two decades and counting

Lagaan and Gadar: Ek Prem Katha, path-breaking films of Indian cinema, released at the box office on the same day 20 years ago. TEAM VIVA hits the nostalgia button.

Lagaan needs no introduction. It was a film that made its mark not just in Hindi cinema, but the world stage too. The national award-winning documentary Chale Chalo highlights the making of this masterpiece, showing us the struggle and belief that went behind Ashutosh Gowariker's dream project.

Made on a then-unprecedented budget of approximately ₹25 crores, Lagaan is a story of perseverance and inspiration which also reflects through its team's conviction. The movie production went through multiple challenges like gathering a crowd of 10,000 people for the cricket match sequence, shooting under severe weather conditions, limited supply of water and electricity, transforming a building into a hotel in a small village in Gujarat for the accommodation of the cast, A K Hangal braving an injury to finish shooting his part and even Ashutosh directing from a cot after suffering a slipped disc.

Elaborating about the film,

Ashutosh said, "The box office response to my first two films jolted me. It also enlightened me to come back with a story that I believed in; a story that would encompass a cinema-loving audience. And the outcome was the script of Lagaan. I was fortunate to have Aamir Khan back me on this one, despite our previous film not doing well at the box office. I thank the audiences for showering so much love and admiration to Lagaan over the years"

At the same time, 20 years ago, Sunny Deol roared to save his love and beloved nation in Gadar: Ek Prem Katha and the echo has stayed alive with the audience even today. Directed by Anil Sharma, no stone was left unturned while giving the 'real touch' to each scene in the movie. The train sequence, at the beginning of the movie, was shot at the Amritsar station where the historical events shown in the movie had actually occurred. The station was given the look of the 1940s to give an authentic

feel. The steam engine used for the shooting was hired from the Railway Museum in Delhi to bring alive the realistic feel of that era.

Talking about the film, Sunny Deol expressed, "Gadar is a beautiful love story. I was in Ooty shooting for a film when Anil narrated the story to me and I instantly fell in love with the project. Like always, I went with my instincts and that's how it all started. I have had the opportunity to play some great characters throughout my career but there was something special about the character of Tara Singh. He is soft and sweet but can turn the world upside down when it comes to his family and country. Back then, we didn't predict that the dialogues and songs of the movie would become a rage."

Despite releasing at the same time, these blockbuster films individually created history on their merit and have left a lasting impression for generations to come.

Hair fall is a huge concern for many women across the world, and if you are one of them, you should know that many treatments can help with this issue.

The only problem is that not everyone has enough time to visit the salon to get one of these treatments. With a busy schedule, taking time out to get your hair treated can be a hassle. However, an efficient and smart way to prevent and stop hair loss permanently is by trying out some homemade hair masks.

For sun-damaged hair

Sun-damaged hair needs proper care especially if you are out in the sun often or if your hair has been chemically treated. The UV rays weaken the shaft of your hair and fade the colour of your hair.

Make a nourishing pack at home by mixing one banana with one teaspoon of cream and a quarter teaspoon of castor oil. Put it on for half an hour and rinse it off thoroughly. It might take one or two washes for the banana to completely go from hair, it's the best nourishing hair pack that you can easily prepare at home

For oily hair

Oily hair can be very difficult to maintain. You are always busy scheduling your hair wash and thinking whether you are over-shampooing your hair. Moreover, oiling becomes impossible. Besides, hair masks make the scalp oilier and you just wish you had dry hair. Coconut milk is the healthiest natural ingredient for healthy hair. If you have oily hair, you should try mixing freshly extracted coconut milk with a squeezed lemon and

Mask that mane

Summers can spell woes for your hair. But DR BLOSSOM KOCHHAR has some remedies up her sleeve



four-five drops of lavender essential oil. Leave it on for four hours and then rinse it off.

To aid hair growth

For those who want to know the best solution for hair growth, there is a very simple one sitting in your kitchen. The vitamins, minerals and fatty acids in ginger promote hair stimulation which leads to hair growth. Ginger contains gingerol which improves blood circulation, leading to hair growth.

Take one teaspoon each of coconut oil, argan oil, ginger juice and onion juice. Combine it with half teaspoon castor oil, two drops of lavender essential oil and one drop of rosemary essential oil. Mix all these and finally add one tea-

spoon of your conditioner. Apply it thoroughly on your scalp and hair strands, keep it on for 30 minutes and then rinse it off with your shampoo. You can use a light conditioner afterwards if your hair is too dry. This will not only make your hair grow faster but will also add lustre to your hair.

