

OPINION 8
CAN ISRAEL BE LED BY
A FRAGILE COALITION?

WORLD 11
COURTS CANNOT
APPOINT PM: OLI

SPORT 14
BUFFON RETURNS
TO PARMA

LUCKNOW, FRIDAY JUNE 18 2021; PAGES 14 ₹3



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SIDDHANT
RELIVES
CHILDHOOD
12 VIVACITY

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

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

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Maharashtra on Thursday began to gear itself for Covid-19 "third wave", which the State Task Force apprehended might be unleashed in the State by a high virulent strain Delta Plus in the next "two to four weeks" if the pandemic-appropriate norms were not followed by the people.

A day after the State Covid-19 Task Force made a presentation before Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray about the possible break out of "third wave" in Maharashtra, the State administration began to mobilise medicines and health equipment to be sent across to both rural and urban areas. This followed a directive it received from the Chief Minister himself.

At Wednesday's meeting, the State Task Force warned the Chief Minister that the cases would double in the coming weeks after a possible advent of third wave in the State. "Uncontrolled crowds and the



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

refusal by the people to follow Covid-19 norms, coupled with the advent of Delta plus variant might trigger a third wave of pandemic in the State," a senior official who briefed the chief minister about a possible third wave said.

The task force told the CM that the lower middle class of people who were not affected the first and second waves of Covid-19 would be hit by the third wave of the pandemic. It advised the Uddhav to increase

testing, strengthen infrastructure and increase vaccination.

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

bled during the third wave.

"The children would not be majorly affected by the third wave. The children make up for more than 3.5 per cent of the patient pool in the State," a senior official said.

The impending Covid-19 "third wave" should seen in the context of the five-level relaxation plan announced by the state government and its decision to relax restrictions in 18 tom 36 districts of the State.

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Class 12 evaluation on 30:30:40 formula

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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



The Supreme Court also directed the boards to incorporate provisions for disputes resolution in their assessment schemes themselves for those students who may be dissatisfied with the marks awarded in the Class 12 board results. CBSE later announced that for such students exams will be conducted on physical mode and the candidates will have to register accordingly.

A special bench of Justices AM Khanwilkar and Dinesh Maheshari said, "After perusing the scheme presented by the concerned Boards, prima facie, we have no hesitation in accepting the same and permit the Boards to proceed on that basis".

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

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

It said that theory paper evaluation formula will be of 30 per cent weightage, to be given to Class X marks, 30 per cent weightage to Class XI marks and 40 per cent weightage to Class XII marks obtained in unit test/mid-term/pre-board exams. The CBSE said that 20 marks will be given for practical in Class-XII and the result will be declared by July 31. The CBSE scheme further elaborated that for Class X 30 per cent marks based on average theory component of best three

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

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

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

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

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

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More fatal fungus Candida auris' threat looms large

Covid crisis is ideal condition for outbreak of deadly fungus

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

After mucormycosis or black fungus, another multi-drug resistant similar infection candida auris is looming large amidst Covid-19 pandemic.

Health experts have sounded alarm that Covid-associated fungus Candida auris cases are worsening in India even as it has spread across the globe from neonatal unit in Venezuela to a hospital in Spain and Brazil where cases of drug-resistant super fungus were reported on Wednesday, leaving the exhausted authorities a worried lot.

According to the researchers, death among candidemia patients infected by C auris can reach 60 per cent.

This can happen for some people because fungus enters the bloodstream and causes a systemic infection known as



candidemia.

They warned that there was enough evidence that suggests that the ongoing Covid-19 crisis may provide ideal conditions for outbreaks of C. auris in hospital ICUs, thus leading to adverse outcomes and additional strain on health-care resources. The death rate is quite high, they said.

The Covid-19 conditions in Brazil have opened the door for the emergence and spread of a relatively new fungus that is quickly showing signs of becoming a drug-resistant "superfungus," as reported by a study published in the Journal of Fungi. India had for long been hotbed for the deadly fungus.

Covid-19 IN INDIA

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

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

However, now in the backdrop of Covid-19 the threat has enhanced.

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Amid LJP crisis, girl says rebel MP Prince raped her

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

On the other hand, Chirag has expelled them from the party.

The Police said they are verifying facts and an enquiry is being conducted. A First Information Report (FIR) will be registered once the preliminary probe is over.

A police officer said a three-page complaint has been



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

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Pashupati Kumar Paras new LJP chief: Sources

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

Centre plans statute for OTT, news portals self-regulation

To address issues of sensitive video content, fake news

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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



have to ensure that programmes are not violative of the programme code or advertising code. According to the new amendment, the Centre may prohibit the transmission or retransmission of any such channel or programme if they fail to act despite the complaint.

"... Programme of any channel is not in conformity with the programme code, it may, after giving an opportunity of hearing to the cable operator, and by an order in writing, prohibit the transmission or re-transmission of any such channel or programme in accordance with the provisions of section 20 of the Act," the notification said.

"Where the Central Government is satisfied that the

advertisement of any channel is not in conformity with the advertising code, it may, after giving an opportunity of hearing to the cable operator, and by an order in writing, prohibit the transmission or re-transmission of any such channel or programme in accordance with the provisions of section 20 of the Act," it said.

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

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BJP factions stick on their guns on BSY's leadership

DEEPAK K UPRETI ■ NEW DELHI

The political crisis in Karnataka continues to simmer with the pro-Yediyurappa and those wanting to unseat him as Chief Minister refusing to walk midway for the reconciliation during their discussion on Thursday with the visiting BJP general secretary Arun Singh.

Singh, who is also Karnataka BJP incharge, interacted with both sides to elicit their views on a range of issues, including alleged interference in Ministries by Yediyurappa's son Vijayendra who is also BJP State vice-chief, Covid-19 management, allocation of portfolios, and the larger issue of change of guard in the State.

According to sources, around 30 legislators from both sides met Singh on Thursday. Sources said Social Welfare Minister B Sriramulu put forth his demand for the post of Deputy Chief Minister. The supporters of the mining baron were confident that the party will concede his demand "in right time".

Singh is understood to have not given audience to MLA Basanagouda Patil Yatnal one of the most vocal critic of the Chief Minister who had early this year alleged that BSY was "blackmailed" by a sleaze CD to allocate Cabinet portfolios. Yatnal was instead asked by Singh to meet him in the national Capital.

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Adani loses \$9bn in 3 days in worst ever wealth rout

New Delhi: Billionaire Gautam Adani's dream run up the global wealth rankings is faltering after a media report raising questions about some offshore investors triggered a rout in his conglomerate's six listed stocks.

The 58-year-old tycoon lost more money this week than anyone else in the world, with his personal fortune tumbling by about \$9 billion to \$67.6 billion, according to the Bloomberg Billionaires Index based on Wednesday closing prices.

Just days ago, he was closing the gap with Mukesh Ambani as Asia's richest man.

Setback for SAD, Punjab Ekta Party merges with Congress

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In a setback for Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD), the Punjab Ekta Party (PEP) on Thursday announced its merger with the Congress ahead of the Assembly polls in the State after three MLAs — Sukhpal Singh Khaira, Jagdev Singh, and Pirmal Singh — met former Congress president Rahul Gandhi at his residence in the national Capital.

The Punjab Ekta Party MLAs were accompanied by AICC general secretary and Punjab affairs incharge Harish Rawat. Khaira, a former Congressman, had joined Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) in December 2015 along with two other MLAs.

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Sonia taken both jabs, Cong retorts on Covid vaccine hesitancy charge

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Congress interim president Sonia Gandhi has taken both doses of the Covishield vaccine, the party said on Thursday following questions from the BJP leaders.

Several BJP leaders have raised questions over the Gandhis' vaccinations and accused them and the party of creating "vaccine hesitancy" in the country.

"Instead of beating around the bush and creating non-issues, the Modi Government should concentrate on vaccinating 80 lakh to one crore people daily," Surjewala told PTI after the BJP sought vaccination details of the Congress' first family.

3 student activists in Delhi riots conspiracy case released on bail

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Student activists Natasha Narwal, Devangana Kalita and Asif Iqbal Tanha walked out of Tihar prison on Thursday, hours after a court here ordered their immediate release in the north-east Delhi riots "conspiracy" case.

The order came two days after the Delhi High Court granted bail to Narwal, Kalita and Tanha, who were arrested in May last year under the stringent Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA).

Director General (Delhi Prisons) Sandeep Goel confirmed that all three have been released.

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Student activist Natasha Narwal hugs Devangana Kalita outside Tihar prison in New Delhi on Thursday

CAPSULE

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

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

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

Nine medical colleges may start functioning this year

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Getting ready for a possible third wave, the Uttar Pradesh government has started building the infrastructure with Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath saying that nine medical colleges could start functioning from this year while the construction work is underway for 14 others.

"Nine medical colleges may start this year. Of these, the construction work for seven is almost complete. Principals have been appointed in all these nine medical colleges," the CM said during a Covid review meeting held through video-conferencing here on Thursday.

Yogi said the appointment of about 50 per cent teachers has also been completed in these medical colleges which would boost the medical infrastructure. During the meeting, the officers also apprised the chief minister of the progress in setting up 14 other medical colleges in the state. The construction work for 13 medical colleges has started. The CM said necessary arrangements should be made to start the teaching work in the medical colleges in time.

The CM was also apprised of adequate availability of oxy-



People queued up for registration at Civil hospital in Lucknow

Pioneer

gen in the state. Officials said that in the last 24 hours, 338 MT of oxygen was supplied across the state. Oxygen is available at the hospitals, medical colleges and refillers with a back-up of more than five days, the officials said.

The CM said that the Covid vaccination drive is going on effectively in the state and from June 21, the Central government would provide the facility of free vaccination for the age group of 18-44 years.

"All preparations should be made to expedite the vacci-

nation drive. For this, cold chains, vaccinators and vaccination centres should be arranged with complete planning," Yogi said. "Vaccination is a protective shield against corona infection and therefore, it should be conducted in a systematic, smooth and uninterrupted manner," the CM said. He was apprised that so far, the first dose of vaccine has been given to more than 2 crore people in the state. More than 50 lakh vaccine doses have been given to people in the age group of 18 to 44 years.

Meanwhile, 336 fresh cases of COVID-19 were reported in the state in the last 24 hours while 685 patients recovered. The active cases reduced to 6,019 as the recovery rate touched 98.4 per cent. Of the total active cases, 3,759 patients were said to be in home isolation.

Lucknow recorded only 16 fresh cases though 11 patients succumbed to the deadly infection on Thursday. Fifteen patients recovered while the active cases stood at 383.

HC asks govt to come up with road map for tackling Covid

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The Allahabad High Court on Thursday asked the UP Government to come up with a road map for tackling the COVID-19 pandemic, which it anticipated is going to "stay for a long time."

"We want to know the status regarding action you have taken up till now to meet the challenge of this pandemic. It

appears that this virus is going to stay with us for long. What is your plan for the future, unseen challenges?" a bench comprising Chief Justice Sanjay Yadav and Justice Prakash Padia asked AAG Manish Goyal, who was appearing for the state.

The bench made it clear that it would not take an adversarial view in a public interest matter and was inclined to

grant more time to the state to come up with an action plan.

"State is doing its duty. We cannot interfere in policy matters. There is no timeline which can be fixed for the state. Is there any timeline for the virus?" the chief justice remarked when intervenors in the matter sought time-bound directions.

The bench also observed that citizens were not adhering

to Covid protocol and were often found violating social distancing rules, masking norms, etc. It added that when action was taken against such erring people by the local police, there was unnecessary hue-cry on social media.

"When the police take action, it becomes a subject on your social media and it is criticised like anything," Chief Justice Yadav observed.

Government expedites developmental works in times of pandemic

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath expedited the development works in Uttar Pradesh during the pandemic, according to an official release issued by the UP government on Thursday.

During the first four years of his regime, of which almost two were marred by the pandemic, Yogi has done some exemplary work, the release said. According to the government, villages with no roads before a few years ago now boast of the largest road network under the leadership of Yogi. Through PWD, the government established one of the biggest road connectivities in the remote areas of the state, the release said. "With the developmental projects, CM Yogi has changed the image of the rural areas of the state. Ever since the Yogi government came to power, a 14,935-km-long road network has been expanded in the rural areas. A total of 2,275 habitations with a population of more than 250 people, located within a 5-km radius on either side of the 7 metre or wider roads, have been directly con-

nected to the road network," the release said. According to Census 2001, PWD has constructed a 1,763-km-long road which connects 1,557 revenue villages with a population of more than 250. A total of 1,543 revenue villages have been connected to the road network by constructing 1739.30-km roads.

The construction of roads for 297 villages with a population of more than 250 has been completed at a cost of 183.87 crores. A total of 163 such revenue villages have been connected to the road network by constructing a road of 184.34 kilometres. So far, 1,674 habitations have been connected with the connectivity route by constructing 2121.57 kms at a cost of a total of Rs 1,407 crore.

Under the Mukhyamantri Samagra Gram Vikas Yojana, construction of a 29-km-long road has almost been completed for 33 revenue villages at a cost of Rs 14.35 crore. Under this scheme, the construction of 178-km-long connectivity road at a cost of Rs 102.48 crore has almost been completed which will connect as many as 156 habitations directly with the road network.

Widow, kids hospitalised after days of starvation

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

A widow who lost her job due to the lockdown in Aligarh was admitted to a hospital along with her five children reportedly after days of starvation. The 40-year-old woman, Guddi, told mediapersons that after she lost her husband to COVID-19 last year, she was the sole breadwinner and worked at a factory. A few months ago, she lost her job as the factory was shut down owing to lockdown. The family hails from Mandir ka Nagla area under Sanni Gate police station area.

"My daughter got ill and was treated but soon after that, the whole family fell ill. We were down with fever and had no food. No shopkeeper was ready to give us ration and I do not have a ration card either. I sought help from the village pradhan but he refused," Guddi said.

She said they survived on chapatis which their neighbours gave them for some weeks but even they stopped giving food after some time, as they said they could not help her daily. The woman said that

her eldest son who worked as a daily wage construction worker also lost his job due to the lockdown following which all the sources of income dried up. After the news of her family's ordeal spread, District Magistrate Chandra Bhushan Singh rushed a team of officials on Wednesday to extend relief, an official release said. A team of three officials, led by SDM Kunwar Bahadur Singh, investigated the matter and provided immediate relief, including food grain, other food items and a sum of Rs 5,000, to the affected family.

Doctors treating her at the Malkhan Singh District Hospital said three of them have been hospitalised but they were taking care of all the family members. Chief Medical Officer of Aligarh Dr R Kishan said, "The entire family lost their jobs during lockdown. They were admitted to the hospital and we are trying to give them the best possible treatment. They have a fever and the physicians are taking care of them. They are also malnourished. Their situation has improved and they are on a high-protein diet."

Meanwhile, Sunil Kumar, who runs a social organisation, came forward to provide ration to the impoverished family.

Vishnu Kumar Bunty of the organisation, which has been helping people hit by the pandemic, said a door-to-door survey should be undertaken to trace those whose livelihood has been snatched away by the successive lockdowns.

Meanwhile in Bareilly, two children were forced to starve for three days after their father committed suicide. According to reports, Manoj Dayal of Gayatri Nagar had a tiff with his wife after which she left home. Dayal worked with a private firm in Noida but he lost his job due to lockdown.

Upset with the tiff, Manoj hanged himself and committed suicide on June 13. His 6-year-old son Wishu and 4-year-old daughter Myari starved for three days and it was only after the body started decaying that they came out of their house. Neighbors found Manoj hanging from the ceiling and they informed police. Both the children were handed over to their uncle while the police started further probe.

Girl molested by hospital staffer

Lucknow (PNS): An 18-year-old Dalit girl alleged that she was molested by a worker of a private hospital where she was admitted for treatment. The incident took place in the wee hours of Wednesday in Mathura's Kotwali Nagar.

The accused, identified as Shyam Gujjar, has been booked. He joined the hospital three days ago. The girl was admitted to the hospital after she complained of severe abdominal pain.

After examining her, doctors gave her a painkiller. The girl alleged that when she was half asleep, Shyam Gujjar allegedly touched her inappropriately and tried to molest her. The accused ran away when the girl hurriedly woke up. She informed her family members about the incident and a complaint was lodged.

Police registered an FIR against Gujjar, who was yet to be arrested. He was charged under sections 354/323/504 of IPC along with SC/ST Act. CO Varun Kumar assured the girl's family that Gujjar would be arrested soon. The girl's family said they wanted the police to examine the CCTV footage to gather more evidence against the accused.

Unnao violence: Inspector among 4 cops suspended

Lucknow (PNS): Four cops, including an inspector, were suspended after DGP HC Awasthi reacted strongly to a video clip showing a cop 'wearing' a plastic stool as a helmet and another holding a wooden basket cover as a shield went viral on social media Thursday.

Awasthi sought a detailed report in this regard from the Unnao SP besides ordering a probe into the matter. Interestingly, Samajwadi Party chief and former CM Akhilesh shared the clip and questioned the preparations of the UP Police to deal with an eventuality.

According to reports, the incident took place on Wednesday when residents of Akrampur in Unnao staged a protest over the death of two youths in a road accident. The police team, including riot police and other security forces — some of whom were armed — reached the spot to disperse the protesters but the situation spiralled out of control and the villagers indulged in stone-pelting. Reports said that 18 policemen were injured.

Amidst the violence, a four-second clip showing a cop 'wearing' a plastic stool as a helmet and another holding a wooden basket cover as a

shield was widely shared on social media on Thursday.

Other clips showed a fierce clash between the police and villagers. The villagers had occupied one side of the main road. Yet another clip showed cops thrashing villagers with batons. The viral video caught the attention of the DGP who demanded an explanation from the Unnao SP and suspended an SHO. The UP Police posted a statement on Twitter, saying an explanation has been sought from local officials.

"Elaborate SOP and sufficient riot gear have been given to all districts to deal with any eventuality. Despite intelligence inputs in Unnao, the police force was ill-equipped, for which the DGP sought an explanation from the officers concerned," the police said.

Meanwhile, Lucknow Range Inspector General Lakshmi Singh tweeted that Kotwali Sadar inspector in-charge Dinesh Mishra, police outpost in-charge of Magarwara, and two constables have been suspended for laxity and incompetence. A clarification has been sought from the CO and the investigation has been given to the Rae Bareilly ASP, the IG said.

UP Backward Classes panel reconstituted

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

After the revamping of the Uttar Pradesh Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (SC/ST) Commission on Wednesday, the Uttar Pradesh government reconstituted the Uttar Pradesh Backward Classes Commission here on Thursday.

Jaswant Saini of Saharanpur, who was the vice-chairman earlier, has been made the chairman of Uttar Pradesh Backward Classes Commission, officials said here on Thursday. Heera Thakur and Prabhunath Chauhan have been made vice-chairpersons of the commission. As many as 25 commission members have also been appointed.

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath also tweeted on Thursday, congratulating Jaswant Saini on being made the chairman of the panel.

PUBLIC NOTICE

Be informed that my client IFC First Bank intends to provide finance to its clients Sri Ram Singh & Smt. Ravinder Kaur against their property being House with land built over part of plot No- 48, admeasuring 500 sq.ft. only being part of Khazra No. 488 situated at Aurangabad Jagir, Ward-Raja Bijli Pasi, Lucknow. If any person has any right, title or interest over the said property, he may approach the undersigned within seven days in writing along with the evidence of his such right, title or interest and if no such objection will be received within the said period it will be presumed that the property in question is free from all encumbrances & disputes and any claim in respect thereof against the owner shall be void and ineffective.

TARUN PRAKASH SRIVASTAVA (Advocate)

Office: Room No. 110-111, City Hotel, B.N. Road, Lalbagh, Lucknow - 226001

Mob. 9335914282

PUBLIC NOTICE

Notice is hereby given by the undersigned for and behalf of the Housing Finance Co. Area Office, Shahzad Road, Lucknow pursuant to Circular No. 422/Annexure-E of LIC HF, that the Original sale dated 18-03-1999 executed National Sahakar Awas Samiti Ltd. in favour of Ratikan The said sale deed is registered in the Office of Sub Registrar Lucknow in Book No. 1 Volume 30 pages 123/138 on Serial No. 645 dated 18-03-1999 and Original sale dated 13-12-2012 executed Ratikan in favour of Sulfa Bano The said sale deed is registered in the Office of Sub Registrar IV Lucknow in Book No. 1 Volume 9845 pages 271/238 on Serial No. 1488 dated 13-12-2012 in respect to Part of Plot No. 7 Khazra No-16 area 800 sq.ft. Situated at Madayyan, Distt.-Lucknow Present owner Meena Tawari has been last Original Sale deed dated-18-03-1999 and 13-12-2012 Sanjay Shukla and Prema Shukla has applied for housing loan for which has proposed the said property to be mortgaged by depositing aforesaid Original sale deed dated-05.02.2007 with LIC HF and as such any person claiming to be the said property covered by the said document may file claim before me within 15 days from the date of publication of notice failing which it will be presumed that the property in question is free from any encumbrance and any claim in respect thereof against the applicant as mortgagee shall be void and ineffective after the lapse of 15 days of publication of the notice.

Marandendra Mohan Mishra (Advocate)

Chamber: Near CMO Office, Kaiserbagh, Lucknow

Tower: Near CMO Office, Kaiserbagh, Lucknow

Mobile: 9415428914, 9539985554

CLASSIFIEDS
NOTICE

It is notified for the information that my Original Qualifying MBA 1st Years and 2nd Year Marksheets No. A1520999616416 has been lost. Subham yadav s/o shiv prashad 4/358 viram khand gombi nagar lucknow.

NOTICE

I Indira Awasthi daughter of Late Sankatha Prasad Shukla born of 6th August 1964 resident of 124/24 E Block Govind Nagar Kanpur have changed my name from Indira Devi to Indira Awasthi for future date of birth and name reference.

NOTICE

Army record is my daughter name is AARUSHI wrong. Correct name is ARUSHI DEVI and DOB 09/11/2012 mention correct name and DOB is as per record. suraybhan singh s/o hari prasad singh r/o Tarapur, Post Asani, Tehsil Fatehpur. (U.P.)

NOTICE

IArmy No-15420854F Rank HAV/DVR Name M.V. SURESH KUMAR Unit AMC Center & College MT Coy Lucknow in my husband service Record my name is wrongly written K.VANISREE, While my correct name is KOMARAGIRI VANISREE, K.Vanisree or Komaragiri Vanisree both are one and same

NOTICE

IArmy No-15440517N Rank SEP/DMT Name Karun Kumar Taram Unit AMC center and College MT Coy Lucknow my Husband service Record my name is wrongly written CHANDRIKA NETAM TO CHANDRIKA TARAM While my correct name is chandrika Taram, Chandrika Netam and Chandrika taram both are one and same person

NOTICE

PUBLIC NOTICE
Be it known all that my clients Sh. Mathura Prasad Seth S/o Sh. Ram Khelawan Serraf and Kalpana W/o Sh. Mathura Prasad Seth both are residing at 10/252 EWS, Avas Vikas Yojna-3 Jhusi, Akhbarpur Mianpatti, Jalalpurkasba, Allahabad, Uttar Pradesh-211019 have severed all relations and disowned their son and daughter in law from all their moveable and immovable properties due to conversion from their original religion and disobedience of my clients. My clients shall not be responsible for their son (Sh. Shivansh Soni) and daughter in law (Ms. Gauri/mubashshira) any acts in future
Varun Shankar Dwivedi, Advocate

Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (A Statutory Body of Government of India)

Notice

Applications are invited for filling up 01 (one) post of Executive Director, on deputation basis. The last date of submission of application is 9th July, 2021. The detailed vacancy may be seen at www.ibbi.gov.in.

DAVP 07121/11/0003/2122

Government of India Ministry of Textile

Appointment of Consultant(s)

under National Technical Textiles Mission

Last date of application : 17 July 2021

Interested candidate may refer detailed advertisement on www.texmin.nic.in

DAVP 41101/11/0003/2122

NORTH EASTERN RAILWAY Notification No. 160/2021

IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR RAIL PASSENGERS

It is notified for information of general public that the period of following Special trains will be extended as under:-

EXTENSION OF THE PERIOD OF SPECIAL TRAINS W.E.F. 30.06.2021 TO TILL FURTHER ADVICE

Sr. No.	Train No.	From-To
1	02511	Gorakhpur-Kochuveli
2	02512	Kochuveli-Gorakhpur
3	05028	Gorakhpur-Hatia
4	05027	Hatia-Gorakhpur
5	05115	Chhapra-Delhi
6	05116	Delhi-Chhapra
7	05018	Gorakhpur- Lokmanya Tilak (T)
8	05017	Lokmanya Tilak (T)-Gorakhpur
9	05048	Gorakhpur-Kolkata
10	05047	Kolkata-Gorakhpur
11	05050	Gorakhpur-Kolkata
12	05049	Kolkata-Gorakhpur
13	05052	Gorakhpur-Kolkata
14	05051	Kolkata-Gorakhpur
15	05101	Chhapra-Lokmanya Tilak (T)
16	05102	Lokmanya Tilak (T)-Chhapra
17	02597	Gorakhpur-Chhatrapati Shivaji (T)
18	02598	Chhatrapati Shivaji (T)-Gorakhpur
19	02529	Patliputra-Lucknow Jn.
20	02530	Lucknow Jn.-Patliputra
21	02595	Gorakhpur-Anand Vihar Terminal
22	02596	Anand Vihar Terminal-Gorakhpur
23	02581	Manduadih-New Delhi
24	02582	New Delhi-Manduadih
25	05029	Gorakhpur-Pune
26	05030	Pune-Gorakhpur
27	05022	Gorakhpur-Shalimar
28	05021	Shalimar-Gorakhpur
29	05120	Manduadih-Rameswaram
30	05119	Rameswaram-Manduadih
31	02587	Gorakhpur-Jammu Tawi
32	02588	Jammu Tawi-Gorakhpur
33	05097	Bhagalpur-Jammu Tawi
34	05098	Jammu Tawi-Bhagalpur
35	05045	Gorakhpur-Okha
36	05046	Okha-Gorakhpur

Remark: Sl. No. 1 to 22 special trains will run with existing days, stoppages & rake composition and Sl. No. 23 to 36 special trains will run with existing days, stoppages but with revised rake composition.

SPECIAL TRAINS WITH REVISED RAKE COMPOSITION

Train No.	Revised Rake Composition	With effect from JCO
02587 Gorakhpur-Jammu Tawi	Generator-cum-Luggage Van-1, LSLRD-1, Gen. lnd-4, Sleeper-7, AC 3 Tier-6, AC 2 Tier-2, Total 21 Coaches	05.07.21
02588 Jammu Tawi-Gorakhpur	Generator-cum-Luggage Van-2, Gen. lnd-4, Sleeper-7, AC 3 Tier-6, AC 2 Tier-2, Total 21 Coaches	08.07.21
05098 Jammu Tawi-Bhagalpur	Generator-cum-Luggage Van-2, Gen. lnd-4, Sleeper-7, AC 3 Tier-6, AC 2 Tier-2, Total 21 Coaches	01.07.21
05045 Gorakhpur-Okha	Generator-cum-Luggage Van-2, Gen. lnd-4, Sleeper-7, AC 3 Tier-6, AC 2 Tier-2, Total 21 Coaches	04.07.21
05022 Gorakhpur-Shalimar	Generator-cum-Luggage Van-1, LSLRD-1, Gen. lnd-4, Sleeper-7, AC 3 Tier-6, AC 2 Tier-2, Total 21 Coaches	05.07.21
05021 Shalimar-Gorakhpur	Generator-cum-Luggage Van-1, LSLRD-1, Gen. lnd-4, Sleeper-7, AC 3 Tier-6, AC 2 Tier-2, Total 21 Coaches	06.07.21
05029 Gorakhpur-Pune	Generator-cum-Luggage Van-1, LSLRD-1, Gen. lnd-4, Sleeper-7, AC 3 Tier-6, AC 2 Tier-2, Total 21 Coaches	08.07.21
05030 Pune-Gorakhpur	Generator-cum-Luggage Van-1, LSLRD-1, Gen. lnd-4, Sleeper-7, AC 3 Tier-6, AC 2 Tier-2, Total 21 Coaches	10.07.21
02581 Manduadih-New Delhi	Generator-cum-Luggage Van-1, LSLRD-1, Gen. lnd-4, Sleeper-7, AC 3 Tier-6, AC 2 Tier-2, 1st AC-cum-lnd AC-1, Total 22 Coaches	01.07.21
02582 New Delhi-Manduadih	Generator-cum-Luggage Van-1, LSLRD-1, Gen. lnd-4, Sleeper-7, AC 3 Tier-6, AC 2 Tier-1, Total 22 Coaches	02.07.21
05120 Manduadih-Rameswaram	Generator-cum-Luggage Van-2, Gen. lnd-4, Sleeper-7, AC 3 Tier-6, AC 2 Tier-1, Total 20 Coaches	04.07.21
05119 Rameswaram-Manduadih	Generator-cum-Luggage Van-2, Gen. lnd-4, Sleeper-7, AC 3 Tier-6, AC 2 Tier-1, Total 20 Coaches	07.07.21

CPROT-72 Chief Passenger Traffic Manager/Gorakhpur

About any passenger amenity complaint SMS on Mob. No. 09794845955

Do Not smoke Bidli/Cigarette in train

Cluster approach to boost vax drive in rural areas from July 1

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The state government is implementing the cluster approach to boost vaccinations in rural areas from July 1 onwards, according to State Immunisation Officer Dr Ajay Ghai. A government order has already been issued in this regard and a pilot project will be carried out in some blocks of the state from June 21 onwards.

Dr Ghai said it would be carried out for the first time in Uttar Pradesh. "Each block in the district will be divided into a cluster and vaccination will be carried out in a cluster of 10-12 villages at a time. This is a near to home approach. The vaccination drive is underway at the CHCs and 2-3 CHCs cover approximately 2 lakh people. Those who are closer to the hospital find it easy but there are others not able to reach the vaccination centres due to some reasons. These people will benefit from the cluster approach. If they can't come to us, we will go to them," Dr Ghai said.

He said there was a feedback about the rural population not going for vaccinations and hence the cluster approach was being adopted.

"IEC activities will be carried out in the villages to spread awareness and vaccines will be administered in schools, Anganwadi centres or panchayat houses, or wherever there is space available. We will have about 15-20 vaccination centres covering 1,000-1,500 people of one village," he added.

The total doses administered in the state till now are 2.42 crore. Approximately 2.04 crore people have been given the first dose while 39 lakh peo-



A woman takes Covid vaccine jab at a hospital in Lucknow on Thursday

Pioneer

ple have been fully vaccinated.

Dr Ghai said that the gap between the women and men getting the jabs is still big and that is why they made two pink booths in each district.

Meanwhile, a total of 11,77,461 vaccine doses have been given in Lucknow so far. While 1,18,938 doses have been administered to health workers, 1,03,089 doses have been given to frontline workers, 3,27,376 doses to those in the 45+ category, 1,80,057 doses to the 60+ category and 3,57,197 doses to the 18-44 category. As many as 20,382 people in the 18-44 category have been fully vaccinated.

A senior official from the CMO office admitted that there was no estimation of how many were administered the vaccine in the rural areas and how many were administered the vaccine in the urban areas.

"This is because the bookings take place through the Cowin portal and several times people in the urban areas take a slot in the rural areas. There is a mix and merge at the rural and the urban Vaccination Centres. However, currently the people are opting for vaccination centres closest to their houses" he said.

Meanwhile, a senior official from the Health department said that the frontline workers are really working hard to ensure that people in the rural areas get vaccinated.

"There are some areas in the state such as Bundelkhand where the number of vaccinated people is less, and a lot of work has been done to expedite the drive in this area," the official said.

Nodal officer for Covid immunisation at KGMU, Dr Nishant Verma said they have

administered 53,000 doses so far, including 37,000 first doses.

"The maximum vaccination has been done in the healthcare category," he pointed out. Commenting on the pace of vaccination, he said that in the 45+ category, they have almost reached the saturation point and hence fewer people are turning up for vaccination.

Dr Verma said they still follow the protocols and the beneficiaries are observed for half an hour.

Dr Vineeta Shukla from RMLMS said they have vaccinated a total of 51,288 people so far. "Our team has done a good job and there has been no wastage," she added.

Meanwhile, at the vaccination camp which was set up at the Naka Hindola Gurudwara, 215 people were vaccinated in the 18-44 category while 58 in the 45+ category.

Cong leaders protest 'irregularities' in purchase of land in Ayodhya

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Amidst controversy over the alleged meeting of Uttar Pradesh Congress president Ajay Kumar Lallu and media chairman of UPCC Naseemuddin Siddiqui with Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav, the party workers and leaders staged a protest against "irregularities" in the purchase of land by Shree Ram Mandir Trust in Ayodhya.

Meanwhile, amidst speculations regarding Lallu and Siddiqui quitting the Congress, the workers and leaders staged a demonstration at all district headquarters in Uttar Pradesh demanding a probe into the alleged corruption in the purchase of land by Shree Ram Mandir Trust in Ayodhya.

The party leaders, led by district president Ved Prakash Tripathi and city presidents Ajay Srivastava 'Ajju' and Dilpreet Singh, were going to give a memorandum to the President of India through the district magistrate of Lucknow when they were intercepted by the police. As they tried to move ahead, the cops used force after which the Congressmen staged a sit-in in front of the Health Directorate. The cops caned the workers to disperse them and also arrested several of them, including Tripathi, Srivastava and Singh. Through their memorandum, the party demanded that the matter be



A protester being rounded up by police in Lucknow on Thursday

Pioneer

investigated under the supervision of a Supreme Court judge and the guilty be brought to the books.

Earlier this week, former UPA minister Jitin Prasada left the Congress to join BJP. Demanding immediate removal of Lallu from the party, former MLC Siraj Mehdi claimed that at the behest of Priyanka Gandhi's secretary Sandeep Singh, ten veteran Congress leaders, including him, were expelled from the party without any reason. He said that more

than a year and a half has passed since then but none of the expelled leaders met any other party leader in search of greener pastures as they were committed Congressmen, but now those leading the party in the biggest state going to polls just few months from now met the SP chief to look for lucrative alternatives.

"The party is already at the bottom and at least now, Sonia Gandhi should identify those who care for the Congress and others who are playing into other parties'

hands to finish the oldest political outfit," Mehdi said, demanding immediate removal of Lallu to save the Congress.

Sources said that an Urdu daily published a news report that Lallu and Siddiqui met Akhilesh Yadav and the UPCC chief made no denial in this regard. A senior party leader, however, claimed that the two met Yadav at the behest of Priyanka Gandhi, who is once again looking for an alliance with the SP for the 2022 assembly elections.

Sakshi Maharaj, seers back Ram temple trust

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Even as the BJP and Shiv Sena workers clashed over a scathing article in 'Saamana' over the alleged irregularities in the land purchase, BJP MP from Unnao Sakshi Maharaj and seers in Ayodhya threw their weight behind the Ramjanmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust, saying the deal was transparent.

"If Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav or Aam Aadmi Party leader Sanjay Singh suspect a scam in the Ayodhya land deal, they are free to withdraw the donations made by them by showing their donation receipts," the BJP MP said in Unnao on Thursday. Sakshi Maharaj said those who are raising questions now are the same people who had opposed the construction of the temple in Ayodhya.

The BJP MP said that the allegations regarding a scam in the purchase of land were baseless. Champat Rai of the Trust has dedicated his entire life to Lord Ram and it was crime to accuse such a person of fraud, he said.

Meanwhile in Ayodhya, Mahant Paramhans Das of Tapasvi Cantonment alleged that AAP and SP leaders approached him and offered a bribe to give a statement against the Ramjanmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust. Sant Paramhans Das issued a letter on Thursday, saying that the leaders of Aam Aadmi Party and Congress offered him Rs 2 crore to oppose the Trust and BJP over the land deal row. The seer also accused Jagatguru Swaroopnand Saraswati saying that the Aam Aadmi Party, SP and Congress paid him Rs 50 crore for making statements against the Trust and BJP.

177 per cent rain surplus in UP so far

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Uttar Pradesh has received 177 per cent surplus rains since the onset of monsoon. As per the Met records, UP has received 4.7 mm rainfall as compared to 3.3 mm which it usually receives by this time. Amongst the districts which have received good rainfall, Chandauli has received 22 mm rainfall as against the normal 0.9 mm, Deoria has received 33 mm rainfall as against the normal 3.7 mm, Lakhimpur Kheri has received 21.3 mm rainfall as against the normal 3.3 mm and Kushinagar has received 21.5 mm rainfall as against the normal 5.2 mm.

However, in Lucknow, 0.1 mm rainfall has been received as against the normal 2.3 mm. Met director JP Gupta said that Uttar Pradesh has received 177 per cent surplus rains. He said the southwest monsoon would arrive in Lucknow in the next three to four days.

According to the Met department, the southwest monsoons has not moved further. "A cyclonic circulation lies over east UP and neighbourhoods in the lower levels. A western disturbance is seen as a trough in mid and upper tropospheric westerlies," an official said.

Large-scale atmospheric condi-

tions are not favourable for further advancement of the monsoon in Rajasthan and the remaining parts of Gujarat, Punjab, Haryana and Delhi. "However, there could be slow progress into some more parts of Uttar Pradesh during the next five days in association with the existing cyclonic circulation over east UP in the lower levels. The northern limit of monsoon continues to pass through Diu, Surat, Nandurbar, Bhopal, Nowgong, Hamirpur, Barabanki, Bareilly, Saharanpur, Ambala and Amritsar," the officials pointed out.

Dr Vibhuti Rai from the Geology department Lucknow University said that Lucknow and surrounding areas did not have this much rains in the month of May, and that the coming days would see good rains and good crops.

"UP witnessed a merging of the cyclonic system both from the Bay of Bengal and earlier from the Arabian Sea. We had the cloud cover in the month of May which continues even now. In the earlier years, mid-June used to be extremely hot conditions and during May, Uttar Pradesh has never seen so much of rains in the last many years. This excess rains is because of the two cyclonic systems and these two cyclones which came one after another," he pointed out.

UP becomes investors' favourite destination

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Uttar Pradesh has become investors' favourite destination as in the last three-and-a-half years, the state has received 98 investment proposals worth Rs 13,408.19 crore (over Rs 134 billion) in the manufacturing sector, according to a government spokesperson. "Big industrialists are investing in infrastructure, food processing, textile, electronic manufacturing, real estate, power and manufacturing sectors in UP," the spokesman said here on Thursday.

According to the statistics released by the department of Industrial Development, the 98 investment proposals worth Rs 13,408.19 crore in the manufacturing sector include ten proposals worth Rs 4,250 crore from foreign investors and 88 from domestic companies for setting up large manufacturing units in the state that would generate 22,028 jobs.

"The UP government has provided land to 66 out of 88 industrialists for establishing their manufacturing units. Most of these industrialists have completed the construction of their units and started production as well. Apart from this, 26 major industrialists are moving ahead with their plans to set up firms, the government official said.

According to the official, Covestro IP is setting up a plastic manufacturing unit in Gautam Buddha Nagar (Noida) at the cost of Rs 800 crore. Similarly, UltraTech Company is setting up a cement factory in Prayagraj at the cost of Rs 600 crore. Sparsh Industries Private Limited and Rimjhim Ispat have invested Rs 600 crore and Rs 500 crore, respectively, in Kanpur Dehat. DCM Shriram is setting up a sugar mill in Hardoi at the cost of Rs 361 crore while Kent RO Systems Ltd has invested Rs 300 crore in Gautam Buddha Nagar and PTC Industries Ltd has invested Rs 205 crore in Lucknow. Similarly, MM Forgings Pvt Ltd has invested Rs 150 crore in Barabanki and Password Papers has invested Rs 351 crore in Meerut. Silverstone is setting up a paper mill in Muzaffarnagar at the cost of Rs 180 crore. "All these companies have also started production," the official said.

Besides, Kanodia Group is investing Rs 1200 crore in Amethi and JK Cement Limited Rs 650 crore in Aligarh to set up a cement factory.

"All these investments are taking place in UP due to the industries-friendly policies of the government and the reciprocation by industrialists through investments to accelerate development in the state," he said.

According to the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI), the transparency of the Yogi government's policies is the main reason for rising investments in the state. The launch of a single-window system for facilitating various clearances and certification by the government to expedite setting up of factories has made the task of industrialists hassle-free and easier.

"Now, industrialists no longer have to run from pillar to post to set up a firm unlike during the previous governments," he said, adding that the introduction of an online system has brought about transparency into the dealings and transactions.

The 'No Objection Certificates' (NOCs) have been given to 3,52,098 industries through Nivesh Mitra portal so far. On the changed environment regarding investment in the state, FICCI state chief Amit Gupta said that the previous governments in UP never addressed the issue seriously and therefore, entrepreneurs lost trust in them. On the contrary, the industrialists have full faith in Yogi's leadership because he makes only those promises which he fulfills, Gupta said. The industrialists are investing in UP despite the COVID-19 pandemic.

Thieves strike at house of former zila panchayat member

Lucknow (PNS): Thieves made off with cash and ornaments worth lakhs of rupees from the house of a former zila panchayat member in Banthra and a close confidante of Defene Minister Rajnath Singh. The complainant, Rajesh Singh Chauhan of Harauni village in the area, is also the president of Transport Welfare Association.