For dry and brittle hair

Excess use of hair colour, chemicals and exposure to the sun can lead to dry, brittle and dull hair. But who would want that? So a simple solution is to make a conditioning pack at home.

Take one or two tablespoons of hair conditioner, depending on the length of your hair, and mix it with one teaspoon glycerine and a

quarter teaspoon of vinegar to add shine to your hair along with a few drops of sandalwood essential oil. This pack gives instant sheen and lustre.

To treat dandruff

We all have a common enemy. Yes, dandruff. No matter how much oiling we do, having dandruff in summers due to sweating is inevitable. To combat this enemy the best thing you can try is a pack made of half a tablespoon of lemon juice and a quarter teaspoon of vinegar. Use a cotton ball to apply this mix all over your scalp. Comb your hair after application. It might cause some irritation or itching but don't worry that means it is working. Do this no more than once a week as too much may lead to hair fall.

Nothing beats a good hot oil massage

There is one thing we completely forget when we have damaged hair, we will go to salons for treatments and apply the most expensive hair care products but we ignore the most potent thing that can reverse hair damage — a good hot oil massage.

Take a tablespoon of coconut/olive oil and add a teaspoon of castor oil along with three or four drops of lavender essential oil to it. Heat the mix a little and massage it gently in your scalp and hair at night. Shampoo it out in the morning. Follow this routine at least once in two weeks as it is extremely beneficial.

(The author is founder & chairperson of an aromatherapy cosmetic brand.)

TRENDBLAZER



REGAINING ENERGY: KATRINA KAIF

Actor **KATRINA KAIF** opened up on getting back to normal life after recovering from COVID-19. She recently posted on social media, "Back at it. Post-Covid I've had to be extremely patient with myself in terms of getting back to exercise. You have to take your time and listen to your body. You have good days and then there are days when you feel exhausted again. Going slow and trusting my body's healing process. Step by step"

fairtalk



'Being locked down at home, let's take this opportunity to follow our interests and start working on them. I took an online mandala course recently and I must say it's extremely refreshing and therapeutic. This form of art seems so intriguing and difficult but they break it down to simple steps which makes it seem quite easy.'

dailytalk



'The kind of love that has been captured in the melody, lyrics and visuals of 'Haate haat dhor' is the one we all long for. I dedicate this song to my parents, who sang together for 50 years and offered their lives to music. It is a very sweet composition and it conveys the message of eternal love without any extravagance.'

EXPLORING NEW AVENUES: DERULO

American singer-songwriter **JASON DERULO** has taken up a new hobby amid the pandemic. He has started trying different recipes in order to put his creativity to good use. "I started off with trying different recipes because we are at home. I had to figure out where to put my creativity. I've never been a cook. This is definitely something new that happened during the pandemic," Derulo said on *The Drew Barrymore Show*.



RURAL AREAS TURN TO QUACKS

The flawed healthcare system means that villagers are forced to look for other credible alternatives, says AMRITANJ INDIWAR

Last week, the World Health Organisation (WHO) reported a 13 per cent decrease in new COVID-19 cases in India. However, the number of new infections in the country remains the highest in the world. As the pandemic continues to hold sway over large swathes, rural areas with no proper health infrastructure are bearing the brunt. This has forced villagers to turn to quacks (medical practitioners who have received no formal training) for treatment.

The lack of information about government hospitals, medicines, treatments and vaccinations has affected the regulation of the virus in rural areas. Furthermore, the villagers' concerns have been heightened by the fact that there are few or no doctors in the government hospitals in their areas. In such a situation, the quacks have assumed a larger role, ironically so, in several villages across the country.

The situation in Bihar's Muzaffarpur district is no better. The district has the highest number of reported cases in the country. While the government reported 208 COVID-19 deaths between April 1 and May 20 in the district, according to a report published in an online portal, 315 people were cremated at Muktidham crematorium during this time. The rural areas of Sikanderpur, Mothijheel, Town Thana, Khabda, Ramdayalu, Patahi, Bhagwanpur, Patahi, Bhikhanpura and Mushahari block were most affected. The lack of proper treatment resulted in the death of many patients in these areas. Ragini, a resident of Alkapuri colony in Muzaffarpur, expressed that people were terrified at the mere mention of COVID-19.