As per police, the thieves entered the house through a dilapidated structure behind. The thieves rummaged through the rooms on the second floor and then reached the rooms first floor. They decamped with ornaments worth Rs 50 lakh, Rs 3,000 in cash and other items.

When Chauhan woke up on Thursday morning, he found a room's lock broken. As he went inside, he saw articles lying strewn across the floor.

Senior police officers reached the scene and pressed a dog squad into service, but they failed to get any clue.

It surfaced during investigation that the thieves had covered the high-mast lamp installed in the backyard of Chauhan's house.

Meanwhile, a day after the murderous assault on a jeweler in Bijnor (Sarojininar), police detained several suspects but failed to get any clue about the attackers. Earlier, four teams were formed to crack the case. The police scanned footages of several CCTV cameras to get a clue about the accused.

The condition of the injured jeweller, Narendra, improved on Thursday. While the police said that the jeweller was attacked over some personal enmity, the family said they had no rivalry with anyone.

On Wednesday, Narendra was attacked when he, his wife Vinod Kumari and their servant Akash were at the shop. Sources said Narendra was seen lifting a bench in self-defence as the attackers whipped out pistols soon after entering the shop. Akash was also seen scuffling with one of the miscreants. One of the miscreants opened fire on Narendra and both fled the scene.

Visitors throng Imambara

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

With the Archaeological Survey of India monuments re-opening on Thursday after corona curbs were eased, Hussainabad & Allied Trust (HAT) secretary and ADM (Trans-Gomti) Vishwabhushan Mishra said 692 visitors thronged the Asafi Imambara while 65 people visited the Chhota Imambara. Forty people also visited the Picture Gallery on Thursday. Besides, 140 visitors turned up at the Residency.

Junior conservation assistant (ASI) Ram Vriksh Yadav said it was a low turnout at the Residency as they would usually get almost 700 visitors in a day. "There were mainly the local visitors and we allowed only those people who were wearing masks. We also had a thermal scanning machine in keeping with the Covid protocol," he said. A senior tourism official



said there would be only local visitors to these monuments for now as there were no international or domestic tourists in these pandemic times. "It would take some time before tourism picks up," he said.

District Magistrate Abhishek Prakash had issued instructions

that only those ASI heritage monuments which are not in the containment zones would be open.

"Instructions have been given for the use of e-tickets and digital payments. There are separate entry/exit gates and group photography has been prohibited," a district administration official said.

'Resolve issues of teachers at the earliest'

Lucknow (PNS): The office-bearers of Uttar Pradesh Junior High School (Pre-Secondary) Teachers' Association gave a memorandum to the Basic Shiksha Adhikari (BSA), demanding that the issues of teachers be resolved at the earliest, failing which they would be forced to take to agitational means.

Co-convenor of the association Sudhir Sehgal said that a 4-member committee met the BSA and handed over a 7-point memorandum to him on Thursday. He said the demands include early payment of funds to the teachers who have retired. "In some cases, even pension has not been released, pushing the retired teachers into penury. We have also demanded that

the process to finalise the pay scale of teachers be expedited. If there is any shortcoming in the letter, it should be immediately informed to the teacher concerned," he said. Among other demands, the association claimed that 50 per cent payment for Junior High School uniforms for the year 2019-20 is pending and the same should be released. They also said that receipts should be given by the BSAs office when it receives an application. They also demanded that all teachers should be vaccinated on priority basis.

District convener Prabhakar Mishra and members Anjay Das & Sanjay Pandey were also part of the delegation.

Toy train to come up at Janeshwar Mishra Park

Lucknow (PNS): A toy train will be provided to Janeshwar Mishra Park soon. The decision to run the toy train was taken at the fifth board meeting of Janeshwar Mishra Park on Thursday. The meeting was presided over by the principal secretary, housing, and it also saw the presence of Divisional Commissioner Ranjan Kumar and District Magistrate Abhishek Prakash. The board passed the proposal of an income of Rs 11.70 crore for the management, security and

operations of the park. It was further said that 20,000 saplings would be planted under the mass plantation programme. There will be 15,000 saplings of fruit-bearing trees.

Ornamental saplings will also be planted in the various gardens of the park to conserve the environment and attract tourists. It was also decided that a proposal should be made for dividing the park into two parts and outsourcing it for maintenance, looking into its vast size.

CITY BRIEFS

SCHOLARSHIP

Devanshi Verma, a Class VIII student of City Montessori School, Aliganj Campus I, has won the Ramanujan Maths Scholarship at national level. Around 33,000 students from over 200 prestigious schools participated in the competition organised by Countingwell (Bengaluru). Devanshi excelled with her mathematical skills and got a place among the top-9 winners. The scholarship includes Rs 10,000 in cash, along with

a one-year subscription to maths learning app 'Countingwell Premium'.

PHD AWARDED

Kuldeep Kumar from the department of Physics, Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar Central University, was awarded doctorate degree after online viva exam during this COVID-19 pandemic. BBAU spokesperson Rachna Gangwar said Kumar has done research on humidity, LPG and carbon dioxide sensors based on graphene-based carbon nano material. "With the help of these sensors, the minimum level of LPG and carbon dioxide present in the atmosphere can be detected," she said.

Maya continues tirade against SP

Lucknow (PNS): Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) supremo Mayawati continued her tirade against the Samajwadi Party on Thursday after several suspended MLAs met SP president Akhilesh Yadav in Lucknow on Tuesday.

"The SP is in such a terrible condition that the MLAs who have now been expelled from the BSP are being asked to join the cycle party by Akhilesh himself just to remain in the media," Mayawati said.

Taking to Twitter on Thursday, the BSP chief said: "The condition of the SP has become so bad that in order to remain in the media, even former MLAs and small workers who have become ineffective and expelled from BSP are being called by its chief himself." In the next tweet, she added, "It seems that the SP chief is no longer having faith in his local leaders." On Wednesday too, the BSP supremo had lambasted the SP for trying to portray a split in the BSP. The expelled BSP MLAs in question are Hakim Lal Bind, Vandana Singh, Ramveer Upadhyay, Anil Kumar Singh, Aslam Rayani, Aslam Ali, Mujtaba Siddiqui, Hargovind Bhargava and Sushma Patel. They were expelled ahead of the Rajya Sabha polls in October 2020 as they were accused of collaborating with the SP in a bid to defeat BSP candidate Ramji Gautam.

Incessant rain paralyses life, exposes admn

PNS ■ VARANASI

Incessant rain right from very early morning paralysed normal life in the city and its adjoining areas. It left dozens of main markets and localities water-logged, exposing the tall claims of the administration and the municipal corporation of having made all arrangements before the arrival of monsoon.

After a long time, this year the monsoon has arrived in this belt of Purvanchal (eastern UP) at least four days ahead of its scheduled arrival between June 18 and 24.

The incessant rain increased the woes of the residents as not only the roads in dozens of localities were water-logged but water also entered several houses, causing a lot of inconveniences to the people.

However, the rain has brought smiles on the faces of paddy growers as they hope to start the sowing for the Kharif crops in time this year after a long time. The trans-Ganga Chandauli district and its adjoining areas are known as the rice bowl of the state and recently, it exported a good quantity of rice to many countries.

Incessant rains not only lashed the Varanasi city but almost all the areas in this



Rain leaves Andhrapul underpass water-logged in Varanasi on Thursday

region as by 8 am the local office of Central Water Commission (CWC) reported that Varanasi had received 24.8 mm, Ghazipur 58.2 mm, Ballia 33.2 mm and Jaunpur 15.6 mm rainfall.

The rain continued till the evening hours in Varanasi and other places and it was heavier than the city had received two days ago when 82.6 mm rainfall was recorded.

Due to rain, not only Andhrapul underpass but also many other areas were water-logged. There was heavy water-logging in front of Varanasi Junction (Cantonment) and Varanasi City railway station. Vehicular movement on even old GT Road connecting the city to Pt Deen Dayal Nagar (Mughalsara) slowed down as there was heavy water-logging near Pillikothi, Golgadda and

many other places. Vehicles especially two-wheelers and three-wheelers were seen stranded at many underpasses and other places including Andhrapul, Chowkaghat and in Adampur area. Besides, there was heavy water-logging in main markets at Godowlia, Dashashwamedh, Nai Sarai, Luxa, Teliabagh, Maidagin, Ravindrapuri Colony, Sagra, Mahmoorganj

and many other areas. With the sewer lines choked, the overflowing water entered houses in several colonies in Mahmoorganj, Shivpurva, Ravindrapuri Colony, Chittupura, Nagwa and other areas. In view of the heavy rain, Municipal Commissioner Gurang Rathi and other senior officials of Varanasi Nagar Nigam officers visited

Andhrapul and other places to see the condition and on their instructions, water pumps were used at some places to pump out water. Besides, desilting machines were also used to clear the choked sewage lines at Andhrapul.

The situation in many areas, where desilting of nullahs and drains could not be completed in time, turned from bad to worse and at many places, the silt removed from drains and dumped at roadside, was washed back by rain to the drains again, wasting all the efforts made so far.

Rain not only disrupted power and telephone services in many areas but also affected the train, flights and bus services. Due to water-logging at Kashi bus depot, the passengers faced a lot of inconveniences. The condition at Varanasi Junction and Cantonment bus depot was also not good due to water-logging.

The incessant rain also affected air services as nine flights, including 6E-641, G8-1404, SG-3755, G8-182 (all from Delhi), G8-511, 6E-349 (both from Mumbai), 6E-915 (Hyderabad), G8-408 (Bengaluru) and G8-953 (Ahmedabad), were cancelled while AI-406 and UL-3612 (both from Delhi) and 6E-5349 (Mumbai) arrived late.

Lallu flays govt for poor development in Varanasi

PNS ■ VARANASI

Uttar Pradesh Congress Committee (UPCC) president Ajay Kumar Lallu on Thursday criticised Prime Minister Narendra Modi for poor development in Varanasi.

Inspecting the water-logged areas along with senior party leaders, Lallu said that on the development issue, the prime minister had misled the people of his parliamentary constituency by showing them a false dream of making the city as Kyoto.

Talking to reporters in an informal chat while walking in water-logged areas near Piplani Katra, the UPCC chief said that nothing was done for the improvement of the sewage system in Varanasi as rain water had entered several houses. Asking the prime minister whether the development in Varanasi was on Gujarat model, Lallu said if it was so then UP did not want such unplanned development.

Earlier, interacting with the local traders at Paradkar Bhawan, the Congress leader said that due to the wrong policies of the government, most of the small industries had closed down and many traders burdened with debts had committed suicide.

"All types of small industries have been completely destroyed, especially in the name of Kyoto, but the local MP (prime minister) has deceived the people, leaving the city today in a bad shape," he said, while hitting out at the Central government for the sky-rocketing prices of petrol and diesel as well as mustard oil. "The farmers are suffering

due to the collapse of the Mandi system as they are not getting remunerative prices for the crops. The farmers' income has not been doubled. Today, the farmers are angry as three black laws have been imposed on them," the UPCC chief said, adding that the Bharatiya Janata Party had not fulfilled even a single promise and the youth were cheated in the name of providing employment.

According to Lallu, the main agenda of this government is false propaganda through its marketing and media branding whereas its work on the ground is equal to zero.

"The BJP government has lost its credibility in the eyes of the public due to discrimination in society and vindictive action against the opposition. People's hopes of 'acche din' have been shattered. Now only a few days are left for the assembly elections to be held in 2022, BJP's departure is certain," he said, adding that only the Congress was fighting for the interests of the traders.

Former minister Ajay Rai said that the small and medium businessmen were the most harassed as the government was being run by a few capitalists. He said there was a big scam in the purchase of land by Shri Ram Janmabhoyi Teerth Kshetra Trust in Ayodhya.

Prominent among others present in the meeting were former MP Dr Rajesh Mishra, Congress state vice-president Vishwajay Singh, party's district chief Rajeshwar Patel, city president Raghavendra Choubey, Durga Prasad Gupta and Sitaram Keshari.

'Install water pumps water-logged areas, directs Minister

PNS ■ VARANASI

Uttar Pradesh Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Tourism, Culture, Religious Affairs and Protocol, Dr Neelkanth Tiwari, has directed the Varanasi Nagar Nigam officials, including the municipal commissioner and nagar swasthya adhikari, to take immediate steps

to pump out water from water-logged areas by installing pumps.

Heavy rains on Thursday left many areas water-logged in the city.

In a telephonic talk with the municipal commissioner, the minister said if the rain water in water-logged areas was not draining out itself, it should be pumped out immediately by

installing pumps so that the people did not face much problems.

The municipal commissioner informed the minister that water pumps had already been installed at six places while their installation at three other areas is in process.

Apart from this, he said, wherever there was a problem in the drainage of water, action

would be taken to pump out water by installing a pump.

Tiwari also directed the nagar nigam's health officer to ensure cleanliness wherever there was filth in the streets due to heavy rains. He said that special care should be taken so that the residents did not face any inconvenience.

Varanasi Zila Panchayat chief's poll on July 3

PNS ■ VARANASI

The election of chairperson of Varanasi Zila Panchayat will be held on July 3 and the result will be announced the same day.

Additional District Magistrate (E) Ranvijay Singh has been appointed as the assistant district election officer to ensure smooth election process.

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the Samajwadi Party (SP) have already announced their candidates for this prestigious post even before the announcement of the election schedule.

As per the notification issued by District Magistrate Kaushal Raj Sharma, who is the district electoral officer, the nomination papers can be obtained from the district election office (Panchayat) in Vikas Bhawan. The nomination will be filed on June 26 from 11:00 am to 3:00 pm and the papers will be scrutinised thereafter.

The candidate can withdraw the nomination on June 29 from 11:00 am to 3:00 pm, and the election will be conducted on July 3 from 11:00 am to 3:00 pm and afterwards the counting will be taken up and the result will be announced the same day.

The entire election process, from filing of nomination papers to the counting of votes,

will be held at Rifle Club in the premises of district collectorate. Sharma has appointed the ADM-E Ranvijay Singh as the assistant district election officer to ensure smooth election process.

It may be mentioned here that the post of chairman of Varanasi Zila Panchayat is reserved for women candidates of the Other Backward Classes (OBC).

The election shall be as per the proportional system by single transferable vote. There are 40 members in Varanasi Zila Panchayat and they will elect their chairperson.

The BJP has announced the name of Punam Maurya as its candidate for the post. President of the ruling party's Kashi Prant unit, Mahesh Chandra Srivastava, has claimed that the BJP has maximum members in the Zila Panchayat house and will manage the magic figure of 21 to win the seat with the support of independents and like-minded parties. He said the party would succeed in retaining the seat.

On the other hand, the Samajwadi Party has announced the name of Chanda Yadav as its candidate for this post and its leaders claimed that the party had 16 members in the 40-member Zila Panchayat. SP district pres-

ident Sujit Yadav also claimed that the party had the support of independents besides the other opposition parties and exuded confidence to wrest the seat from the BJP.

The seat of Varanasi Zila Panchayat chairperson has been held by the BJP for the maximum times. The seat remained with the BJP from 1996 to 2005 during which its leaders Uday Nath Singh (1996 to 1997), Sankatha Patel (1997 to 2000) and Kiran Patel (2000 to 2005) were the chairperson.

Earlier, the seat was won by Jawahar Lal Jaiswal of the Congress and he remained chairman from 1989 to 1995. Kanhaiya Lal Gupta of the SP was chairman from 1995 to 1996. The SP again won the seat again when its leader Suchita Patel was elected chairperson for one year (2008 to 2009) but Apna Dal leader Anil Patel wrested the seat with the support of the BJP and he was chairman from 2009 to 2011.

Bahujan Samaj Party leader Madhukar Patel was chairperson from 2011 to 2012 and afterwards, BJP leader Sujit Kumar Singh occupied the seat.

In the election held in 2016, SP leader Aprajita Sonkar won the seat but after the change of the guard in the state, she joined the BJP.

Varanasi receives Covid medicine kits for children

PNS ■ VARANASI

In view of the possible threat of the third wave of COVID-19, the district administration on Thursday got more than 12,000 medicine kits from the state government for distribution among the asymptomatic children below 12 years.

The preparations to tackle the third wave of COVID-19, which is likely to affect the children most as per expert, have already been started and as part of it the state government has provided more than 12,000 COVID-19 medicine kits to the district administration, Chief Medical Officer Dr VB Singh said, adding, the medicine kits

Downward trend continues

Varanasi (PNS): The Varanasi district continued recording a decrease in COVID-19 cases on Thursday.

Six people tested positive for novel coronavirus infection during the past 24 hours, taking the tally of confirmed cases to 82,138, as per the figures released by the Health department on Thursday evening. With no COVID-19 deaths during the last 24 hours, the death toll remained at 771. As many as 21 COVID-19

patients recovered during the past 24 hours - 13 in home isolation and eight in hospitals. With this, 81,166 COVID-19 patients have been cured in the district - 74,899 in home isolation and 6,267 in Covid hospitals. The vaccination drive continued on Thursday at 141 vaccination centres, including 88 for people above 45 years, 53 for those between 18 and 44 years of age. Besides, Covid vaccine was administered at eight centres for working

employees aged between 18 and 44 years, three for parents of children up to the age of 12 and two for working women. Besides, drivers of commercial vehicles were vaccinated at a booth set up at RTO office in Babatpur and street vendors in a special booth at community health centre (CHC) at Chaukaghat. The physically challenged people were vaccinated at a special vaccination booth at ESIC Hospital in Pandeypur.

Dr Singh said the medical kits contained medicines for children up to the age of 12 years as per the age category and advised the parents to give the medicines to the wards after consulting doctors and experts.

Additional Chief Medical Officer Dr Sanjay Rai said the COVID-19 medicine kits would be distributed in all eight blocks and 125 wards of the district by 694 monitoring committees.

He said the state government had provided a total of 12,285 medicine kits to the district and assured of making more kits available in the days to come.

200 villages included in city limits to be developed

PNS ■ ALLAHABAD

Now 200 villages will witness development with their inclusion in the Prayagraj Municipal Corporation limits. The municipal corporation will spend Rs 55 crore on drains, road-drain repair, construction and repair of roads. Maximum Rs 5 crore will be spent in Jhansi Nagar panchayat area. Rs 15 crore will be spent on street lights (LED) to illuminate the extended areas at night. It is also proposed to install new street light pillars where needed. The work is set to be completed in the first half of this financial year.

On December 31, 2019, the government had notified the inclusion of 207 villages adjoining Naini, Jhansi, Phaphamau and Kaushambi in the

Prayagraj municipal limits. There was a long gap in its denotification. On November 20 last year, all the villages were de-notified. The reason was the allocation to the village heads and the expenditure of the government's budget. After the money was spent, the limit extension was completed.

Then development was hampered due to panchayat elections. Just before the elections, the Kaushambi administration again conducted the election of pradhans in seven villages, due to which these villages are being considered outside the municipal limits.

After the panchayat elections, the work was interrupted in the extended areas due to the increase in coronavirus infection. After getting the resolution of

the executive and the consent of the House, the proposals for development in all the 200 villages included in the municipal limits are in the final stage.

According to Chief Engineer Satish Kumar, new constructions are proposed by repairing the bad roads in the extended areas. He said detailed plans would take shape after getting the primary work done in all the areas.

There are plans to re-install street lights in all the villages involved in the border expansion. The roads will be illuminated not only on the main roads but also inside the villages. New street light poles will also be installed where needed. The chief engineer said that about Rs 15 crore would be spent on this alone.

In the first phase, preparations are

being made to install street lights. Detailed plans have been made for the betterment of public facilities in the extended areas.

Mayor Abhilasha Gupta Nandi said that in the first phase, preparations were being made to install street lights and take up road, drain, pavement construction and repair works. She said all the work would be completed in six months.

Municipal Commissioner Ravi Ranjan said that a survey of the areas involved in border expansion had been done. He said the work of installing LEDs in the areas which were part of the city would start soon and at the same time, the work of connecting roads and drains, lanes along the main roads would be taken up.

NCR's Gurjit, Nisha in Indian women's hockey team

Allahabad (PNS): Two sports persons, Gurjit Kaur and Nisha of North Central Railway, are to be part of Indian Hockey Women team in the Tokyo Olympics.

They have been selected for Indian hockey women's team for participation in the Tokyo Olympics. Nisha and Gurjeet Kaur are senior clerks and are presently posted at Prayagraj. NCR GM VK Tripathi congratulated Gurjeet and Nisha and wished good luck to the entire squad for a brilliant performance in the upcoming event.

The following Indian Railway hockey women players have been selected for Indian hockey women team for participation in Tokyo Olympics 2020: Deep Grace Ekka (WR), Nikki Pradhan (SER), Gurjit Kaur (NCR), Nisha (NCR), Neha (NR), Sushila Chanu (CR), Monika (CR), Navjot Kaur (RCF), Salima Tete (SER), Navneet Kaur (WR), Lalremsiami (RCF), Vandana Katriya (CR), Sharmila (joining under process in NR).

Three more bodies buried in sand come out, cremated

Allahabad (PNS): Due to the erosion in the Ganga bank at Phaphamau ghat, more dead bodies buried in the sand during the COVID-19 period are coming out. On Thursday, after receiving information about three more bodies coming out of sand on this ghat, the municipal officials rushed to the spot.

The employees of the municipal corporation cremated the bodies as per tradition. With this, 24 bodies which came out of the sand at this ghat, have been cremated so far.

The bodies have been coming out of sand at the Phaphamau Ghat since a fortnight after the water level in the Ganga rose and it rained again. To prevent these bodies from being washed into the river, the municipal corporation is keeping vigil and cremating the buried body whenever it surfaces due to erosion.

After receiving information on Thursday about three more bodies coming out of the sand at the ghat, the zonal officer of the municipal corporation's Phaphamau Zone, Neeraj Kumar Singh, along with workers and labourers reached the spot. They arranged wood and shroud and cremated the bodies as per Hindu rituals and the zonal officer lit the pyres. The municipal corporation officials said the erosion of the bank was increasing at the ghat, more bodies could come out and the dead bodies have been buried everywhere within a radius of about 500 meters.

The biggest challenge before the municipal administration is to prevent the dead bodies from flowing in the Ganga.

19 test +ve in Prayagraj

PNS ■ ALLAHABAD

As many as 19 new cases of coronavirus infection were reported in Prayagraj during the past 24 hours, as per the figures released by officials on Thursday.

At the same time, the number of people recovering from COVID-19 was less than the other days.

According to CMO Dr Prabhakar Rai, the increasing number of coronavirus infections has been taken seriously since Tuesday.

Within 24 hours, the number of new COVID-19 cases has increased from 17 to 19. He said that about 300 contacts of the newly-infected people had been tested.

Along with the general testing, contact tracing is also going on.

Twenty COVID-19 patients have been cured during the past 24 hours, 18 in home isolation and two in hospitals.



People perform yoga ahead of International Yoga Day on the river bank of Ganga in Prayagraj on Thursday

Youth arrested for dancing with gun in hand in wedding

Allahabad (PNS): Police arrested a youth who danced with a pistol in his hand as the orchestra played tunes at a marriage ceremony in Meja, Vindhya.

The police swung into action after a video showing a youth dancing with a pistol in his hand went viral. After registering a case against the accused, the police started searching for him. He was arrested on Thursday.

It may be pointed out here that a youth who came with the baarat in Meja's Urnah village on Tuesday night kept dancing throughout the night with a pistol in his hand. The orchestra party was called by the bride's side. The youth kept waving the

firearm while dancing with the dancer.

When the Meja police got information, a report was registered against the youth and a police team was sent to Jigna in Mirzapur for his arrest. The marriage of the daughter of Shivkaran, a resident of Urnah village, was solemnised on Tuesday night. The baarat came from Jigna in Mirzapur.

Seeing the pistol in his hand, no one dared to stop the youth. Somehow, the elders intervened and saved the terrified dancer with whom the youth kept dancing, brandishing the pistol. Arun Kumar Chaturvedi reached the village with a force and questioned Shivkaran about the identity of the youth.

Woman makes suicide bid

PNS ■ ALLAHABAD

Unsuccessful love marriage resulted in a suicide bid by a 35-year-old woman who took a leap into the Ganga from Shastri bridge on Thursday morning.

However, the local boatmen and the river police divers saved her life and handed her over to the family members.

Priyanka Kesarwani of Rani Mandi under the Attarsuiya police station had married a Jodhpur-based youth against the wishes of her parents. After some years, the marriage could not continue and Priyanka came back to Prayagraj, but owing to strained relations with the family, she had to take a separate house.

Owing to this mental ordeal, Priyanka was depressed and in a fit of depression she left her house in early morning hours on Thursday and reached Shastri bridge, from where she jumped into the Ganga at 6:30 am.

In the morning hours hundreds of bathers reach the Ganga for a holy dip, and the local boatmen and river police personnel keep a watch on the bathers to avert any untoward incident.

The bathers, besides the river police and the local boatmen saw Priyanka jumping into the river from the bridge and rescued her.

10 pvt hospitals to administer paid Covid vaccine

PNS ■ KANPUR

Kanpur Nursing Homes Association president Dr MK Sarangi said that the government had granted sanction to private hospitals to vaccinate people.

He said 10 private hospitals had been granted permission to vaccinate people at the fixed charges. He said the vaccines which were being sanctioned would have to be utilised latest by June 30.

Dr Sarangi said in view of the slow vaccination going on in the city and keeping in view the genuine problems of the people, the government had decided to allow private hospitals to carry out vaccination at their hospitals.

He said the people coming to private hospitals would have to pay Rs 1,250 for one dose of Covaxin and Rs 150 as vaccination fee and Rs 630 for Covishield dose along with Rs 150 as vaccination fee.

He said the 10 hospitals which had been granted permission to administer Covid vaccine were Naraina Medical College, New Leelamani Hospital, Prakhar Hospital, Panacea Hospital, Dhanvantri Hospital, Kanpur Medical Centre, J. L. Rohtagi Hospital, Ratnadeep Hospital, GTB Hospital and Raksha Hospital.

SNCU at Dufferin: Meanwhile, the special new-

born care unit (SNCU) will soon be added to the hospital at the New OPD block where a 20-bed SNCU was under construction.

It will admit children below five years of age.

Chief Medical Superintendent Dr Seema Srivastava said this SNCU would tentatively be ready by December 2021 and would have well equipped beds, ventilators and photometry machines for proper treatment of children.

She said on an average, Dufferin Hospital had around two dozen births every day and thus it would be well equipped to treat infants and newborns.

Complete Panki STP by December: DC

PNS ■ KANPUR

Kanpur Divisional Commissioner Dr Raj Shekhar, while carrying out an inspection of the Namami Ganga Project under the National Mission for Clean Ganga, said the project was very close to its objective to keep the Ganga clean and sacred.

He said hundreds of mega projects were being implemented in various places across the river Ganga to ensure that untreated sewer and industrial waste did not flow into the Ganga. He said one of the mega projects was the new 30 MLD sewage treatment plant (STP) at Panki which was being constructed under the Namami Ganga project.

The divisional commissioner said the Panki STP was estimated to cost Rs 100 Cr and it would have capacity to process 30 MLD of sewer water.

He said this STP would cover around 18 square kilometre area and would help in connecting the sewer lines of around 85,000 households of South Kanpur, including Panki, Swaraj Nagar, Gangaganj, Ratanpur, Mahaveer Yojana, Jawahar Puram Yojana and Kanshiram Colony etc.

He visited the work site and reviewed the progress of the work on Thursday.

Dr Shekhar said that as of now, the around 50 per cent of the work had been completed and added that earlier the entire project was scheduled to be completed by October, 2021, but because of Covid curfew it would be delayed by two months. He directed the Namami Ganga team and the authorised body to complete the pending works by December so that the benefit of the project could be extended to the people of the area as soon as possible.

The divisional commissioner also directed the general manager and project manager to expedite the process for obtaining no objection certificates (NOC) from Railways and National Highway Authority of India and also for getting independent 24 hours dedicated power supply for the next three to four months so that the project could be completed by December end.

He also directed the Jal Nigam general manager and project manager to go for a plantation drive between July and August and plant trees across the boundary wall so that an important step toward nature's conservation could be ensured under Namami Ganga.

The divisional commissioner was accompanied by the GM general manager, project manager and engineer of NMCG.

NCL gives ₹90 lakh to Sonbhadra

CORRESPONDENT ■ SONBHADRA

Northern Coalfields Limited (NCL) provided financial assistance of ₹90 Lakh to the Sonbhadra district administration under its Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives for procuring medical equipment to strengthen health infrastructure and containing the spread of Covid-19 in the district. NCL GM (CSR) AK Singh handed over the cheque to Sonbhadra DM Abhishek Singh on Wednesday. The fund will be mainly utilised for the purchase of essential medical equipment such as pulse oximeter, thermal scanner, oxygen flowmeter, portable X-ray machine, CBC



machine, auto analyzer along with PPE kits, masks and sanitisers. Previously, NCL had given ₹5 crore to Uttar Pradesh government for procurement of 50 ambulances. During the pandemic-triggered lockdown massive distribution of ration kits was done among the needy. NCL is also establishing an oxygen plant in its Atal Hospital Bina in Sonbhadra. NCL spent about ₹32 crore in the last fiscal towards CSR activities in UP, most of which were in Sonbhadra only. NCL is the Miniratna company of Government of India producing coal from its 10 highly-mechanised mines in Madhya

Elderly couple looted in Kalyanpur

PNS ■ KANPUR

In a daylight incident, armed miscreants brutally beat up an elderly couple and escaped after looting their cash and valuables in a posh locality under Kalyanpur police station on Thursday morning.

The local police got the injured couple admitted to hospital.

RN Shukla of Kailash Vihar Awasthi Vikas Colony-I in Kalyanpur had retired from Gramin Bank. His family comprises his wife Shashi, two sons Ashish and Piyush. The elder son is a sales

manager in a private company in Noida while the younger is employed in a multi-national company there.

RN Shukla said around 8:30 am, when his wife was preparing tea in the kitchen, three miscreants broke into his house and held them at knife-point. When the couple protested, they brutally beat up Shashi and repeatedly stabbed Shukla. Thereafter, the miscreants looted cash and valuables including gold chain, mobile phone, laptop and escaped.

The police are investigating the case with the help of CCTV footage.

Cong demands CBI probe into Ayodhya land scam

PNS ■ KANPUR

Hundreds of Congressmen marched to the district collectorate on Thursday and handed over a memorandum addressed to the President of India to the district magistrate, demanding a CBI inquiry into the multi-crore land scam in the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust.

The Congress leaders urged President Ram Nath Kovind to bring to fore the multi-crore land scam which had "made a mockery of religious sentiments" of crores of Hindus of the country.

Congress City unit president Naushad Alam Mansoori said the people of the country, due to their religious attachment to the issue of Ram



City Congress Committee members lead a delegation to DM to hand over memorandum demanding CBI inquiry into land scam by Ram Mandir Trust on Thursday

Mandir, had donated liberally for the Ram temple. He said of late a multi-crore rupee land scam by Ram Mandir Trust had surfaced and this had hurt the sentiments of the Hindus. He

said it appeared that Bharatiya Janata Party and Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh were behind this multi-crore rupees land scam and they were working hand in glove.

Alam said the Supreme Court had intervened in the whole issue of the Ram Mandir and it was due to the intervention of the apex court of the country that the people had accepted the judgment in the most respectable manner. He said the same people were now hurt and wanted the apex court to ensure that a CBI inquiry was ordered into this land scam. He said unless the apex court intervened, the truth would never come to the fore and added that the forces behind the multi-crore rupees scam were trying to sweep the issue beneath the carpet.

The delegation comprised Naushad Alam Mansoori, SD Mishra, Kamal Jaiswal, Neelam Chaurasia, Swati Verma and dozens of other leaders.

Jewellers to follow hallmarking

Kanpur (PNS): The Kanpur Sarafa Committee has agreed to strictly follow the hallmarking of gold jewellery and has welcomed the Central government decision to implement the hallmark policy in phases. It has also welcomed the government assurance that there shall be no penalty till August 2021.

Its president Kailash Nath Agarwal, addressing a meeting, said hallmarking was being made mandatory but in the next two phases for gold jewellery and artefacts of 20, 23 and 24 carats.

He said that there was no bar on households selling non-hallmarked gold jewellery but it had been made mandatory for the jewellers in the districts. He said thus jewellers would not be allowed to re-sell the gold without proper marking.

He informed the members that in the first phase hallmarking was being made mandatory for those districts which had fully functional assaying and hallmarking centres. He said in the second phase it would be for those districts that had this facility in the 100 km range and in areas where there was no such facility it would be implemented in the third phase.

Discussing the finer details of the national meeting which was attended by UP Sarafa Association president MC Jain, he said jewellers who had an annual turnover of less than Rs 40 lakh had been granted exemption from mandatory hallmarking, which at current rates meant that those who sold around 1.5 kg gold every year. He said this was done not to place compliance burden on small jewellers.

Agarwal said that the jewellers would be allowed to alter hallmarking jewellery by up to 2 grams of its weight while ensuring the purity to ensure that minor alterations could be made without going through the entire process.

He added that to ensure compliance of mandatory hallmarking, registration fee had been waived and made free while so far jewellers had to pay a slab-based registration fee.

UAVs to deliver medical supplies to remote areas with difficult terrain

Kanpur (PNS): Based on the joint feasibility study carried out by the Indian Institute of Technology, Kanpur and Indian Council for Medical Research (ICMR), the Central government has invited bids from companies or agencies that can deliver medical supplies using unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV) to remote locations with difficult terrain.

It comes as part of the Central government's ongoing effort to expand the Covid vaccination drive. IIT-K and ICMR have developed a standard protocol for successful delivery of vaccines using a UAV. Mini Ratna company HLL Infra Tech Services Limited has been roped in to invite UAV operators in the bid. On behalf of the ICMR, the HLL Infra Tech Services Limited (procurement support agency) has invited expression of interest (EOI) through the Central Public Procurement Portal from experienced Indian agencies for the delivery of medical supplies (vaccines/drugs) by UAVs. IIT-K Director Prof Abhay Karandikar said, "This is another opportunity for IIT Kanpur to serve the nation during these times."

Among the key protocols for the bid, is the mandatory specification that says 'UAV should be able to cover a minimum aerial distance of 35 km and clock vertical altitude of 100 metres'.

The test drone was developed by CDspace Robotics Pvt Ltd, a startup incubated at IIT Kanpur. The feasibility study was jointly monitored by the project investigator AK Ghosh and Prof Manindra Agarwal along with Nikhil Upadhyay, head of CD Space Robotics Pvt Ltd. The UAV would take off vertically and carry minimum payload of 4 kgs and safety features and navigation would be strictly according to the civil aviation regulator DGCA, the bid document states.

Need for more work on cost-effective agricultural technologies: Scientist

PNS ■ KANPUR

Even after over seven decades of Eplanning, the majority of Indian farmers are still facing problems of poor production and thin margin of profit. The future of agriculture is a very important question. This engenders the need for work on cost-effective technologies with focus on environmental protection and conservation of natural resources.

This was stated by soil scientist from CSA University of Agriculture and Technology, Dr Khalil Khan, on Thursday. He said the Indian Council for Agricultural Research (ICAR) had cautioned that despite the increase in food grain production, on account of increasing population there would be a massive demand for quality and nutritious food. He said it was true that currently there was massive pressure on decreasing available cultivable land to produce more quantity, variety and quality of food.

He said India with its large arable land and 15 agro-climatic zones had almost all types of weather conditions, soil types and capacity of growing a variety of crops. He said low-access of credit and prominent role of unorganised creditors affecting decisions of farmers in purchasing of inputs and selling of outputs was a major cause of concern. He said minimal use of technology, mechanisation and poor productivity was another area of concern. Dr Khan said that reforms towards privatisation, liberalisation

and globalisation affected the inputs market at a faster pace. He said the face of Indian agriculture was changing fast on account of information technology, new technologies in agriculture, private investments, especially on research and development, government efforts to rejuvenate the cooperative movement to address the problems of small holdings and small produce.

He said the coming up of several startups in agriculture run by highly educated youths showed that they were able to understand the high potential of putting money and effort into this sector.

He said the changing demand due to increase in incomes, globalisation and health consciousness was affecting and going to affect production in future and the demand for fruits and vegetables, dairy products, fish and meat was going to increase in future. He said as a result, research, technology improvements, protected cultivation of high value greens and other vegetables would be more.

Dr Khan said precision farming with soil testing-based decisions, automation using artificial intelligence would be focused for precise application inputs in agriculture. He said sensors and drones would be used for precision, quality and the environment in a cost effective manner. He added that small and marginal farmers would also be using these technologies with the help of private players.

Lalimli workers threaten self-immolation

PNS ■ KANPUR

Hundreds of Lalimli workers have threatened to immolate themselves if they were not paid their salary pending for the past 36 months by June 30.

Marching under the banner of Lalimli Karmachari Sangh, the workers took out a procession from the mill's main gate on Thursday and staged a massive demonstration at the office of the Commissioner of Police.

Speaking on the occasion, Lalimli employees' union president Ajay Singh said if the workers were not paid their pending salary by June 30,

they would be forced to commit self-immolation at the factory's main gate.

A five-member delegation was called by Commissioner of Police Asim Arun, who, after collecting a memorandum from the workers, held a talk with BIC Chairman Balram Kumar in Delhi. During their talk, the chairman assured the Commissioner of Police to make all efforts to resolve the issue of workers' salary by June 30. Ajay Singh said the Lalimli workers had now launched a decisive fight which would be continued till the disbursement of their salary.

It was also decided that a delegation, led by Ajay Singh,



Delegation: A delegation of Kanpur University Self-financed Teachers' Association led by its president Dr Kamlesh Yadav and general secretary Dr Akhand Pratap Singh met Chhatrapati Shahu Ji Maharaj

would also meet President Ram Nath Kovind and hand over to him a memorandum during his visit to the city on June 22.

Around 200 workers took part in the demonstration. They included Vidya Sagar Shukla, Ajmeri Warsi, Manoj Kumar, Sushil Singh, Kashiram

University (CSJMU) Vice Chancellor Prof Vinay Kumar Pathak on Thursday and urged him for transfer of approved self-financed teachers to other affiliated colleges. They also demanded him to exempt approved teachers from re-interview.

The vice chancellor assured the self-financed degree teachers to take decision on the issue in the meeting of the affiliation committee. He also assured to deduct Teachers Welfare Fund (TWF) and deposit it in separate accounts of self-financed teachers. The leaders also urged the vice chancellor to conduct practical/viva-voce exams as per past practice.

Gkp-BDTS spl to run on June 25 & July 2

CORRESPONDENT ■ GORAKHPUR

The railway administration for the convenience of the passengers will run 05301/05302 Gorakhpur-Bandra Terminus (BDTS)-Gorakhpur summer special train on June 25 and July 2 on every Friday from Gorakhpur and on June 26 and July 3 on every Saturday from Bandra Terminus for two trips. All the coaches in this train 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- BDTS SPECIAL: The 05301 Gorakhpur - Bandra Terminus

summer special train will on June 25 and July 2 on every Friday leave Gorakhpur at 05.00 hrs, Khalilabad at 05.40 hrs, Basti at 06.09 hrs, Gonda at 07.30 hrs, Lucknow (Northern Railway) at 10.15 hrs, Kanpur Central at 12.20 hrs, Kannauj at 13.56 hrs, Farrukhabad at 15.18 hrs, Kasganj at 17.15 hrs, Mathura at 19.25 hrs, Achhnera at 20.35 hrs, Bharatpur at 21.27 hrs, Kota on second day at 00.20 hrs, Ratlam at 04.10 hrs, Vadodara at 08.18 hrs, Surat at 10.22 hrs, Vapi at 11.42 hrs, Borivali at 13.35 hrs and reach Bandra Terminus at 14.25 hrs.

BDTS-GORAKHPUR SPECIAL: In the return journey 05302 Bandra Terminus - Gorakhpur summer special train will on June 26 and July 3 on every Saturday leave

Bandra Terminus at 19.25 hrs, Borivali at 20.10 hrs, Vapi at 21.55 hrs, Surat at 23.32 hrs, Vadodara on second day at 01.15 hrs, Ratlam at 05.35 hrs, Kota at 09.30 hrs, Bharatpur at 14.30 hrs, Achhnera at 15.25 hrs, Mathura at 16.45 hrs, Kasganj at 19.00 hrs, Farrukhabad at 20.55 hrs, Kannauj at 22.07 hrs, Kanpur Central at 00.20 hrs, Lucknow (NR) at 01.50 hrs, Gonda at 04.10 hrs, Basti at 05.25 hrs, Khalilabad at 06.00 hrs and will reach Gorakhpur at 06.45 hrs.

In this special train, a total of 22 LHB coaches, including 17 of general second class, three of general chair car, one of SLRD besides one of generator-cum-luggage van will be attached.

Prayagraj Sangam-Mankapur spl from June 21

CORRESPONDENT ■ GORAKHPUR

For the convenience of the passengers the restoration as well as extension of the running period of the following special trains will be done by the railway administration. All coaches in these trains will be of reserved class and passengers travelling in them will have to follow the Covid-19 norms, CPRO Pankaj Kumar Singh said.