"Those who test positive are isolated in rooms. However, because the virus is highly stigmatised, the infected person is not treated well by the public. Imagine the situation of the infected families without any support from their neighbours," said Ragini.

Ankush Singh, a resident of Manika village in Mushahari block, while expressing widespread fear among the rural population, added that even after he recovered from the virus, no one was concerned about his well-being. He also pointed out



the unprofessional behaviour of the staff at block hospitals. "Both my brother and I had tested positive. After several attempts to be examined, the doctor at the block hospital prescribed medicines like Paracetamol, Doxycycline and vitamins with no guidance or concern for patients," Ankush informed. According to him, chemists and quacks are more concerned than doctors about the well-being of the villagers.

In Paru block, which reported several positive cases, dispensary employees and quacks were treating people. Accepting quacks as the first line of defence against COVID-19, District Councilor, Devesh Chandra stated that they are a lifeline for more than 50,000 people in the block. These quacks, who do not have medical degrees, but practice medicine based on their practical experience, have kept the situation in the villages from going haywire.

Quacks Balram Shah, Umesh Prasad, Ganesh Pandit, Asharfi Bhagat, Parmeshwar Prasad, and others in



Paru Block had decided to come forward and assist the villagers. "Whatever medical experience we have gained over the years, the villagers are benefiting from it. The situation was such that people

were scared and unwilling to get vaccinated and, therefore, we decided not to leave them under such circumstances. We are likely to get infected in the process, but helping people is the need of

the hour," said these quacks. The block medical officer, on the other hand, stated that trained healthcare workers are going to villages for inspection, vaccination, and to provide medicines on a regular basis. At the block level, consultation, medicine and inspection are available.

Regardless, the pandemic has undoubtedly exposed the condition of health infrastructure in rural areas. The situation in Bihar's Vaishali district is also similar. Basant Kumar, a homoeopathic practitioner from Chaklahlad village in Vaishali district, while sharing his experience, said, "I went to the block health centre to get the rapid antigen test done. The centre was crowded with no COVID-19 guidelines being followed. Although I had registered myself, due to the huge crowd, I had to return without getting tested. Two days later, I received a message on my mobile number informing me that I had tested negative. I was shocked to receive that message."

Basant claimed that several people in his village received negative reports without being tested. He believes that even in medical colleges, Covid positive patients are not being cared for. Villagers have become hesitant about visiting government hospitals and started relying on these quacks.

It should be noted, however, that the purpose of this article is not to recognise or glorify quack doctors. But, at the same time, it is equally important to note that if properly trained, these quacks can play a critical role in reaching out to villagers. The government should consider training these quacks on COVID-19 protocols and benefiting from their knowledge and the relationship they share with villagers in creating awareness about preventive measures and vaccination in these hard-to-reach areas. West Bengal government has already ordered to train and tag quacks with health workers to help in surveillance so that the COVID-19 treatment (of patients) can start early; specifically in remote rural areas where proper doctors are not readily available. If successful, other states should also follow suit.

(Charkha Features)



The Liberator

RAJYOGI BRAHMAKUMAR NIKUNJ JI feels that God being regarded as omnipresent is a misconception. If he was within us, why would we pray to be freed from the troubles of this life?

Today we all are living in an age where technology rules, yet many of us believe that God is everywhere and in everything around us. According to most religious scholars, God is present in every creature and every particle is his manifestation. However, is it really so?

Since the infiniteness of God leaves no room for any other existence, some people put forth arguments to say that, besides God, whatever else appears has no real and separate existence. They say that what you call 'souls', embodied in various forms, aren't separate from and identical with infinite God. The distinction which we notice between the embodied souls and God is, according to them, only in appearance. They call it a dream or an illusion. Is that really the case? If that's true then why is there so much strife, hatred and sorrow in this world? For ages, humans have prayed to God and undertaken penances to get a glimpse of him or receive his blessings.

Now, from a rational point of view, the very act of prayer is contrary to the belief in God's omnipresence, because if he is present everywhere and in every one what is the need to pray? And why have saints, seers and other holy people searched for the supreme God if he is everywhere? Furthermore, dreams, as far as man understands them now, are representative of suppressed wishes, reminiscent of past events and certain emotions which are waiting to be fulfilled or exteriorised. They are not unreal but are correlated to the real world.

Thus, it is unphilosophical and illogical to theorise that God is infinite and that the souls or *jivas* are not different from him and that the world is a mere dream. The truth is that souls are infinitesimal points of light, eternal in their existence and God is a supreme point of light.

When souls are suffering, they call out to God to come and liberate them from their bondage and end their misery. It is thus obvious from this that the soul is not God. If it were God, then it would not be undergoing suffering in the first place. And this also shows that God is not omnipresent. If he was present everywhere, then there would have been no need for anyone to pray and beg him to come and end their sorrows, right? Because he comes and liberates human souls from the bondage of vices, which are the root cause of all human suffering, God is called a liberator. Remember, human souls come into these bondages precisely because they are not God, who is never captured by bondages as he is pure. That's the reason why can purify another soul because all souls are caught in the same quagmire of vices. So, let us connect to that one supreme source and enlighten ourselves with his positive energy and powers to live a life of abundance.



Beat the heat

Summers are bound to drain the energy out of you.

DOLLY KUMAR suggests some options you can adopt to stay on the path to your health goals during these lethargic times

Summers can be difficult in a lot of ways as the heat has drastic effects on us in the form of heat stroke, sunburn and dehydration among other things. With the soaring temperature, even when most of us are restricted indoors, it is easy to lose focus on our health. Severe sweating can cause an electrolyte imbalance due to the loss of sodium from the body and often demotivates people from working out. The same is followed by a loss of appetite and an absence of cravings for oily, high-calorie foods. These factors can be used to your advantage if you wish to lose weight, by following certain dietary habits and fulfilling the cravings for light and cold foods.

Drink lots of water and healthy beverage alternatives

The best way to remain hydrated in summers is by drinking a lot of water. You can put a sliced lemon and some mint leaves in your water jug for added

benefits and flavour. You can replace your tea and coffee with green tea. As per research, if drunk in moderate amounts, it can be as hydrating as water. Its anti-inflammatory properties will help with other summer issues like cooling down the redness and swelling of sunburn, acne or irritation.

Meditate to stay away from stress

It is easy to be irritated and restless during summers due to the unbearable heat. In present circumstances where you are working from home, you can get stressed. All this will affect your mental peace, hence it is recommended to indulge in a long session of meditation to stay away from stress which triggers hormones like cortisol resulting in weight gain. Cortisol doesn't only cause sugar cravings but also slows down metabolism. **Don't overeat and add healthy**

alternatives to your diet

When you lose appetite during summers, it is easy to fill yourself with finger foods or other junk food, often resulting in overeating. To avoid unhealthy food habits, opt for healthier alternatives. Add foods like quinoa, trail mix, seeds, and olive oil to your diet. Not only will this keep you full, but its added benefits will help lose weight. Quinoa is one of the healthiest and most versatile ingredients out there, which is power-packed with nutrients and can be easily incorporated into most dishes. Similarly, incorporating seeds

and olive oil will provide you with a fibre-rich diet.

Do yoga and low-impact exercises to remain fit

While it is unimaginable to indulge in a heavy workout during the summer months, you don't want to lose your gains in terms of weight loss by missing exercise. Hence, do yoga and other low-impact exercises that, apart from helping you keep fit, act as a stress-buster. This can include walking, swimming, cycling or elliptical cardio too.

Reduce sugar intake and replace it with healthy alternatives

We may not want to eat heavy foods but craving cold soft drinks during the summers is something we all succumb to. But it increases our sugar intake,

which is the case even when we make smoothies and shakes at home. Instead of using sugar, use healthier alternatives like honey and stevia. Stevia is a non-nutritive and zero-calorie sweetener that is made of *steviol glycosides* extracted from the leaves of a plant with the same name. It is known to reduce calorie intake, blood sugar levels and risk of cavities.

Healthy snacks

For your hunger pangs, always keep healthy snacks and cookies with you, especially if you are diabetic. Sort out your snacks for midday, post-lunch, midnight in the form of trail mix, cookies and granola bars. It will deter you from indulging in eating unhealthy snacks. **Start your mornings with healthy food**

Breakfast is the most important meal of the day. How you start your day essentially determines the rest of your day. It is recommended to start the morning with light and healthy food like corn flakes or muesli. It will keep you filled for longer and won't be heavy on the gut. One can also go for summer fruits as they will keep you hydrated as well.

In a nutshell, keep yourself at ease with light foods and exercises. You wouldn't want to miss out on healthy ingredients in your diet, therefore incorporate them into your food in different ways. It is possible to have a tasty and healthy diet at the same time.

(The author is director and founder of an entrepreneurial venture in the wellness and skincare space.)