PRAYAGRAJ SANGAM - MANKAPUR SPECIAL: The 04233 Prayagraj Sangam (PYGS) - Mankapur special train will run daily from June 21 until further notice. Likewise, the 04234 Mankapur-Prayagraj Sangam special train will run daily from June 22 until further notice.

PRAYAGRAJ SANGAM-

BASTI SPECIAL: The 04231 Prayagraj Sangam-Basti special train will from June 21 until further notice run five days a week i.e. on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday. On the other hand, the 04232 Basti-Prayagraj Sangam special train will from June 21 until further notice run five days a week i.e. on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday.

CHENNAI-LUCKOW JN SPECIAL: The 06093 Chennai-Lucknow Jn biweekly special train will from July 3 to November 6 run on every Saturday and Tuesday. On the other hand, the 06094 Lucknow Jn-Chennai biweekly special train will from July 5 to November 8 run on every Monday and Thursday.

TRAINS TO BE DIVERTED

Due to pre-non-interlocking (Pre-NI) and interlocking regarding the doubling work on Katangi Khurd-New Katni section of Jabalpur Division of West Central Railway (WCR) the diversion of the following trains will be done by the railway administration, CPRO PK Singh said.

DURG-NAUTANWA SPECIAL: The 08201 Durg-Nautanwa special train to run from Durg on June 23 will run via the diverted route i.e. Durg-Gondia-Kachhpura-Jabalpur-Katni. Besides, the 08202 Nautanwa-Durg special train to run from Nautanwa on June 25 will run via the diverted route Katni-Jabalpur-Kachhpura-Gondia-Durg.

DM's directive to officials

CORRESPONDENT ■ MIRZAPUR

DM Praveen Kumar Laxkar chaired the meeting of the task force formed under Mukhyamantri Bal Seva Yojana at the Collectorate on Wednesday. In it such cases were discussed under which government help was to be provided to the wards of those who had died due to Covid-19

Ajay Kumar Singh at a meeting with bankers, petrol pump owners and jewellers at Police Lines on Wednesday said CCTV cameras were very useful for business establishments. He advised to install high quality cameras inside and outside business establishments. He said in case of a crime police found a clue through the CCTV camera footages and it



District Magistrate Praveen Kumar Laxkar chairing the meeting of task force at the Collectorate on Wednesday

recently. Conducting it Probation Officer Shakti Tripathi apprised that 40 cases were identified in such category in which 15 were not found eligible for help due to different reasons like some were residents of another state, some others were in the category whose income above above ₹2 lakh per annum while others were found to be over 18 years of age and so on. According to the PO out of 25 cases formality of seven had been completed and the task force unanimously accepted the proposal to provide help to them. The DM directed the officials concerned to complete verification of rest of the cases without inordinate delay and help should be made available to the genuine people instantly as per the spirit of the government. The meeting was attended by CDO Sirilaxmi VS and other task force members.

SP'S ADVICE: Superintendent of Police (SP)

should be made as an essential thing for business houses. On the occasion he advised the bankers to inquire about the presence of new people in the bank as a routine work. Interacting with traders the SP told them not to appoint staff without proper verification. The SP was apprised of some practical problems and he gave an assurance for their redressal. He said the police was committed to taking action against nuisance values. The meeting was also attended by ASP (City) Sanjay Kumar, CO City, SHOs Katra and City Kotwali, Pappu Mehrotra and the others.

CANDIDATE DECLARED: The Samajwadi Party (SP) on Wednesday declared Asha Devi Gautam as the candidate for the post of zila panchayat (ZP) chairperson. Addressing a press conference in a guest house located at Shabri locality, party district president Devi Prasad Chaudhary claimed that 20

party members had been elected as member, ZP, and seven independents had supported the candidate. He said party had occupied the chair twice in the past. Among those present were Shiv Shankar Yadav, former MLA Jagadamba Patel, Ajay Yadav, Sanjay Yadav, Shailesh Patel, Ashok Singh 'Munna', Asha Devi Gautam, Munni Yadav and Ashok Mishra.

BOOK RELEASE: District Information Officer (DIO) Dr Pankaj Kumar said books have been the heritage and writers architect of the society. He expressed these views while releasing the book 'Bhartiya Itihās Evam Sanskriti' written by Saurabh Chaubey. Extending his best wishes to the writer, Dr Pankaj threw light over the salient features of the book and praised it. On the occasion he said that the book was useful for competitive examinations as well for students of graduation and post-graduation. The function was chaired by principal GD Bimari PG College Dr Rajeev Agrawal and conducted by Dr Dhruvji Pandey. Prominent among those who graced the occasion were Dr Shashidhar Shukla, Dr Kamal Krishna, Dr Kuldeep Pandey and others.

FOUR ARRESTED: The Halia police arrested four accused and recovered 175 litres of illicit liquor recently. Reports said that during routine patrolling Halia police was tipped off by an informer about illicit liquor trade in Adva Colony area. The police raided the place and found chemicals, empty bottles, bottle covers etc in a house along with persons involved in packing there.

Thereafter the police arrested them and seized the liquor. After registering a case under relevant sections of the Excise Act in this connection the police sent them to jail.

Bengal Gov meets Prez over law & order in State

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

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

The Governor who reportedly met the President for about 45 minutes submitted a note detailing his observations on the deteriorating law and order and human rights, State repression of opposition work-

ers, persecution of them by the ruling Trinamool Congress and what he called a "stunning silence" of the powers that be towards the ongoing bloodshed and loot.

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

The Governor is also reported to have given detailed reports on every district and sub-division where such violence was taking place and also the places he recently visited to acquire a firsthand experience of the alleged torture being perpetrated on the people, requesting presidential action.

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

Sources said that the Governor briefed the Home Minister about the "retributive violence" being perpe-



trated on the people in a planned manner with the State Government turning a blind eye on the situation. He is also known to have raised issue of latest "sectarian" attacks that took place at Chandannagore in Hooghly district and Titilaya area right in the heart of Capital Kolkata.

Earlier Bengal Opposition Leader Suwendu Adhikari too had complained about a Basirhat-Dhulagarh like communal attacks being organized in these two places.

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

Centre dares impose Article 356."

The Governor who was on a 3-day trip to the national Capital earlier met Union Ministers Prahlad Singh Patel and Prahlad Joshi before tweeting "... had useful interaction with Union Minister of Coal and Mines and Parliamentary Affairs..." Sources reporting on the "useful interactions" said

talks also featured on investigations into the multi-crore coal scam from Bengal --- involving some of TMC's top leadership.

Earlier complaining on the alleged "retributive post poll violence" Dhankhar said how the State Government was turning a blind eye to the incidents that had rendered thousands of people homeless and

properties worth cores looted and destroyed.

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

BJP creating 'perspective' for ulterior motive: Didi

Kolkata: Bengal Chief Minister on Thursday chose to ignore Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar's visit to Delhi saying "speech is silver and silence is golden."

Instead of directly attacking the Governor --- a usual tactic that she would adopt for the past couple of years --- Banerjee focused on the "political gimmicks" of the BJP to create a "perspective" for some ulterior motive.

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

state of affairs in the BJP-ruled States she said how the saffron party was not bothered about the situations in UP, MP, Gujarat etc where "people are dying like animals and their bodies floating in the rivers."

Refuting charges of post-poll violence Banerjee said, "as journalists you must have better information about the so-called violence ... but have you seen violence anywhere? ... some incidents happened during election, but at that time, the Election Commission was in charge ...," reminding how the BJP was "trying to create a perspective. ... But it is not

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

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

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

Kerala HC rejects PIL challenging reform moves in Lakshadweep

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

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

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

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

The judges observed that the observation of the legality of the draft regulation which was under the active consideration of the administration was completely premature. Because of the draft administrative reforms which were opposed by the inhabitants of the islands, the BJP unit is getting isolated. Every day hundreds of party workers are leaving the Hindutwa brigade for good though there are hardly 150 party activists in the islands.

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

However, in the event of her arrest, she should be released on bail, the court ordered.

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

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

The Covid-19 deaths dropped to 636 in Maharashtra on Thursday, even as the infections came down to 9,830 in the State. A day after Maharashtra logged 1,236 deaths and 10,107 fresh cases, the daily deaths came down by nearly half, while the infections dropped marginally by 277. With 636 deaths reported on Thursday, the Covid-19 toll in the State jumped from 1,15,390 to 1,16,026. With 9,830 fresh infections, the total infections in the state rose from 59,34,880 to 59,44,710.

As 5,890 patients were discharged from the hospitals across the state after full recovery, the total number of people discharged from the hospitals since the second week of March last year increased from 56,79,746 to 56,85,836.

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

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

Bharadwaj said, "CBSE is also developing a software on the basis of which schools can calculate marks for Class 12 exams." He mentioned that the students who wish to take exams can appear once the situation get normal. "The process of exams for students who want

to take will be initiated after results," he said adding the Class 10 Board results will be declared by July 20.

On its part, the CISCE mentioned that performance of the candidates in the school examinations in the subjects in Classes 9 and 10, measured through their best marks obtained in the two years (referred to as raw marks) and the best performance of the school in the last six years will be evaluated. "The first two factors measure the subject proficiency of the candidates, while the last is a measure of the general quality of the schools the candidates are appearing from," CISCE official statement said.

The assessment scheme released by the board includes student's marks in Class 10 board exams, project, practical work in subjects, best marks obtained in school exams in Classes 11 and 12, and best per-

formance of the school itself in the last six years. The CISCE arrived at this after considering data from 2015 to 2020.

The CISCE's Class 12 ISC result formula was devised by a committee of three experts who are statisticians and "six in-house members". The panel analysed data for one lakh students from across 1,200 schools for the Class 12 ISC result and 2.2 lakh students from 2,500 schools for the Class 10 ICSE exam. The evaluation formula, however, has evoked mixed reaction from experts with some hailing the criteria while others terming it to be unfair move for students who will step into their higher education system.

"In my opinion, more weightage should have been included for internal exams conducted in class 12 as students become serious about academics after joining class 12. They tend to take class 11 less

seriously as it is not a Board class. Also including weightage for class 10 is not very wise as it includes many subjects which students don't pursue at the senior secondary level and has no relevance at this stage," said Meenu Kanwar, Principal of the Amity International School Mayur Vihar, New Delhi.

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

"I believe the CBSE and the members of the Committee to set the evaluation process did their best to keep intact a sound school education. Now with this we look forward to abide and hence convey the markings to the Board sooner we get an official communication in this regard," said Ojha.

Army takes stock of LAC, LOC situation

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Army top brass on Thursday began a three-day brainstorming session to review the situation on the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in Ladakh and the Line of Control (LOC) and its operational preparedness to meet any challenge. Incidentally, the Army Commanders' Conference comes a year after the Galwan Valley clash in Eastern Ladakh.

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India will retaliate strongly if provoked, Rajnath warns China

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

As face-offs continue at the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in Ladakh, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Thursday cautioned China that India is a peace loving nation but will hit back strongly if provoked. He also paid tributes to the 20 Indian army personnel including the commanding officer who were killed in a brawl with the Chinese troops in the Galwan valley a year ago. Dedicating 12 strategic-

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

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

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

Highlighting the significance of the 12 roads including 10 in Arunachal Pradesh and one each in Ladakh and Jammu and Kashmir, he said they will not only give a boost in connectivity but would facilitate faster movement of troops along the international border.

Trees worth ₹1,50,000 cr looted from Kerala in last 2 years: Environmentalist

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

Trees, some of them are known as Royal Trees, worth ₹1,50,000 crore has been looted from Kerala during the last two years alone, according to leading environmentalist John Peruvanthanam who knows the forests of the State like the back of his hand.

Sir, as he is known across Kerala had toured the districts from where he got information about the illegal tree felling braving his own life and what he saw was massive robbing of forests by the axis consisting of politicians-bureaucrats and timber mafia. "Rose Wood, which is also known by the name the Royal Tree, costs more than ₹700 lakh per cubic feet. Thousands of such trees have been chopped away by this cartel. Most of the trees cut down were taken away from the country in cargo aircraft and ships. These are used in the construction of castles, palaces and ranch houses in Europe and USA," said John Peruvanthanam, the unofficial forester of the State. He said that trees which were more than 1000 years old

were cut down and taken away by the mafia. The environmental and ecological values provided by these trees were thousand fold more than the ₹1,50,000 crore that the exchequer lost by the illegal felling of these trees. This is the biggest anti-national activity scene in Kerala," he said.



Opposition V D Satheshan made a startling disclosure on Thursday that the bureaucrat-politician-forest poachers cartel has swindled the entire forest in the State.

"They have cut down all rare species of trees from areas where there was semblance to green cover in the State. We understand that forest land in eight districts were slaughtered

by the Pinaryi Vijayan Government that has been ruling the State since 2016," Satheshan told reporters after leading a team of Opposition party leaders to areas which were cleared off forests by the timber mafia.

The opposition party leaders visited the entire forest ranges in the State from trees were cut down indiscriminately. "What we saw was wanton destruction of the fragile forests in the State.

There were trees, nay, rare trees, many of them thousands of years old, which were felled by the mafia with the official patronage of the ministers," charged Satheshan.

On Thursday, a section of the vernacular media had come out with a quote from additional chief secretary A Jayathilak, who in a demi official letter to Land Revenue Commissioner K Biju stated that there were many errors in the Government Order issued to facilitate felling of trees. According to Jayathilak, the government was forced to withdraw the controversial order following large scale illegal felling of trees.

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No relief for 10K encroachers in Aravali forest

Apex court refuses to stay order for removal of encroachments in Faridabad's Aravali forest area

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

“We want our forest land to be cleared,” the Supreme Court made it clear on Thursday as it refused to stay its direction asking the Haryana Government and the Faridabad Municipal Corporation to remove all encroachments, consisting around 10,000 residential constructions, in the Aravali forest area near Khori village.

The bench of Justices A M Khanwilkar and Dinesh Maheshwari asked the State and the civic body to comply with its June 7 direction in this regard, observing “land grabbers cannot take refuge of rule of law” and talk of “fairness”. The Bench had also sought the compliance report from the State government officials after removing all encroachments from forest land near Khori village in Faridabad district with-



in six weeks. During the hearing conducted through video-conferencing, advocate Aparna Bhat, appearing for the petitioners who have sought a stay on demolition of these structures, said there are around 10,000 families in the village. “Please don’t give us numbers. It makes no difference. We want out forest land to be cleared,” the bench said,

adding, “We have given enough time. The notification was issued but you continued there at your own risk.” “This is forest land. This is not ordinary land,” the bench

observed. Bhat argued about rehabilitation and said that the State authority has not taken up the issue of eligibility and identification process has not been done. The bench referred to its April 5 order, passed in a matter related to the issue, and said the civic body will take steps in accordance with law. “You have to evict them in accordance with law. You have to give benefit of scheme (of rehabilitation) to those who are eligible,” the bench told the counsel appearing for the municipal corporation.

The bench, while asking whether the petitioners had given additional documents to the corporation for verification, observed that enough time was already given earlier. “Look at these people and their situation. They are migrant labourers. There are children,” Bhat said and also referred to the COVID-19 pandemic situation. “That is for the state to do. We are only concerned with the vacation of forest area. We have given enough time earlier,” the bench observed.

The apex court observed that people there can produce their documents for identification and rehabilitation to the corporation. When Bhat referred to global guidelines for non-eviction during pandemic, the bench said, “We are not concerned with global guidelines. This issue is going on for long.” The bench said that no indulgence can be shown at this stage. It noted that petitioners were obligated to produce documents before the corporation

for the rehabilitation scheme and they have failed to do so. The bench said that clearance of encroachment on forest land would be done by following the due process of law. It said that larger issues related to the matter are pending and it would take up the plea on July 27. The Judges also rejected Haryana Government’s arguments of violence, stone pelting during demolition attempts. “You know what you have to do. We don’t want to say on this. We want our order to be complied with,” the bench said. It had said that Superintendent of Police, Faridabad, shall be personally responsible for ensuring adequate logistical support and police protection to the officials of corporation.

Post-Covid syndrome grips more than 23% patients: Study

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

It’s almost three months that Rajeev Chaudhary (54) has been declared Covid-19 negative. But he is still reeling under the post-Covid syndrome, which the doctors call ‘long Covid’.

“My sugar level has shot up. I feel fatigued whole day as if there is no strength in my body. At times, I feel very depressed while anxiety lingers on,” the Delhi government official shares the trauma he’s going through daily.

Chaudhary is not the only one who is grappling with post-Covid health issues. According to a study, among all patients infected with the coronavirus disease, more than 23 percent continued to suffer from one or more health issues even a month after being diagnosed with Covid-19.

Patients with such post-Covid conditions are variously referred to as having long-haul Covid, long Covid or post-acute sequelae of Covid-19 (PASC), said the study by an NGO FAIR Health which had analysed private health care claim records for nearly 2 million people diagnosed with Covid last year. The people in the study ranged in age from babies to the elderly; some 53 percent were female and 47 percent were male.

The five most common post-Covid conditions across all ages were pain, breathing difficulties, hyperlipidemia, malaise and fatigue, and hypertension. Pain, breathing difficulties and intestinal issues were the top conditions among the paediatric population (0-18). More than 25 per cent young individuals aged between 19 and 29 showed cardiac inflammation post-Covid.

As per the study, 50 per cent patients hospitalised with

Pvt hospitals start inoculating people with Sputnik jabs

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Russia’s Covid-19 vaccine — Sputnik V — is finding takers in the private sector with hospitals like Indraprastha Apollo, Fortis Healthcare and Madhukar Rainbow Children’s Hospital starting administering the jab to people.

Dr Reddy’s Laboratories has started inoculation with Sputnik V, as part of the soft launch in India after it obtained regulatory clearance from the Central Drugs Laboratory. In April, Sputnik V received an emergency use authorization in India.

Reddy’s administered the first dose of the vaccine in India in Hyderabad under a limited pilot on May 14. The vaccine is currently priced at \$12.9 (Rs948) plus tax for one dose in India. This price is expected to reduce after local supply commences.

Dr Reddy’s Laboratories co-chairman and managing director G V Prasad said: “With the rising cases in India, vaccination is our most effective



tool in our battle against Covid-19.

Fortis Memorial Research Institute, Gurugram and Fortis Hospital, Mohali have decided to launch it as part of a limited pilot roll-out from June, 19 2021. The two-dose vaccine will be available at two hospitals. In the coming days, the vaccine will be available at more Fortis hospitals across 11 cities as part of the phase-wise pilot project.

Dr Ashutosh Raghuvanshi, MD and CEO, Fortis Healthcare, said, “Till date, our units were only providing Covaxin and

Covishield. We are the first to provide a third vaccine option, at Fortis Memorial Research Institute and Fortis Hospital Mohali, with the dual objective of expanding and scaling up the vaccination drive and lowering the infection risks to future mutations of the virus.”

Sputnik V has been developed by Russia’s Gamaleya National Research Institute of Epidemiology and Microbiology. Hyderabad-based Dr. Reddy’s Laboratories has partnered with Russian Direct Investment Fund (RDIF) for the roll out of the two-dose vaccine in India.

63% drop in domestic air traffic in May

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

There was a 63 per cent drop in domestic air traffic in May compared to April as the Covid-19 second wave ravaged the entire country. In numbers, around 21.15 lakh domestic passengers travelled by air in May compared to 57.25 lakh who travelled in April.

According to the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA), 78.22 lakh people travelled within the country by air in March. Air India, GO FIRST (previously known as GoAir), Vistara and AirAsia India carried 4.29 lakh, 1.38 lakh, 97,000 and 64,000 passengers respectively in May, the data showed.

It was due to the second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic that had badly hit the country and its aviation sector. While IndiGo carried 11.69 lakh passengers in May, a 55.3-per cent share of the domestic market, SpiceJet flew 1.99 lakh passengers, accounting for a 9.4-per cent share of the market, according to data shared by the DGCA.

The occupancy rate or load factor of the six major Indian airlines was between 39.3 per cent and 64 per cent in May, it stated. The occupancy rate at SpiceJet was 64 per cent in May, the DGCA noted.

The occupancy rates for IndiGo, Vistara, GO FIRST,



Air India and AirAsia India were 51.2 per cent, 40.9 per cent, 63.3 per cent, 39.3 per cent and 44.4 per cent respectively, it added. India resumed domestic passenger flights on May 25 last year after a gap of two months due to the coronavirus pandemic.

June and July, 2020, had seen 19.8 lakh and just over 21 lakh domestic flyers, respectively, as per DGCA data. As the second wave unleashed its ferocity, the numbers first dropped to 57 lakh in April and then crashed to 21.1 lakh in May, 2021 — a figure seen in the first two months after domestic flights’ resumption on May 25, 2020.

Indian airlines are allowed to operate a maximum of 50 per cent of their pre-pandemic domestic flights. The DGCA data mentioned that in May, IndiGo had the best on-time performance of 98.7 per cent at four metro airports — Bengaluru, Delhi, Hyderabad and Mumbai.

Vistara and AirAsia India were at the second and third positions at these four airports in May with 98.1 per cent and 97.4 per cent on-time performance respectively, the DGCA said.

Covid 3rd wave unlikely to hit kids much, says survey

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The possible third wave of Covid-19 is unlikely to affect children much, according to a multi-centric community based serosurvey study conducted by AIIMS, Delhi, thus contradicting apprehensions that a future Covid-19 wave may disproportionately hit kids.

The survey revealed that infection rates among kids and adults in five cities in different parts of the country, in both rural and urban areas, were similar. The data also showed that irrespective of the age groups, rural sites had lower sero-positivity compared to the urban sites.

Citing the findings, the researchers associated with AIIMS in Bhubaneswar and Gorakhpur, apart from Delhi, JIPMER, Puducherry, Translational Health Science and Technology Institute, Faridabad and Agartala government medical college and WHO have ruled out the possibility that Covid-19 surges ahead are likely to hit children harder than before.

Blood samples were collected from 4,509 individuals, 700 aged 2-17 years and 3,809 aged 18 and above between March 15-June 10 to check for the antibodies against SARS coV 2 for the study.

Of the participants tested from Delhi, Faridabad, Bhubaneswar, Agartala and Gorakhpur, 55.7 per cent kids

and adolescents had antibodies against the COVID-19 virus, while in adults the seroprevalence was found to be 63.5 per cent.

“Hence, it is unlikely that any future third wave by a prevailing COVID-19 variant would disproportionately affect children two years or older,” the report has said.

Within the rural sites, children had slightly lower sero-positivity compared to adults. However, this differential prevalence was not observed in the urban sites.

It was also seen that the prevalence in children was slightly more among female participants compared to male (58.6 per cent versus 53.0 per cent) but there was no statistically significant difference in sero-positivity between male and female.

The researchers found that children aged 2-4 years and 5-9 years had almost identical sero-positivity rate (42.4 per cent and 43.8 per cent) which was lower than the rate observed for children aged 10-17 years (60.3 per cent).

The higher seropositivity rate in children aged 10-17 years may be reflective of their higher mobility and independence compared to the younger children, the study noted adding that as reported in the literature, a large proportion of children (50.9%) had an asymptomatic COVID-19 infection.

CRPF issues Covid norms to protect its personnel

RAKESH K SINGH ■ NEW DELHI

With varying protocols being adopted by different States for management of Covid-19 and allowing persons in their respective jurisdiction, the CRPF has issued a detailed set of guidelines for its personnel entering or reporting from leave from minimum seven days quarantine in case of negative test report and for positive cases, action as per existing guidelines.

The move comes after the status of Covid-19 was reviewed by the CRPF directorate and it was observed that the number of patients and positivity rate has declined considerably and the overall situation has improved and the overall situation has improved.



However, due to caution, care has been maintained in the CRPF for consolidation of the whole process of Covid-19 management.

The State governments are following different practices in respect of persons coming to respective State jurisdiction.

In Jammu and Kashmir, there is a provision for mandatory antigen test and no quarantine is required if the test report is negative. In Punjab, five-day mandatory quarantine is in place. In Rajasthan, no quarantine is required if a negative RTPCR report of not less than 72 hours is there or institutional quarantine for 15 days or till a negative test report is received. In Rajasthan, no RTPCR test

report or quarantine is required if an individual is vaccinated with both the doses of vaccine 28 days prior to arrival in the State.

Likewise, in Delhi, no quarantine/restriction is in place for inter-State movement. In Haryana and Chandigarh, no institutional quarantine is required for asymptomatic passengers.

In view of the differing Covid protocols in vogue across the States, the CRPF issued the detailed instructions for strict compliance.

The CRPF has directed that if the test report is negative or where the test is mandatory as per local administration norms, the personnel will undergo seven-day quarantine at respective unit/establishment locations.

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

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

BJP State president Dr Manik Saha, accepted “differences” saying “we are a family, and in a family it happens sometime and has been sorted out.”

He, However, skirted answer to the query on TMC’s attempt to poach BJP MLAs in Tripura.

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

with Chief Minister and MLAs including ‘rebels’. Santosh reportedly held a closed door one-to-one meeting at Agartala with several BJP leaders to understand the differences and address the grievances and differences.

BJP General Secretary had discussion with MPs Pratima Bhowmik and Rebati Tripura, Deputy Chief Minister Jishnu Debbarman and dissident MLAs. Tripura BJP in-charge Vinod Kumar Sonkar, who was also to arrive here, had to cancel his visit on account of a family issue.

Govt extends validity of motor vehicle documents

Uniform pollution certificate for all vehicles across India, PUC to have mobile number of vehicle owner

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Centre on Thursday extended the validity of motor vehicle documents like

driving licence (DL), registration certificate (RC) and permits till September 30, 2021, in view of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Simultaneously, the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH) also notified to make the PUC (Pollution Under Control) certificate for all vehicles uniform across the country and also to link the PUC database with the National Register.

Keeping the Covid protocols in mind, the MoRTH said

it has advised the enforcement authorities that the validity of fitness, permit (all types), licence, registration or any other concerned document(s) may be treated to be valid till September 30, 2021.

“This covers all documents whose validity has expired since Feb 1, 2020, or would expire by September 30, 2021. This will help out citizens in availing transport related services, while maintaining social distancing,” it said.



Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin called on Prime Minister Narendra Modi here on Thursday. Stalin, who recently led his party to a big win in the Assembly polls in his State, is on a visit to the national Capital. Pioneer photo



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PAPER WITH PASSION

India-Pak thaw?

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

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



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

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

PICTALK



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

Battle lines drawn

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

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



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

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

Can Israel be led by a fragile coalition?



PRIYADARSHI DUTTA

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

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

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

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



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

Naftali Bennett, the new Prime Minister of Israel, has impressive credentials. A commando by training, he served in reserve duty of the Sayeret Matkal. In 1999, he founded a high-tech company Cyota, specialising in information security. He also served as CEO, of Soluto, which he later sold for around \$100 million.

In 2005, destiny brought him close to Netanyahu, when the latter was Leader of Opposition in the Knesset. He became the head of



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

Netanyahu's general staff, and helped him formulate the education reform plan. Soon after Netanyahu came to power in 2009, Bennett was appointed as Director-General of the Yesha Council, an umbrella organisation of municipal councils of the Jewish settlement in West Bank. He led a fight to lift the freeze on fresh settlement activity of Jews in West Bank. The Jews view the West Bank (or river Jordan) as Judea-Samaria of the Old Testament. The same year he co-founded the 'My Israel Movement' which fought campaigns to boycott Israel, post-Zionist movements, and the boycott of Israel. His entrepreneurial achievements catapulted his name to the pages of Forbes magazine in 2012. In November, 2012 he was appointed as the chairman of the HaBayit HaYehudi, the national religious party. In 2013-14 in the elections to the 19th Knesset, he led his party to a historic tally of 12 seats. This time Netanyahu appointed him as the Minister of Economy, Minister of Religious Services and Minister of Jerusalem and Diaspora Affairs. In elections to the 20th Knesset (2015), Bennett's party won eight seats. He was made the Minister of Education and

Minister of Diaspora Affairs in the 34th Government.

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

With Bennett being pro-settlement, he is likely to follow a hawkish policy vis-a-vis West Bank. The two-State solution, defunct anyway since 2007, after Fatah and Hamas irretrievably split, will elude the liberals again.

(The writer is an author and independent researcher based in New Delhi. The views expressed are personal.)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

RIGHT TO PROTEST

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

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

LOOK OUT FOR CHIRAG

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

Let masking-up become a habit



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

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

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

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

A GOOD DECISION

Sir — The Central Board of Secondary

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

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

SOUND BITE

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



Kerala Leader of Opposition — VD Satheesan

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

United Nations Secretary-General — Antonio Guterres

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



Actor — Ayushmann Khurrana

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

Former Australia captain — Ian Chappell

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



Andhra Pradesh Industries Minister — Mekapati Goutham Reddy

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com



FIRST COLUMN

FIND INDIA'S PLACE IN THE WEST

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



KUMARDEEP BANERJEE

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



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

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

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

Steering the boat safely amid Covid

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



K SRINATH REDDY

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

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

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

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

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

Home care would be appropriate and ade-



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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

POINT COUNTERPOINT

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

— US PRESIDENT JOE BIDEN



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

— RUSSIAN PRESIDENT VLADIMIR PUTIN

Covid orphans must be a priority care group

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

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

The number of out-of-home care children in need of care and protection in India is estimated to be about 2.4 crore and the number is continuous-



SUBHASH C PANDEY

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

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

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



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

parents registered on CARINGS portal managed by Central Adoption Resource Agency (CARA) can adopt children. CARA prefers orphans under kinship care, with shelter homes being the last resort. A child under two years is considered 'legally free' to be adopted if no one approaches the shelter home for two months. The waiting period is four months for older children. As many as 5,693 children were adopted in 2010 and 5,964 in 2011. After the institution of CARA and CARINGS in 2015, the pace of adoption has distinctly slowed down to 1881 in 2015-16, 3,210 in 2016-17 and 2,160 in 2020-21. The pandemic has slowed down the adoption process further as it also affected functioning of courts.

There is a bias towards adoption of infants. Over 80 per cent of adoptions are of children below two years. Litigation and challenges end up delaying the adoption process. In the last three years, 174 cases ended in disruption — termination of adoption proceeding before finalisation — and five cases ended in dissolution — termination after finalisation.

Hundreds of adoption cases are still pending in courts. An amendment to the concerned Act to transfer powers vested in courts to District Magistrates in order to speed up adoptions process is awaiting Rajya Sabha approval. The amendment also seeks to give a prominent role to District Magistrates in superintendence of Child Care Institutions, mostly run by

NGOs supposedly under the oversight of the Social Welfare Department. It is found that the NGOs are interested in getting funding without properly providing even basic facilities of food, hygiene and sanitation. There have also been serious complaints of abuse of inmates in some of NGO-run facilities. The 2015 law had ushered in the concept of foster care in India in which the child is placed with a caregiver running a residential child care facility or in a private home of a foster parent. They receive financial support from Government.

The system provides personalized parental care in a family-like environment to a group of unrelated children in a community setting. It is considered suitable for street chil-

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

Sensex extends losses

AS FED'S TAPER TALK TRIPS WORLD MARKETS

PTI ■ MUMBAI

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"The Fed raised the US growth forecast to 7 per cent this year, while officials moved their first projected rate increases from 2024 into 2023 and opened talks about when to pull back on the USD 120 billion in monthly bond purchase program," said Vikas Jain, Senior Research Analyst at Reliance Securities.

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

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

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

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

PTI ■ MUMBAI

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

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

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

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

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

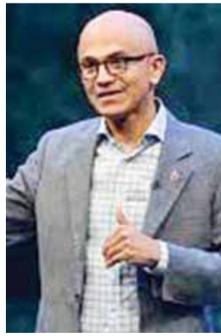
PTI ■ NEW YORK

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

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

"In this role, Nadella will lead the work to set the agenda for the board, leveraging his deep understanding of the business to elevate the right strategic opportunities and identify key risks and mitigation approaches for the board's review," the company said in a statement.

Nadella, 53, succeeds Thompson, who as the lead independent director, will retain significant authority including providing input on behalf of the independent directors on board agendas, calling meetings of the independent directors, setting agendas for executive sessions, and



leading performance evaluations of the CEO, the technology giant's new Chairman.

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

In addition to these role changes, the board declared a quarterly dividend of USD 0.56 per share. The dividend is payable September 9, 2021, to shareholders of record on August 19, 2021.

Nadella succeeded Steve Ballmer to become Microsoft's CEO in 2014.

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

IANs ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

The office memorandum issued by NPPA said that the change in GST rate has an impact on fixation of MRP of items attracting tax.

As the MRP of drugs and formulations is inclusive of tax, therefore, any downward change in tax/GST rates should be reflected in MRP and the benefit of this reduction should be passed on to the consumers, it said.

BRIEFS

HEALTH MINISTER PRAISES VACCINATION PERSONNEL
Jaipur: Health Minister Dr Raghunath Sharma congratulated officers and employees associated with vaccination on administration of 2 crore vaccination doses in the State under covid-19 vaccination programme. He has called upon the vaccination personnel to work sincerely in future too with the same diligence and enthusiasm and help people in saving from the effects of covid-19 virus.

FOURTEEN CROSS DISABILITY EARLY INTERVENTION CENTRES OPENED IN THE COUNTRY
Dr Thaaawarchand Gehlot, Hon'ble Union Minister of Social Justice & Empowerment inaugurated 14 Cross Disability Early Intervention Centres located in 7 National Institutes and 7 Composite Regional Centres under the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (DEPWD), Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment, Government of India today through the virtual platform in the presence of Hon'ble Union Ministers of State in the Ministry, Shri Krishan Pal Gurjar, Shri Ramdas Athawale, Shri Rattan Lal Kataria and Secretary, DEPWD, Ms Anjali Bhawra.

DIRECTOR TOURISM JAMMU CONDUCTS TOUR
Vivekanand Rai (IRS), Director Tourism Jammu today conducted an extensive tour of Patnitop, Sudhmahadev and Mantalai Area. He was accompanied by a team of officers wherein various Tourism projects undertaken by the Department were inspected. While paying obeisance to the holy shrines of Sudhmahadev and Mantalai he also interacted with local pujaris and tourists and listened to their suggestions for developing these areas. Sudhmahadev located 112 Km from Jammu, houses a highly revered Shiva Temple which is believed to be nearly 3000 years old, having a black marble idol of Lord Shiva and Goddess Parvati besides a Trishul.

DOORSTEP DELIVERY OF MILK, FRUITS, VEGETABLES
New Delhi: During the Covid pandemic, when buyers are extremely skeptical about buying their groceries physically, doorstep delivery of fruits and vegetables has seen high demands. Supr Daily enables customers to place their grocery orders anytime by 11 pm and get them delivered by 7 am the next day. "Nothing brings us more joy than ensuring the safety of our customers and giving them the convenience to get everything they need, all at one place," said Puneet Kumar, co-founder of Supr Daily.

NIFTY 50

BSE 500

SCRIP	OPEN	High	LOW	LTP	CHANGE
NIFTY 50	15648.30	15769.35	15616.75	15691.40	-76.15
ULTRACEMCO	6555.00	6750.00	6550.00	6699.00	-71.00
TCS	3265.50	3336.00	3260.00	3320.00	-53.65
INFY	1475.10	1502.65	1475.10	1501.20	-20.60
ASIANPAINT	3017.95	3073.95	3005.00	3059.00	-41.20
TECHM	1059.95	1084.70	1057.00	1083.10	-13.95
TATASTEEL	703.55	743	724.85	741.5	-8.25
HDFCLIFE	685.95	707.85	682.3	699.5	-7.35
WIPRO	552.5	561.5	549.55	559.25	-4
HCLTECH	980	988.95	978.55	985	-5.6
BRIJANNIA	3625.90	3663.00	3609.90	3656.45	-17
NESTLEIND	17915.00	18189.30	17900.00	18039.90	-747
HINDUNILVR	2398.00	2425.90	2386.40	2415.10	-72
RELIANCE	2200.00	2235.00	2179.90	2214.15	-25.5
DIVISLAB	4300.70	4324.45	4271.00	4298.00	-27
SHRECEAM	28015.05	28800.00	28015.05	28205.00	-197.5
KOTAKBANK	1747.25	1771.80	1736.00	1757.65	-29.5
M&M	802	809	792.55	804.65	-1.5
BAJAJFINSV	117500.00	119720.00	117390.00	118100.00	-461.5
LPL	1481.00	1499.85	1480.25	1484.50	-64
IT	834.85	848	828.65	834	-4
TITAN	1706.00	1722.00	1701.40	1706.00	-8.95
SUNPHARMA	671.8	673.55	661.65	665	-4.05
BAIFINANCE	5920.00	6115.00	5920.00	6034.00	-47.6
SRILIFE	983	992.7	977	983	-8.8
BPCL	477.95	482.9	476.3	476.9	-4.35
CIDLA	955	959.75	943.5	948	-8.75
POWERGRID	2440.5	2440.5	2367.5	2398.5	-23
GRASIM	1465.00	1490.05	1450.55	1454.90	-143
TATASTEEL	1118.95	1133.80	1095.65	1105.50	-11.65
ONGC	125.6	127	123.5	123.5	-1.35
IOC	206.95	208	205	205	-2.35
JSWSTEEL	702.1	711	693.45	695	-8.9
TATAMOTORS	348.4	352.9	342.25	344.9	-4.45
BAJAJ-AUTO	4120.00	4120.00	4042.00	4058.00	-52.45
ICICIBANK	630.05	637.55	626.7	631.55	-8.55
HDFC	2482.20	2506.95	2482.20	2487.75	-33.7
SBIN	421	425.95	416.6	419.7	-6.25
HDFCBANK	1466.00	1478.75	1460.00	1462.10	-2.25
BHARTIARTL	539.5	541.25	527.05	528.2	-8.55
AXISBANK	741.95	745.4	736	737	-12.8
COALINDIA	155	154.4	151.4	152.3	-3.25
DREDDY	5406.10	5414.00	5248.55	5292.60	-113.5
HEROMOTOCO	2947.00	2958.95	2902.00	2912.45	-62.95
MARUTI	7080.00	7099.10	6931.10	6955.00	-192.5
NTPC	118.2	120.6	116.95	117	-2.8
EICHMOTOC	2720.00	2772.90	2664.70	2668.90	-72.15
INDUSINDBK	1002.00	1021.80	968	987.3	-30
HINDALCO	376	380.3	365.05	369	-11.25
ADANIAPORTS	683	704.65	638.35	642	-63.5

SCRIP	Open	High	Low	LTP	MPHASIS	2085	2132.3	2021.4	2037.55
ADANIAPORTS	680.8	704	638.2	646.8	GRAPHITE	710	718.15	653.5	668
ADANIANT	1381.1	1435.25	1304.4	1367.95	MARUTI	7062.15	7097.3	6940	6968.75
TATAPOWER	124	126.85	122.2	123.9	NAUKRI	4791.25	4961.2	4791.25	4949.7
TATASTEEL	1119.95	1133.75	1096	1103.65	IOC	115.6	116.3	114.05	114.6
ADVENZYMES	406.05	447.75	399.7	431.55	HDFCLIFE	688	703.8	682.6	700.1
RELIANCE	2200.25	2235	2179.85	2215.55	TATAHEM	734.85	742	718.5	725.95
HCSL	53.7	57.3	53.7	57.8	L&TFFH	96	96.3	93.1	93.95
SAIL	127.55	133.35	127.4	128.3	AXISBANK	743.6	745.45	736	738.2
IBULHSGFIN	294	301.45	281.5	283.6	TECHM	1060	1084.35	1057.15	1080.25
ITC	207.2	208	205.05	205.5	GAIL	161.9	163.65	160.55	160.55
GUJGAS	636.85	674.8	626.05	659.9	JSWENERGY	63.85	66.05	65.75	65.1
MOTHERSUMI	244	244.9	237.15	239.65	AUBANK	1026.1	1055.75	1007.8	1026.2
SBIN	420.5	425.9	416.7	420.2	BRITANNIA	3601	3663.2	3601	3658.65
IDEA	9.5	9.77	9.39	9.43	M&M	799	809.9	793	805.45
CESC	797	819.15	774	780.5	BPCCL	478.6	482.8	476.15	477.1
INDUSINDBK	1000	1022	968.55	984.25	TATAELSI	3740	3819.8	3720.85	3737.25
JUSTDIAL	1042	1108.5	1026	1038.2	AMARAJIABAT	768	778.3	763.3	763.3
TATAMOTORS	348	352.9	342.4	345.6	CARERATING	704.7	749.95	697.55	712.45
BAIFINANCE	5927	6116.25	5927	6050	MGL	1294	1284.45	1232.45	1245.25
TCS	3260	3335.05	3260	3320.1	DEEPAKERT	443	464.1	438.3	452.8
INFY	1473	1502	1473	1497.05	GRAMFIN	1465	1490	1450	1457.45
HINDALCO	378	380.25	365.25	369.3	ABFRL	200.9	206.55	200.25	201.6
HFCL	52.05	54.75	52.05	53.2	GRANULES	32.08	321.65	316.37	316.5
ZEELE	225.1	231.5	222.4	223.7	IRB	150.1	150.1	140.6	143.25
BOMDYEING	91.5	97.95	91.3	94.75	NATCOPHARM	1136.8	1136.8	1075.5	1081.15
LICHSGFIN	494.9	498	478.1	482.05	DIVISLAB	4302	4322.85	4272	4301.1
UNIONBANK	36.1	39.25	36.1	38.05	IDFCFIRSTB	58.25	59.5	57.55	57.85
JINDALSTEL	400	411.5	392.6	395.85	COROMANDEL	861.9	897.8	860	885.05
GREAVESCFT	150	169.35	147.8	163.85	MINDTREE	2540	2508.2	2449.55	2478
HINDUNILVR	2395.35	2425.05	2386.1	2416.9	VOITAS	1016.05	1043.25	1013.6	1030.5
BHEL	65.65	68.05	65.2	65.5	PIDILITIND	2125	2159.8	2119	2127.5
PNCB	41	42.05	40.85	41.1	SOMANYCERA	537	565	516.2	532.95
ICICIBANK	633	637.55	627	632.5	JAGRAN*	617	637	615.5	626
BANKBARODA	83.5	84.6	81.3	81.85	APOLLOTYRE	232.9	234.6	228.7	229.85
AUROPHARMA	978	988.65	947.65	962.9	GICRE	203	208.8	201.15	203.8
KOTAKBANK	1750.1	1771.7	1737.05	1767.9	CONSUMER	9	9.95	9.31	9.5
BELM	1330	1424.65	1312.9	1382.25	PFC	129	129	126.45	127
ASHOKLEY	124.4	125.15	119.6	121.2	JKTYRE	150.3	154.2	147.2	152.9
HDFC	2481	2507	2481	2487	UBEL	1374.55	1417.45	1362.15	1402.65
JSWSTEEL	1415.7	1436.35	1393.4	1410.95	TORNTPHARM	287.5	2965	2869.9	2953.3
SRTSTEEL	704	711	693.5	696.4	BEL	149	149.75	147	146.15
JAISONPLTD	159.1	165.1	148.8	152.6	INDIGO	1711	1737.7	1696.15	1708.25
AIICORPINT	3005	3073.75	3001.5	3060.35	NOCLL	206	214.75	205.55	210.45
THYROCARE	1280	1							

Courts cannot appoint PM: Oli

Oli heading minority Govt after losing trust vote in House

PTI ■ KATHMANDU

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

President Bidya Devi Bhandari, at the recommendation of Prime Minister Oli, dissolved the lower house for the second time in five months on May 22 and announced snap elections on November 12 and November 19.