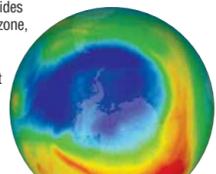


“ Good actions give strength to ourselves and inspire good actions in others. —Plato ”

NITROGEN OXIDE EMISSIONS CUT

As the novel coronavirus pandemic slowed global commerce to a crawl in early 2020, emissions of nitrogen oxides (NOx) — which create ozone, a threat to human health and the climate — decreased by 15 per cent globally, according to a study led by scientists at NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory in southern California.

As a result of the lower NOx emissions, by June 2020, global ozone levels had dropped to a level that policymakers thought would take at least 15 years to reach by conventional means, such as regulations. The more stringent the lockdown a nation imposed, the greater the reduction in emissions. For example, China's stay-at-home orders in early February 2020 produced a 50 per cent drop in NOx emissions in some cities within a few weeks; most US states achieved a 25 per cent drop later in the spring.



EFFECT OF VITAMIN D DEFICIENCY

Vitamin D deficiency strongly exaggerates the craving for and effects of opioids, potentially increasing the risk for dependence and addiction, a new study suggests.

The findings suggest that addressing the common problem of vitamin D deficiency with inexpensive supplements could play a part in combating the ongoing scourge of opioid addiction.

"Our results suggest that we may have an opportunity in the public health arena to influence the opioid epidemic," said researcher David E. Fisher from the Massachusetts General Hospital.

The lab data suggesting that vitamin D deficiency increases addictive behaviour was supported by several accompanying analyses of human health records.



AI PREDICTS INFECTION-RISK

A team of researchers has used an Artificial Intelligence (AI) algorithm to sift through terabytes of gene expression data to look for shared patterns in patients with past pandemic viral infections, including SARS, MERS and swine flu. The researchers, including Pradipta Ghosh from the University of California San Diego, indicated two telltale signatures.

One, a set of 166 genes, reveals how the human immune system responds to viral infections. A second set of 20 signature genes predicts the severity of a patient's disease. For example, the need to hospitalise or use a mechanical ventilator.

The algorithm's utility was validated using lung tissues collected at autopsies from deceased patients with Covid-19 and animal models of the infection. With each new set of data, the team tested it in their model. They saw the same signature gene expression patterns every time.



IMPACT OF CLIMATE CRISIS IN INDIA

A new review by the global think tank, ODI, laid out how rising temperatures will jeopardise India's economic development through different channels, including falling agriculture productivity, impact to public health, reduced labour productivity and sea level rise.

Different threats will interact to devastating effect, as exemplified by cyclones Tauktae and Yaas during the second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The study is a first-ever literature review on the economic costs of climate inaction in India. At one degree Celsius of global warming, the country is already experiencing damages. Flooding in India over the last decade caused \$3 billion in economic damage — accounting for 10 per cent of global economic losses due to floods.

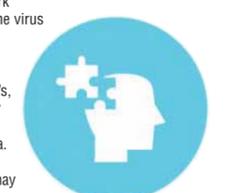


COVID AND COGNITIVE IMPAIRMENT

US researchers have found an overlap between Covid-19 and brain changes that are common in Alzheimer's. While some studies suggest that SARS-CoV-2 infects brain cells directly, others found no evidence of the virus in the brain.

The study, led by researchers from Cleveland Clinic, discovered close network relationships between the virus and genes/proteins associated with several neurological diseases, most notably Alzheimer's, pointing to pathways by which Covid-19 could lead to AD-like dementia.

"These findings indicate that the virus may impact several genes or pathways involved in neuroinflammation and brain microvascular injury, which could lead to Alzheimer's disease-like cognitive impairment," said lead author Feixiong Cheng, from Cleveland Clinic's Genomic Medicine Institute.



▶ shortpasses

CILIC WINS STUTTGART FINAL
BERLIN: Felix Auger-Aliassime suffered more heartbreak on the ATP Tour as he lost his eighth straight final on Sunday, going down to Marin Cilic in straight sets at Stuttgart's grass-court tournament. Cilic won the 19th career title with a 7-6 (7/2), 6-3 victory.

MCKEOWN SMASHES WR
ADELAIDE: Australia's Kaylee McKeown threw down the Olympic gauntlet to American rival Regan Smith by smashing her 100m backstroke world record on Sunday, while Ariarne Titmus fired a warning shot to superstar Katie Ledecky with the second fastest 400m freestyle ever.