Prime Minister Oli is heading a minority Government after losing a trust vote in the House.

On June 9, the apex court issued a show-cause notice to the Office of the Prime Minister and the President's

Office to furnish a written response within 15 days.

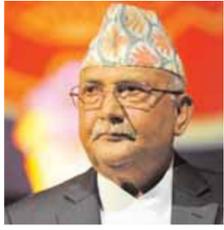
Furnishing a written reply to the Supreme Court on Thursday as demanded by the Constitutional Bench, Oli said the court cannot appoint a Prime Minister as it cannot undertake the legislative and the executive functions of the state.

The apex court received Oli's response via the Office of the Attorney General.

"The Court's duty is to interpret the Constitution and the existing laws, it cannot play the role of the legislative or the executive bodies," 69-year-old Oli said in his response.

"Forming governments on the basis of parties is the fundamental characteristic of the parliamentary system and the Constitution does not imagine party-less practices," he added.

Oli also defended the involvement of the President in



this whole issue, saying Article 76 of the Constitution grants the sole right to appoint a Prime Minister to the President only.

"Appointment of a Prime Minister is absolutely a political and an executive process," he underlined.

"As per Article 76 (5), there is no such provision of a person gaining or losing a vote of confidence in the House being examined by the legislature or the judiciary," he said.

On May 21, Nepali

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

However, Oli too laid claim to the government, saying he had support of 153 lawmakers including 32 Lawmakers belonging to Janata Samajwadi Party.

But President Bhandari said both claims by Oli and Deuba were insufficient. Soon after the move, the Oli government recommended the dissolution of the House and midterm elections for November.

As many as 30 writ petitions, including by the Opposition alliance, have been

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

The Supreme Court has started hearing on the case. Regular hearings on the case will resume from June 23.

Nepal plunged into a political crisis on December 20 last year after President Bhandari dissolved the House and announced fresh elections on April 30 and May 10 at the recommendation of Prime Minister Oli, amidst a tussle for power within the ruling Nepal Communist Party (NCP).

In February, the apex court reinstated the dissolved House of Representatives, in a setback to embattled Prime Minister Oli who was preparing for snap polls.

Oli repeatedly defended his move to dissolve the lower house, saying some leaders of his party were attempting to form a "parallel government".

Biden, Putin discuss ambassadors, nuclear weapons and more

AP ■ WASHINGTON

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

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

The most pressing issues the leaders discussed:

AMBASSADORS

Biden and Putin agreed to return their respective ambassadors to Washington and Moscow in a bid to improve badly deteriorated diplomatic relations between their countries.

Russia's ambassador to the United States, Anatoly Antonov, left Washington in March amid a row after Biden called Putin a killer in a television interview and imposed new sanctions on Russia over its treatment of opposition figure Alexei Navalny.

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

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

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



staff issues and the hope was an agreement could be reached in the next two months.

Neither administration official was authorized to comment publicly by name and both spoke on condition of anonymity.

CYBERSECURITY

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

Biden said he and Putin agreed to have their experts work out an understanding about what types of critical infrastructure would be off-limits to cyberattacks. He said the U.S. Presented Russia with 16 specific types of infrastructure, including energy, elections, banking and water systems, and the defense industry.

The agreement comes amid a flood of ransomware attacks against U.S. businesses and government agencies, including one in May that disrupted fuel supplies along the East Coast for nearly a week. The disruption was blamed on a criminal gang operating out of Russia, which does not extradite suspects to the U.S.

Other serious incidents include the SolarWinds intrusion discovered last year in which hackers, believed by

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

Biden said the U.S. And Russian governments would follow up on certain criminal cases, an apparent reference to cybercriminals operating with impunity from Russian territory.

Putin agreed there is mutual interest in the subject.

Biden also made an implicit threat against Russia, saying the U.S.

Has "significant cyber capability" it could use against Russia if it were to interfere with U.S. Critical infrastructure.

NUCLEAR WEAPONS

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

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

Biden said the goal is to work with Russia on "a mechanism that can lead to control of new and dangerous and sophisticated weapons that are coming on the scene now, that reduce the time for response, that raise the prospect of accidental war." He said this was discussed in detail.

No date was announced for the start of talks.

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

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

PTI ■ LONDON

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

The House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee (FAC) said its evidence spoke of an increasingly "bullying" stance of China in its dealing with organisations such as the United Nations and World Health Organisation (WHO).

In its 'In the room: the UK's role in multilateral diplomacy'

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

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

Editors of Hong Kong newspaper arrested under security law

AP ■ HONG KONG

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

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

Iran nuclear deal hangs in balance as Islamic Republic votes

AP ■ DUBAI

Iran's tattered nuclear deal with world powers hangs in the balance as the country prepares to vote on Friday for a new president and diplomats press on with efforts to get both the US and Tehran to reenter the accord. The deal represents the signature accomplishment of the relatively moderate President Hassan Rouhani's eight years in office: suspending crushing sanctions in exchange for the strict monitoring and limiting of Iran's uranium stockpile.

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

With analysts and polling suggesting that a hard-line candidate already targeted by US sanctions will win Friday's vote, a return to the deal may

be possible but it likely won't lead to a further detente between Iran and the West.

"It's certainly not as complex as drafting a deal from scratch, which is what the sides did that resulted in the 2015 deal," said Henry Rome, a senior analyst focusing on Iran at the Eurasia Group.

"But there's still a lot of details that need to be worked out," he added. "I think there's a lot of domestic politics that go into this and an interest from hard-liners, including the supreme leader, to ensure that their favoured candidate wins without any significant disruptions to that process."

The 2015 deal, which saw Iranians flood into the streets in celebration, marked a major turn after years of tensions between Iran and the West over Iran's nuclear programme.

Tehran has long insisted that its programme is for peaceful purposes. However, US intelligence agencies and International Atomic Energy Agency say Iran pursued an organised nuclear weapons programme up until 2003.

Israeli officer charged in killing of autistic Palestinian

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

The indictment came just over a year after the shooting of Eyad Hallaq. Hallaq's family had previously criticized Israeli authorities' investigation into Eyad's killing, and had called for much tougher charges. The officer, who remains unidentified in the indictment submitted to the Jerusalem District Court on Thursday, was charged with reckless manslaughter, and if convicted could face up to 12 years in prison.

Palestinian teen shot by Israeli troops in West Bank dies

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

The Israeli military said Wednesday that a soldier stationed near a wildcat settler outpost near the West Bank city of Nablus saw a group of Palestinians approaching, and that one "hurled a suspicious object at him, which exploded adjacent to the soldier."

The army said that the soldier fired in the air, then shot the Palestinian who threw the object.

3 Chinese astronauts enter space station after successful docking operation

PTI ■ BEIJING/JIUQUAN

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

According to the China Manned Space Agency (CMSA), Shenzhou-12 manned spaceship successfully docked with the space station core module Tianhe on Thursday afternoon and entered the orbital capsule from

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

FROM PAGE 1

3RD COVID...

On June 5, the Government had announced that it would implement the un-lock plan in 18 districts — Aurangabad, Bhandara, Buldhana, Chandrapur, Dhule, Gadchiroli, Gondia, Jalgaon, Jalna, Latur, Nagpur, Nanded, Nashik, Parbhani, Thane, Washim, Wardha and Yavatmal — from June 7.

Among other things, the CM directed the doctors and the task force officials present at Wednesday's meeting to increase the availability of medicine and health equipment in both urban areas in the state. "The vaccination will definitely play an important role. But at the same time our priority should be to ensure that the Covid norms like Covidnorms like social distancing are followed and there would not be over-crowding at public places. We need to increase the RT-PCR tests, procure more of PPE kits and we should be ready with adequate medicines, beds, Oxygen and other medical facilities at our hospitals," Uddhav said at the meeting. The CM said that the vaccination should be pursued aggressively. He said that since the country would be receiving 42 crore vaccine doses by August-September 2021, the state would also be benefitted by the arrival of new vaccine stocks.

CLASS 12 EVALUATION...

"Therefore, to ensure standardisation, each school will have to internally moderate the marks to account for the school level variations by using a reliable reference standard," the CBSE said, adding that the historical performance of the school, in terms of the best overall performance in the previous three years' Board examination, will be taken as the reference for moderating the marks assessed by the schools for 2020-21.

The board further said that in case, any student is not able to meet the qualifying criterion, he/she will be placed in "essential repeat" or "compartment category". "Students who are not satisfied with assessment, done based on the policy will be given an opportunity to appear in examinations to be conducted by the board when conditions are conducive for holding the examinations.

As per this policy, marks scored in later examination will be considered as final," the CBSE said.

The Council for the Indian School

Certificate Examinations (CISCE) also informed the top court that it will declare the Class XII results by July 20, after evaluating the students based on its well defined objective criteria. It has said that assessment of students would be done based on their marks obtained in Class X examination, performance in school examinations in class XI and XII along with practical and performance of school in the last six years.

The CISCE has said that among the factors used in the computation include best year for school from among the years 2015-2020, the best year for a school is the year when the school achieved the best average percentage in terms of the total scores (out of 500). Like CBSE, CISCE has also said that students who are not satisfied with the evaluation criteria may opt for giving the examination to be held when the COVID situation in India improves.

MORE FATAL...

In fact, C. auris has been reported from over 40 countries across six continents since its first description a decade ago, said a study. Prof Arunaloke Chakrabarti, mycologist and head of the Department of Medical Microbiology at PGIMER (Post Graduate Institute of Medical Education and Research), Chandigarh, said that hospital environments may serve as venues for C. auris transmission as it is a known environmental colonizer of ICUs.

"C. auris patients shed viable yeast cells from their skin continuously and thereby contaminate hospital environments. C. auris outbreaks occur in critically ill hospitalized patients and can result in mortality rates ranging from 30 per cent to 72 per cent," he said.

Experts say both C. auris and SARS-CoV-2 have been found on hospital surfaces including on bed rails, IV poles, beds, air conditioner ducts, windows and hospital floors.

Therefore, the standard COVID-19 critical care of mechanical ventilation and protracted ventilator-assisted management makes these patients potentially susceptible to colonization and infections by C. auris.

The resistance of C. auris to drugs like fluconazole is particularly worrisome, says yet another study, "New Clonal Strain of Candida auris, Delhi, India". It was published way back in 2013 when Candida auris traces were reported from two hos-

pitals by researchers led by Dr Anuradha Chowdhary from Vallabhbhai Patel Chest Institute, Delhi, India.

It says that "Candida species has been identified among 25 per cent of Intensive Care Unit (ICU) patients with central line associated bloodstream infections and the prevalence of C. auris was estimated to be ranging from 5 to 30 per cent among Candidemia patients.

The emergence of C. auris raises several serious concerns for public health primarily due to its outbreak potential.

Dr Chakrabarti, added that hand hygiene should be followed strictly by staff and patient attendants before and after contact. Soap and water and alcohol hand sanitizers with or without chlorhexidine have been found equally effective in eradicating hand carriage of C. auris, he said.

As per the Public Health England, key IPC practices include isolation of all infected or colonized patients; use of contact precautions in addition to rigorous hand hygiene; screening of close contacts; and a terminal cleaning once infected patients get discharged.

In their other study, Anuradha Chowdhary and A. Singh from Vallabhbhai Patel Chest Institute of the University of Delhi, New Delhi, India, B Tarai from Max Health Care Institute, New Delhi and A Sharma from International Centre for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology, New Delhi, found that candidemia affected 15 critically ill coronavirus disease patients admitted to an intensive care unit during the said period. Candida auris accounted for two thirds of cases with 60 per cent case-fatality rate.

On further analysis, the findings highlighted the role of hospital-acquired C. auris bloodstream infections, showing that the patients were probably infected while hospitalized.

"C. auris can be transmitted in health-care settings just like other multidrug-resistant organisms, such as carbapenem-resistant Enterobacteriaceae and methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus," said the study adding that "all patients in the ICU had indwelling invasive devices such as central venous and urinary catheters, which may be the source of C. auris infections (i.e., candidemia and urinary tract infection)".

At least, 6 of the 10 patients died, possibly because of multiple underlying health conditions. However, 67 per cent of those who died had persistent candidemia,

which may have contributed to their death, said the study.

AMID LJP CRISIS...

Earlier, On Tuesday, Chirag shared a letter with his uncle in which he mentioned the complaint of sexual molestation by a woman party worker against Prince. Chirag in his letter, dated March 29, mentioned that Prince was allegedly blackmailed by a woman over the allegations of sexual exploitation.

"When this matter came to my knowledge, I suggested Prince to register a complaint with the police. I have discussed this with Pasupati Kumar Paras, who is an elder in my family, but he did not take it seriously," Chirag said in the letter.

CENTRE PLANS STATUTE...

At present there are over 900 television channels which have been granted permission by the MIB are required to comply with the Programme and Advertising Code laid down under the Cable Television Network Rules.

Besides, there are at least 40 Over the Top (OTT) platforms including multinationals like Netflix, Amazon Prime and HotStar and hundreds of news content websites. The market size of OTT platforms in India is close to Rs 1,000 crore with around 20 crore users. Some of the OTT platforms are accessed through annual subscription fees, while a large number of them are free in a bid to attract subscribers.

In a statement, the Ministry said there is an institutional mechanism by way of an Inter-Ministerial Committee to address grievances of citizens relating to violation of the Programme/Advertising Codes under the Rules.

"Similarly, various broadcasters have also developed their internal self-regulatory mechanism for addressing grievances. However, a need was felt to lay down a statutory mechanism for strengthening the grievance redressal structure. Some broadcasters had also requested for giving legal recognition to their associations/bodies," it adds.

According to the Ministry, the Government shall constitute an Inter-Departmental Committee, chaired by the Additional Secretary in the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, and consisting of representatives from the Ministry

of Women and Child Development, Ministry of Home Affairs, Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, Ministry of External Affairs, Ministry of Defence, and representatives of such other Ministries and Organisations, including experts for hearing grievances or complaint. The committee will meet periodically and hear complaints.

The I&B ministry has been receiving complaints from the public over the adult content and language shown in OTT platforms that sometimes borders on soft porn. There have also been complaints against single-shop digital news websites for creating discontent in society by indulging in fake news without any redressal or retraction.

BJP FACTIONS STICK ON...

Another BJP leader and MLC H Vishwanath who met the BJP general secretary sought removal of the incumbent Chief Minister saying he was no longer fit to govern the State because of his "advance age. "All Ministers are unhappy with the Yediyurappa ji Government," he said. Interestingly, he went public with his demand against the CM despite Singh's advance directive that no one would air differences in public.

"Modi is constantly telling us that dynastic rule is dangerous. What is going on in Karnataka is the same thing. The Karnataka BJP has forgotten Modi. I told him public opinion about the government is becoming negative," he said.

Vishwanath also alleged "continuous interference and corruption" by the Yediyurappa family in the State Government and administration. Vishwanath, formerly from the JD(S), was among the 18 MLAs whose crossing over to the BJP amidst month-long political drama had led to the exit of Janata Dal Secular-Congress Government and facilitated BJP's return to power in Karnataka in 2019. Another anti-BSY leader Tourism Minister CP Yogeeshwar also met Singh. Yogeeshwar, a Congress turncoat, had recently visited Delhi to demand ouster of the CM.

On the other hand, Gokak BJP MLA Ramesh Jarkiholi said it is impossible to replace Yediyurappa and he would complete his remaining tenure as the CM.

Singh will continue his interaction with Karnataka leaders on Friday before returning to Delhi where he would sub-

mit his report to the Central leaders.

SETBACK FOR SAD, PUNJAB EKTA PARTY MERGES WITH...

He returned to the grand-old party on June 4 saying AAP convener Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal is a dictator.

Taking to Twitter, Khaira thanked Rahul Gandhi and Punjab Chief Minister Captain Amarinder Singh. Khaira also said it was a political blunder to join the AAP. "The Congress is the only viable platform to fight the fanatic and fascist BJP at the national level and the only option to prevent the corrupt and anti-Punjab Badal family from hijacking the State," he added.

The Assembly elections in Punjab will be held in February or March 2022. Earlier this week, the SAD and BSP stitched an alliance to contest the upcoming Assembly elections in Punjab.

3 STUDENT...

A senior jail official said Kalita and Narwal were released around 7 pm and Tanha around 7.30 pm. The three student activists were not released from the prison on time over delays in verifying their addresses and sureties. In its order for the immediate release of the trio, the Delhi court said the delay in the verification process by police could not be a plausible reason for the accused to be kept imprisoned. After securing bail from the High Court, the activists had moved the trial court, seeking immediate release from prison.

When the trial court deferred the order on their plea for Thursday, they moved the Delhi High Court, which ordered the lower court to proceed with the issue with "promptitude and expedition".

The three student activists were arrested in May 2020 and are accused of being the "masterminds" of the February 2020 violence, which left 53 people dead and more than 200 injured.

The High Court, while granting them bail on June 15, had observed that "in an anxiety to suppress dissent, the state has blurred the line between right to protest and terrorist activity" and if such a mind-set gains traction, it would be a "sad day for democracy". The Delhi Police has, however, moved the Supreme Court, challenging the High Court judgement granting them bail in the case.



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

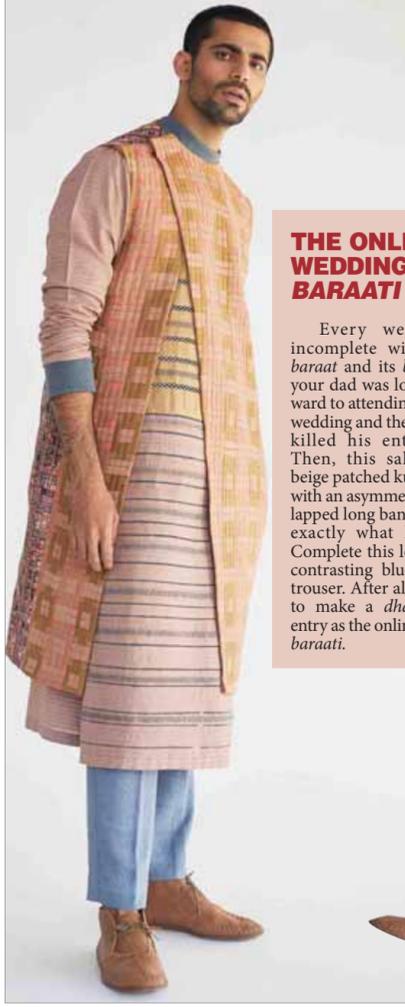
GIVE HIM THE FASHION BOOST HE NEEDS

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

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

THE SUNDAY BRUNCH DAD

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



THE ONLINE WEDDING BARAATI DAD

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



THE FUN WITH KIDS DAD

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



THE DATE NIGHT DAD

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

THE DAILY CHORES DAD

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



THE KITCHEN KING DAD

Does your dad love to play chef? Then spruce up his look in this blue mesh print tunic teamed with shorts. Also, remind your MasterChef Dad to wear an apron.

So, this Father's Day give your #SuperHeroDad the stylish look he deserves.



THE ZOOM MEETING DAD

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



Being economical in a time of extravagance

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



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

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

Kinetic Honda) brought CVTs onto the last generation of the City and the current generation car gets one as well. As costs for such gearboxes fitted in cars have come down, vehicles such as the Nissan Magnite are also getting CVT boxes. In fact, it may be only a matter of time before CVT gearboxes replace the slow Automated Manual Transmission (AMT) gearboxes.

However, truth be told, I'd never spent time with a CVT vehicle for an extended period or made regular highway runs in such vehicles. But these last three months with the Verna have been illuminating, to say the least. CVTs have their flaws, they are not designed for drivers who push the pedal to the metal. It is not easy to explain the way they work without diagrams, but you can think of two cones at the end of two shafts — one from the engine and the driving shaft that is connected by a band, in-car CVTs this is usually a metal chain and well, the cones move back and forth giving an infinite amount of ratios between the engine shaft and the drive shaft, thus the

name CVT. Well, in practical applications, there are usually a few steps, in the case of the Verna IVT, eight steps which you can consider as 'fixed' ratios. This is best explained by a diagram, and you can watch an explainer I have out on YouTube under my Excuse The Beard series.

Hyundai-Kia have both been really aggressive in pushing their Dual-Clutch Transmissions (DCT) vehicles from the i20 to the Seltos. That is a totally different type of automatic technology where there are two clutches, one for odd gears and one for even (and the reverse) gears. Because of that gear shifts in DCT vehicles is lightning fast and they are far more oriented to the enthusiastic driver. In the i20 DCT I kept over two months earlier this year, it was a blast to drive. The IVT cars are not so much fun to drive, being far more sedate.

However, as petrol prices cross ₹100 in some states and might even cross ₹125 in a couple of months, the IVT comes into its own when it

comes to fuel economy. The Verna I drove delivered over 18.5 kilometres per litre on the highway and even inside the city delivered over 15 kilometres per litre on longer drives. The Verna is not a small car, it is well-equipped and being summer, the air-con was on all the time as was the seat cooling. I did not deliberately drive economically, keeping the car at the speed limit of the expressways, albeit on cruise control and the IVT always kept the 1.5 litres naturally aspirated petrol engine in a very sweet spot. Delhi to Kanpur is near as makes no difference 500 kilometres, and there are some bad patches towards the end. But it was still superb. Put on a podcast, there are some excellent ones to listen to and drive this car, and you'll be surprised. Not just at how nice it is, but also how little fuel it drinks to get the job done.

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

To look at artist Krishen Khanna's *bandwallahs*, at the Grosvenor online show in London, is to understand both sensitivity and sensibility. The colours, the contours, and the charisma of life are what looks back at you in this series called — *Paintings In My Sitting Room*.

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

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

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

Timeless pieces

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



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

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

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

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

TRENDBLAZER



SIDDHANT RELIVES CHILDHOOD

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

fairtalk



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

dailytalk



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

MAYA OPENS UP ON HER ROLE IN LUCA

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





PITAARA OF WHOLESOME FOOD

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

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

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

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

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

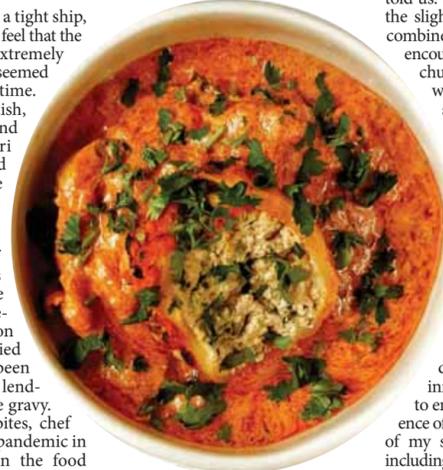
kebabs.

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

The chef is running a tight ship, and we couldn't help but feel that the Pitaara Kitchen is an extremely successful venture as he seemed to be on his toes all the time. However, for the next dish, he sat down with us and served us some Dogri meat curry and asked his staff to pass on some bajra rotis. He explained that this is a traditional meat curry from the Dogri community of Jammu. The mutton was cooked with some choice spices and had a somewhat sweet taste to it, on account of the sour-dried mango powder it has been finished in, which also lended some viscosity to the gravy.

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

We were rubbing our tummies in contentment when the chef unveiled the mango tart. And we were left wishing that we should not have scarfed down as much. The thick, luscious mango curd, topped with roasted pistachios, was complemented by the bajra tart shell it was served in. We stifled several burps as we bid adieu to the chef. We hope that last bit is enough to convey that you should give the Pitaara Kitchen a chance if you would like to treat yourself to some tweaked regional specialties.

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

Nothing that tomato soup can't fix

■ AVNI KAUL

CARDIOVASCULAR HEALTH

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

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

BONE HEALTH

The vitamin K and calcium in tomato soup help you get healthy bones. Lycopene in tomato soup boosts bone mass which helps countering osteoporosis. Consuming tomato soup daily decreases the blood levels of TNF alpha by approximately 34 per cent. A deficiency in lycopene could increase oxidative stress in the bones and cause unwanted changes in the tissues. You can keep these issues at bay by making tomato soup a daily part of your meal.

DISEASE COUNTERING LYCOPENE

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

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

BLOOD CIRCULATION

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

VITAMINS

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

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

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



R E C I P E S



CHEESY POTATO AND QUINOA CAKE

WHAT YOU NEED

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

METHOD

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

chillies, coriander and finely chop them all.

- In a bowl take boiled, grated potato, quinoa, chopped ginger, green chillies, coriander and mix it well with the bread crumbs and other spices.

- Make a round ball of the mixture and stuff the smoked cheese in the middle of the ball.

- Refrigerate for 20 minutes.

- Heat oil in a pan and deep fry.

- Serve hot with mint & tamarind chutney and quinoa salad with fruits on the side.

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

STRAWBERRY SPONGE CAKE

WHAT YOU NEED

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

METHOD

- Add butter to a



microwave safe glass bowl.

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

Serve hot, with fruit coulis.

Courtesy: Whirlpool, India.



CALIFORNIA WALNUT AND CARROT FALAFEL

WHAT YOU NEED

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

- A pinch of salt
- Pepper to taste

METHOD

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

salt and pepper to taste.

- Add the chopped walnuts, mix well and form balls. If it's too moist, you can add a little oatmeal, chickpeas or whole wheat.
- In the oven tray lined with vegetable parchment paper, bake the balls at 180°C for 15 to 20 minutes. Turn them over and bake for another 10 to 15 minutes.
- Serve hot!

Courtesy: Chef Sabyasachi Gori.



DESSERT COCKTAIL: SPEYSIDE TIRAMISU

WHAT YOU NEED

- Glenfiddich 12-year-old: 60ml
- Chocolate sauce: 15 ml
- Single cream: 15 ml
- Espresso shot: 15 ml
- Caramel syrup/ honey/ maple syrup: 10 ml

- Orange peel/ cinnamon: as per preference

METHOD

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

Courtesy: Angad Singh Gandhi, Glenfiddich India brand ambassador.



AVOCADO AND MANGO URAMAKI

WHAT YOU NEED

For the sushi rice:

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

For the sushi rolling:

- Avocado, cut length-wise: 1 bowl

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

METHOD

For cooking the rice:

- Wash and rinse the sushi rice in running water to extract the excess starch from the rice grains. (process to be repeated five times)
- Boil the sushi rice with water, with the ratio of 1:1 ¼.
- Make the sushi vinegar by mixing vinegar, sugar and salt.
- Once the rice is cooked, mix the rice and sushi vinegar together and keep it covered with a moist

cloth until used further.

For rolling the sushi:

- Place the nori sheet on the sushi mat and uniformly spread a handful of sushi rice on the sheet.
- Sprinkle a mix of white and black sesame seeds on the sushi rice.
- Flip the nori sheet in such a manner that the sushi rice is facing the sushi mat.

- Place the cut alphonso mango and avocado on the nori sheet.

- Gently roll the sushi into a square shape applying even pressure throughout the roll and cut into eight equal pieces with a sharp knife.
- Serve with gari, wasabi and soy.

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

TWO IN 2 FOR AZZURRI

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

AFP ■ ROME

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



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

conceding a goal, sit first in Group A and are guaranteed a top-two finish and last-16 berth. "We played well, we wanted to

win at all costs," Italy coach Roberto Mancini told RAI. "They started well, it was not easy to win a second game in

five days." Mancini's men, looking to win Italy a second European title after their sole success in

Eriksen to have heart defibrillator implanted

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

"After Christian has been through different heart examinations it has been decided that he should have an ICD (heart starter)," the Danish football body said in a statement on Twitter.

The device, which is an improved variant of a pacemaker, is "necessary after a cardiac attack due to rhythm disturbances," it added.

DBU provided no details on the potential consequences for the 29-year-old Inter Milan player's future career.

Eriksen "has accepted the solution" and it had also been "confirmed by specialists nationally and internationally who all recommend the same treatment," DBU said. AFP

Ukraine end 6-match losing run

AFP ■ BUCHAREST

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

The West Ham forward grabbed the opener on 29 minutes in Bucharest and then teed up Yaremchuk with a brilliant first-time pass to double the lead five minutes later.

Ezgjani Aljoski pulled a goal back for North Macedonia just before the hour as he converted the rebound from his missed penalty, while Ukraine midfielder Ruslan Malinovskyi also saw a late spot-kick saved.

Andriy Shevchenko's side are now level on three points with Austria and the Netherlands in Group C after Ukraine ended a six-match losing run in the competition.

Major tournament newcomers North Macedonia have lost their first two games and



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

will be eliminated if the Dutch avoid defeat to Austria in Amsterdam, where victory for either side will secure a spot in the knockout phase.

Ukraine's 3-2 loss to the Netherlands last weekend saw them match the longest losing run in tournament history, a record shared with Yugoslavia, but they reignited their last-16 bid with a deserved victory over the Macedonians.

Yarmolenko edged closer to Shevchenko's all-time lead-

ing mark of 48 Ukraine goals, striking for the third game in a row as he slotted in from point-blank range after Oleksandr Karavaev's clever flick at a corner.

Yaremchuk had been guilty of wasting an excellent early chance when clean through on goal, but the Gent striker made no mistake when Yarmolenko's brilliant pass put him in the clear, squeezing the ball between Stole Dimitrievski and his near post.

1968, host Wales in their final group game on Sunday, with top spot up for grabs.

A new star shone for Italy at the Stadio Olimpico, where they had brushed aside Turkey 3-0 in the tournament's opening match last week, as Sassuolo's Locatelli scored twice before

Captain Giorgio Chiellini had an early effort ruled out by VAR for handball, before the 36-year-old defender was forced off with what appeared to be a thigh injury.

But the hosts always looked the more dangerous side and took the lead in the 26th minute.

Locatelli played a wonderful volleyed pass to his Sassuolo teammate Domenico Berardi on the wing, who powered to the byline and picked out Locatelli for a simple tap-in.

The three points and a place in the knockout phase for the fourth straight European Championship were all but secured less than seven minutes after the interval, when a flowing move ended with Locatelli driving a left-footed shot into the bottom corner from outside the box.

Immobile had wasted a couple of earlier chances but did grab his second goal of the tournament in the 89th minute, curling a low effort past Swiss goalkeeper Yann Sommer.

Switzerland will now likely have to beat Turkey in Baku on Sunday to reach the next round.



Outgoing Real Madrid captain Sergio Ramos, right, poses with 4 UEFA Champions League and 5 La Liga trophies that he won as a player during his 16 year stay at Santiago Bernabeu. @realmadrid

Ramos says goodbye to Real Madrid

AFP ■ MADRID

Sergio Ramos broke down in tears, saying leaving Real Madrid was one of the most difficult moments of his life as he bid farewell on Thursday after 16 years at the club.

The defender played 671 games for Real Madrid and will be remembered as one of the club's greatest ever players, having won five La Liga titles and four Champions Leagues.

The 35-year-old, who struggled for fitness and form last season, was unable to agree an extension to his contract and will become a free agent on July 1.

Ramos and Real Madrid president Florentino Perez delivered short speeches in a presentation room at the club's training ground, with Ramos' family in the audience.

"The moment has come, one of the most difficult in my life, because you are never ready to leave Real Madrid," Ramos said.

"The fans supported me in the good moments and the bad. I would have liked to say goodbye in the stadium.

"A wonderful stage is closing, one that has been unique in my life, but an exciting new chapter begins and I go into it with a lot of desire to show

my quality for many years to come."

Ramos said he wants to "add more titles" to his record and added "this is not a goodbye but a see you later because sooner or later I will return to Real Madrid."

Perez said it was "not an easy day", remembering how he signed Ramos, aged 19, from Sevilla for 27 million euros in 2005.

"He arrived wanting to take on the world," said Perez. "You are undoubtedly one of legends of Real Madrid. You have grown as a player here and been our iconic captain for years."

Buffon returns to Parma after 2 decades

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

"He is back where he belongs, he is back home. Superman returns," the club said on Twitter along with a short video in which 43-year-old Buffon said: "OK Kyle (Krause) I'm in. I'm back."

Club owner Kyle Krause replied: "Great news, welcome home."

Buffon holds the record for Serie A matches played with 657, since his first with Parma in 1995 as a 17-year-old. Since then, Buffon has



Goalkeeping legend Gianluigi Buffon as a Parma player. @ParmaCalcio_en

played just one season in Serie B when Juventus were demoted in 2006-2007 for the 'Calciopoli' match-fixing scandal.

The former World Cup winner announced last month he was leaving Juventus, the club he had played for since moving from Parma in 2001, apart from one season with Paris Saint-Germain in 2018-2019.

Former Italy captain Buffon is an iconic figure in Italian football, one of the stars of the Azzurri's 2006 World Cup triumph who racked up a record 176 caps for his country.

Buffon won 10 Serie A

titles with Juventus, as well as five Italian Cups with the club and second-tier Serie B in 2007.

He also won Ligue 1 with PSG in 2018-2019 before returning to the Turin giants. He won the UEFA Cup back in 1999 with Parma.

However, he has never won the Champions League after losing finals with Juve in 2003, 2015 and 2017.

Buffon has reportedly signed a two-year deal with the Emilia-Romagna side with a guarantee of being captain and number one goalkeeper and having a role in the club when his career ends.

shortpasses

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

India, NZ ready for ultimate Test

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



PTI ■ SOUTHAMPTON

WTC Final (Day 1)
 Live from 3:00 pm IST
 STAR SPORTS 1 NETWORK

INDIA-NEW ZEALAND IN TESTS

Venue	Played	Ind won	NZ won	Drawn
In India	34	16	2	16
In NZ	25	5	10	10
Total	59	21	12	26
Last 5 matches	5	3	2	-

HIGHEST TOTAL	India	New Zealand
India	583-7 dec at Ahmedabad	1999-00
New Zealand	680-8 dec at Wellington	2013-14
TOP SCORE	India	New Zealand
India	231 Vinoo Mankad at Chennai	1955-56
New Zealand	302 Brendon McCullum at Wellington	2013-14
BEST BOWLING (I)	India	New Zealand
India	8-72 S Venkatraghavan at Delhi	1964-65
New Zealand	7-23 Richard Hadlee at Wellington	1975-76

FAISEL FEATURES

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

For the connoisseurs of the glorious game, Test cricket is the ultimate format and despite its aura, the 144-year-old history needed a facelift along with a context which the World Test Championship provided despite various bottlenecks, including the Covid-19 pandemic.

For Kohli, India's most successful Test captain, a trophy-less cabinet doesn't do justice to the champion performer that he has been for a decade.

Kohli needs a global triumph. Every captain needs it but perhaps the Indian captain wants it more.

It's how history will remember him just like it remembers Dhoni with a lot of respect and utmost fondness for those heroic World title wins.

Williamson stands in his way with a bunch of fine cricketers and the most amiable set of players that one would come across in International cricket.

They are India's rivals but when Williamson hits those cover drives, Devon Conway teases a Ravichandran Ashwin or Ravindra Jadeja, Trent Boult gets one banana inswinger aimed at Rohit Sharma's bootlaces, the crazy fans of a cricket-mad nation wouldn't possibly be able to hate them.

These are 'Gentlemen Cricketers' who have grown on the fans bit by bit with their cricket and their conduct. It's difficult not to love them, especially after their gut-wrenching World Cup defeat at the Lord's two summers back.

If Williamson happens to stand with the ICC Test Mace on the Hampshire Bowl balcony, one might just smile and think that perhaps "Nice guys don't always finish last".

But after two years and half a dozen series later, a battle-hardened Indian team will give its all in a match, from which the winning team will also walk away with a \$1.6 million wind-fall.

There are a number of cricketers, who wouldn't practically have a shot at any other global trophy and for them it's their 'World Cup' which they want

to lay their hands on. Cheteshwar Pujara would be ready to take more bruises on his body if Neil Wagner starts bowling short. Ajinkya Rahane has grown in stature after a series for the ages and he will squeeze that extra ounce of energy to make it count.

Ravichandran Ashwin is unlikely to play a white ball World Cup again and wouldn't mind one bit if he can fool Williamson, Ross Taylor or the dogged Henry Nicholls with a carrom ball or a slider.

Ishant Sharma has grown 14 years older since that epic WACA spell to Ricky Ponting and India's senior-most player deserves to win a World Championship as much as anyone else.

Man to man, there is very little to choose between the two teams even

No surprises in India's playing XI

Southampton: India on Thursday went for tried and tested players, preferring veteran Ishant Sharma over Mohammed Siraj in the playing eleven for the World Test Championship final.

On expected lines, the team picked two specialist spinners in Ravindra Jadeja and R Ashwin, who are also more than handy with the bat.

The three pacers are Ishant, Mohammad Shami and Jasprit Bumrah, leaving no space for the impressive Siraj. Wicketkeeper-batsman Rishabh Pant will bat at number six.

though playing New Zealand in conditions that aid seam and swing isn't the easiest of tasks.

A final has its own set of pressures and no one would feel it more than Rohit Sharma and Shubman Gill, who would have the hardest job currently in Test cricket.

They would face the most under-rated but perhaps the best new ball pair in the business in Boult and Southee, who would make the new ball jag around and the old ball talk.

Kyle Jamieson hasn't played against England in Edgbaston but Williamson knows what kind of a nightmare he was with his steep back-of-length bounce generated from his 6 feet 9 inch frame. If that's not enough, Wagner will pound it in with stuff aimed at rib-cage enticing the batters to go for the hook and pull shots or take it on the body.

TEAMS

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



Indian batswoman Smriti Mandhana plays shot against England during 2nd Day play of the one-off Test between the two sides in Bristol. @BCCIWomen

Indian openers start strong after England post 396-9

PTI ■ BRISTOL

Shafali Verma and Smriti Mandhana provided India Women a confident start but the visitors still have a mountain to climb after England Women posted a mammoth 396 for nine in their first innings in the one-off Test, here on Friday.

It was the highest-ever total scored by a team against India in Test cricket and the visitors are still trailing by 333 runs with Verma (35 not out) and Mandhana (27 not out) taking India to 63 for no loss at tea on the second day.

Verma was at her usual aggressive self as she cut and pulled in her own inimitable style. The 17-year-old not only presented the straight bat for defence with grace, she also hit a six off Nat Sciver with remarkable ease. It was only the second six hit by an Indian woman in Test cricket.

Mandhana was cautious yet fluent. She got her first boundary when she punched one off Sciver in the cover region. When she got the opportunity, Mandhana did not hesitate to pull. Her elegant drives were a

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delight to watch. She raised the team's fifty with one such well-timed shot off Kate Cross.

Cross missed a chance to dismiss Mandhana (when on 23) when she dropped the left-hander in her follow through.

This was after Indian bowlers were made to put in some hard yards for the second consecutive day.

Debutant Sophia Dunkley (74 not out) led the charge with a resolute unbeaten half-century and two crucial partnerships with tail-enders after England resumed at the overnight score of 269 for six.

Dunkley first added 56 runs for the eighth wicket with Sophie Ecclestone (17) and then forged a 70-run stand with Anya Shrubsole, who punished the Indian bowlers in her career-best 47.

England declared their innings when Shrubsole was bowled by Sneha Rana, who ended up as India's best bowler with a four-wicket haul.