MALVIKA REACHES FINAL
KAUNAS: India's Malvika Bansod defeated France's Anna Tatranova 21-13, 21-10 to enter the women's singles final at RSL Lithuanian International badminton tournament on Sunday.

DU PLESSIS RECOVERING
ABU DHABI: Much to the cricket community's relief, South African star Faf du Plessis on Sunday said he was back from the hospital and 'recovering', after suffering a concussion during his Quetta Gladiators' PSL match against Peshawar Zalmi.

SÁNCHEZ OUT OF COPA
SANTIAGO: Striker Alexis Sánchez will not travel to Brazil with the rest of the Chile squad and will miss at least the group stage of Copa America due to a calf injury.

MANKAD IN ICC HALL OF FAME
DUBAI: The ICC on Sunday inducted 10 icons of the game, including India's Vinoo Mankad, into its illustrious Hall of Fame with two players each from five eras, dating back to cricket's early days, making it to the list.

HASAN ALI TO MISS PSL
ABU DHABI: Islamabad United fast bowler Hasan Ali will miss the remainder of the PSL because of family commitments. Agencies

GREATEST OF ALL TIME

Djoker comeback from 2 sets down to beat Tsitsipas & win his second Roland Garros title



AP ■ PARIS

Novak Djokovic has won his second French Open championship and his 19th Grand Slam title by rallying past Stefanos

Tsitsipas in a seesaw final at Roland Garros. The score was 6-7 (6), 2-6, 6-3, 6-2, 6-4. Djokovic also erased a two-set deficit to win in the fourth round, and has done it six times in his career.

The 22-year-old Tsitsipas looked like the fresher player early on, and Djokovic was coming off an epic semifinal victory over Rafael Nadal. But the 34-year-old Serb found his form and held every service

game in the final three sets. Djokovic improved to 35-10 in five-set matches. He has won the first two majors of the year, and at Wimbledon he'll have a chance to match the men's record of 20 Grand

Slam titles shared by Nadal and Roger Federer. Djokovic joined Rod Laver and Roy Emerson as the only men to win each of the four major tournaments at least twice.



Barbora Krejčíková, right, and compatriot Katerina Siniakova kiss the cup after defeating Bethanie Mattek-Sands and Iga Świątek in women's doubles final. AP

Barbora completes rare sweep, wins women's doubles crown

AFP ■ PARIS

French Open champion Barbora Krejčíková completed a rare sweep of titles at Roland Garros as she won a third women's doubles major trophy with fellow Czech teammate Katerina Siniakova on Sunday. Less than 24 hours after she claimed her maiden singles slam title, Krejčíková became the first woman since Mary Pierce in 2000 to lift both trophies at the clay-court major. Only seven women have completed the titles sweep at Roland Garros. "Right now after all of this happened, this last two weeks, last two days, I feel really relieved and relaxed," Krejčíková said. "I just know from now

on I can really enjoy because I have pretty much achieved everything I really wanted. Now I can just improve, that's the only thing I can do, just improving." In addition to her pair of trophies, Krejčíková will reclaim the No 1 spot in the doubles rankings next week. "We will have a little bit glass of champagne," Krejčíková said. "I already said I don't really drink but I think it's a time to actually celebrate it. I think we going to really enjoy." Krejčíková, who defeated Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova for the women's singles title on Saturday, also became the first player to sweep both titles at any Grand Slam tournament since Serena Williams at Wimbledon in 2016.

Sterling saves England's day

Three Lions make winning start as Raheem strike sinks Croatia

AFP ■ LONDON

Raheem Sterling ignited England's Euro 2020 campaign as the Manchester City forward's clinical finish sealed a 1-0 win against Croatia in their Group D opener on Sunday.

Gareth Southgate's side were struggling to break down Croatia until Sterling struck in the second half at sun-baked Wembley.

The 26-year-old's first goal at a major tournament — in his 13th game — was the perfect riposte to critics who questioned Southgate's decision to select him instead of Jack Grealish.

Sterling has endured a chequered relationship with England fans after being hounded following his tame performances at Euro 2016.

He also struggled to hold down a place with Premier League champions City this term, culminating in his lacklustre display in their Champions League final defeat against Chelsea.

But, days after he was given an MBE in the Queen's Birthday Honours List for his anti-racism campaigning, Sterling enjoyed a perfectly-timed moment of redemption.

In a rematch of the 2018 World Cup semi-final won by Croatia, England were hampered by a lack of cutting edge until Sterling came to the rescue.

Sterling's winner eased the tension at Wembley and got fans bellowing 'Football's coming home' in the hope England can emulate their run to the semi-finals when they hosted Euro 96, and maybe



Raheem Sterling, center, celebrates after scoring England's opening goal against Croatia at Wembley stadium in London. AP

even win a major tournament for the first time since the 1966 World Cup.

In truth, this was a far from convincing performance, but Southgate will take heart from the way his team kept their nerve on a pressure-packed occasion.

England host neighbours Scotland in their second Group D match on Friday before taking on the Czech Republic in their final game of the first stage on June 22.

FINLAND SNATCH WIN
Copenhagen: Finland beat

Denmark 1-0 in their opening match of Euro 2020 which was overshadowed by Christian Eriksen collapsing and having to be revived on the field by medics.

Joel Pohjanpalo scored the only goal on the hour mark of a Group B match which was stopped for nearly two hours after Danish playmaker Eriksen slumped to the turf towards the end of the first half.

The match, which had kicked off at 1800 local time (1600 GMT), resumed two-and-a-half hours later in front of a passionate

crowd at the Parken Stadium.

The two teams played out an uneventful final few minutes of the first half after both sets of players returned to the pitch with several Danish players in tears.

After a short break of five minutes the second half of the match continued with a similar pattern as before Eriksen's collapse.

Pohjanpalo stunned the crowd into silence when he headed home Jere Uronen's cross, capitalising on Finland's one true chance of the game.

No 1 for a reason

Lukaku scores brace in Belgium's 3-0 win



Belgium's Thomas Meunier, right, celebrates with Romelu Lukaku after scoring his sides second goal against Russia on Saturday. AP

St Petersburg: Belgium striker Romelu Lukaku sent a message of support to his stricken Inter Milan team-mate Christian Eriksen after scoring, as his double helped the Red Devils open their Euro 2020 campaign with a 3-0 win over Russia on Saturday.

Lukaku gave Belgium an early lead in Saint Petersburg, then shouted "Chris, Chris, stay strong - I love you" into a pitch-side camera during the celebration for his opening goal.

"I am really happy with the win, but it was hard for me to play because my thoughts were with Christian Eriksen," said Lukaku, who revealed he cried tears of concern before kick-off for his Inter team-mate. Substitute Thomas Meunier

doubled Belgium's lead on 34 minutes before Lukaku put the result beyond doubt with a late second goal.

Belgium, the world's top-ranked team, are under pressure to deliver at the European Championship as some pundits claim this is Martinez's last chance to win a title with an ageing squad.

Yet even with Manchester City playmaker Kevin De Bruyne and Borussia Dortmund midfielder Axel Witsel sidelined by injury, Belgium were too strong for Russia.

Before kick-off, the Belgium team were booed for taking a knee to highlight racial injustice, while their Russian opponents stood. AFP

EURO2020 BRIEFLY

VERRATI CLOSE TO RETURN
ROME: Italy midfielder Marco Verratti is close to regaining fitness after missing his country's opening Euro 2020 match with a knee problem, the team's medical chief said on Sunday. PSG's Verratti sat out Italy's 3-0 win against Turkey, but has returned to training this weekend. The team are now hopeful the 28-year-old could be fit for the final Group A games against the Swiss on Wednesday and Wales four days later.

PORTUGAL'S CANCELO OUT
LISBON: Portugal's Joao Cancelo has tested positive for Covid-19 and is out of Euro, the defending champions' announced on Sunday. Manchester United's Diogo Dalot, on loan to AC Milan, has replaced the Manchester City right-back in the Portuguese squad with the titleholders opening their Group F campaign against Hungary in Budapest on Tuesday.

BENZEMA, GRIEZMANN FINE
PARIS: France coach Didier Deschamps gave Karim Benzema and Antoine Griezmann a clean bill of health on Sunday ahead of the world champion's Euro 2020 opener against Germany on Tuesday. The pair emerged from team's final friendly win against Bulgaria five days ago with niggling injuries — a dead leg for Benzema and calf issue for Griezmann.

RUEDIGER READY TO GET DIRTY
MUNICH: Chelsea defender Antonio Ruediger insists Germany need to get a little dirty in their Euro 2020 opener against France on Tuesday in order to subdue the world champions' forward firepower. France start as clear favourites for the Group F clash while Germany's defence faces a stern test having leaked 20 goals in 13 games this season. Fresh from winning the Champions League final with Chelsea, Ruediger insists the Germans can ill afford to allow France's star forwards like Kylian Mbappe and Antoine Griezmann room to attack. "Of course, they have good forwards, we have to be ready to win the one-on-one challenges," Ruediger said. We have to be a little dirty, not always be nice or try to play nice football. "Against players like them, you have to throw down a marker." AFP

ITALY'S HUNGER IS LIKE CHELSEA
ROME: Italy midfielder Jorginho said on Sunday that he sees the same hunger in his national side's Euro 2020 squad as his Chelsea team that recently lifted the Champions League trophy. "This group resembles Chelsea, it's wonderful, they are so hungry and want to prove something, from the youngest to the most experienced," former Napoli player Jorginho told a press conference. "We have learned (coach Roberto Mancini's) philosophy, what he wants is in our heads. "I still have a great desire to win. I don't want to stop now. I would like to experience those same emotions with the national team."

ERIKSEN STABLE POST COLLAPSE
COPENHAGEN: Denmark midfielder Christian Eriksen remained in hospital but is in a 'stable' condition after collapsing in his country's Euro 2020 game against Finland on Saturday, the Danish Football Union (DBU) said Sunday. "This morning we have spoken to Christian Eriksen, who has sent his greetings to his teammates. His condition is stable, and he continues to be hospitalized for further examination," the football body said in a post to Twitter.

MATCHES TODAY
Scotland vs Czech Republic (6:30pm)
Poland vs Slovakia (9:30pm)
Spain vs Sweden (12:30am)
Live broadcast in Sony Ten 2 Network

Black Caps win Test series Big challenge coming up: Latham on WTC final

AFP ■ BIRMINGHAM

New Zealand overpowered England by eight wickets in the second Test at Edgbaston on Sunday as they sealed a 1-0 series win with more than a day to spare.

Set a target of just 38 after England tailender Olly Stone was out to the very first ball of the fourth day, the Blackcaps finished on 41-2.

Tom Latham, captaining the team in place of the injured Kane Williamson, hit the winning boundary to be 23 not out after the first Test of a two-match series at Lord's last week ended in a draw.

Victory gave New Zealand just a third win in 18 Test series in England, and a first this century after their 1986 and 1999 triumphs.

And it means they will head into next week's inaugural World Test Championship final against India at Southampton in confident mood.

"It's great to get an extra day



New Zealand players celebrate with the winners trophy after win in 2nd Test. AP

of rest before India but we'll celebrate as well — we've not won here since 1999, so it's important to celebrate those achievements," said Latham at the presentation ceremony.

By contrast, this was England's first series loss at home since a 2014 defeat by Sri Lanka.

"It hasn't been our best week, has it?" England captain Joe Root told BBC Radio.

"I think we've massively

underperformed. Credit to New Zealand, they have outperformed us throughout the game."

Matt Henry was named player of the match following overall figures of 6-114.

South Africa-born opener Devon Conway was named New Zealand's player of the series after he followed a remarkable 200 on Test debut at Lord's with 80 in the first innings of this match.

Birmingham: India is dangerous on all fronts, New Zealand vice-captain Tom Latham on Sunday said of their challengers for the World Test Championship crown, describing the Virat-Kohli unit a "completely different side" from vanquished England.

In the absence of injured Kane Williamson, Latham led the team to a memorable 1-0 Test series triumph in the two-match rubber against hosts England, their first in the UK since 1999.

Asked where does he see the biggest danger from India coming, Latham said, "All around the board."

"They've got a fantastic set of bowlers, a lot of quality batsmen that have scored runs in different conditions all around the world. They were over here a few years ago and played really well, so we know we'll have to play well to beat them."



While the team celebrated a fine series triumph, Latham said the focus will shift to India in two days' time. "The preparation has been great but it's important that we do shift our focus

and adapt to a completely different side," he said at the post-match press conference.

Latham said that India's performances on their tour of England in 2018 — albeit in a 4-1 series defeat — showed that they would be tough to beat at the Ageas Bowl.

The inaugural WTC final is scheduled to be held in Southampton from June 18-23.

With the match finishing in under four days, the Kiwis will get a day extra to rest and prepare for the India challenge.

"Great to put the feet up for a day, big challenge coming up but looking forward to celebrating, haven't won here since 1999, so celebrate tonight and then look forward," Latham said.

"Great support from Kiwis, the English and also back home. Atmosphere was amazing."