

OPINION 6
WHEN THE CALENDAR
DOESN'T GO FULL CIRCLE

WORLD 8
ISRAEL, HAMAS AGREE
TO CEASEFIRE

SPORT 12
COLOMBIA REMOVED AS
COPA AMERICA CO-HOST

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NOT ACTING
FOR MONEY:
ANSHUMAN
10 VIVACITY



Kids, teens fall victim to corona by thousands

Delhi, Punjab, TN, Gujarat, Karnataka, U'khand, Andhra, Maha report cases

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

Coronavirus, which spared children in the first wave, has started stalking them in the second wave with a string of States like Maharashtra, Punjab, Tamil Nadu, Gujarat, Karnataka, Uttarakhand, Delhi and Andhra Pradesh reporting spike in infection in this vulnerable group, including newborns. Those with co-morbidities are failing to survive. In Tamil Nadu, around 1,000 to 1,300 children are getting infected with the virus every day, while in Karnataka, 39,846 children aged 0-9 years and 1,05,044 aged 10-19 years have tested Covid-19 positive between March 18 and May 18 this year. Similarly, in Maharashtra, 99,022 in 11-20 age group and 38,265 children up to age 10

have tested Covid positive in the last few months. The situation is equally grim in Uttarakhand, where Covid cases among children in the 0-9 and 10-19 years' age groups have jumped by 155 per cent and 170 per cent respectively in comparison to the figure the past one year. However, from April 1 to May 19 alone, the hilly State has reg-

istered 3,313 cases — reflecting a surge of 155.46 per cent in 49 days over the past one year during the same period. Delhi and Uttar Pradesh too are grappling with the rise in infections among children. Cases of infection in children are trickling in from various districts like Surat, Ahmedabad and Vadodara in Gujarat. There also have been a few fatalities

as well in the State. For instance, of the 20,162 Covid-19 cases registered in Surat city, 296 are of children between the age group of 0 and 10 years. In the past two months, Punjab reported several cases of adolescents and younger population getting infected, while in Telangana, 2.7 per cent of Covid victims have been the children below 10 years.

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Covid-19 IN INDIA	
TOTAL CASES:	2,62,85,069 (+2,54,288)
DEATHS:	2,95,508 (+4,142)
RECOVERED:	2,30,58,817 (+3,52,744)
ACTIVE:	29,20,221
MAHA:	55,27,092 (+29,644)
K'TAKA:	23,67,742 (+32,218)
KERALA:	22,93,633 (+29,673)
UP:	16,59,212 (+7,682)
DELHI:	14,12,959 (+3,009)

Setback for delinquent billionaires! SC OK's insolvency proceedings

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

In a significant verdict, the Supreme Court on Friday held that individual guarantors to corporate loans will also undergo insolvency proceedings along with firms under the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC) and they are not absolved of liabilities even after resolution plans to revive the sick companies are approved.

The verdict, upholding Centre's November 15, 2019, notification bringing personal guarantors of corporate debtors under the net of the IBC, assumes significance in view of the fact that various high-profile industrialists may now face insolvency proceedings along with their debt-ridden firms under the IBC. Lenders had last year filed bankruptcy cases against promoters of alleged delinquent companies including Reliance Group's Anil Ambani, Dewan Housing Finance Corp Ltd's Kapil Wadhawan and Bhushan Power and Steel Ltd's Sanjay Singhal. The cases were however stayed on appeals filed in higher courts.

A bench comprising justices L Nageswara Rao and S



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Ravindra Bhat held that approval of the resolution plan for revival of sick companies under the IBC does not discharge personal guarantors of their liability to pay back banks or financial institutions (FIs) as they are bound by separate contracts. "It is held that approval of a resolution plan does not ipso facto discharge a personal guarantor (of a corporate debtor) of her or his liabilities under the contract of guarantee. As held by this court, the release or discharge of a principal borrower from the debt owed by it to its creditor, by an involuntary process, i.e. by operation of law, or due to liquidation or insolvency proceeding, does not absolve the surety/guarantor of his or her liability, which arises out of an independent contract," Justice Ravindra Bhat, writing the judgement for the

bench, said. The top court also permitted simultaneous insolvency proceedings against corporate guarantors before National Company Law Tribunals (NCLTs). "It is held that the impugned notification is legal and valid. It is also held that approval of a resolution plan relating to a corporate debtor does not operate so as to discharge the liabilities of personal guarantors (to corporate debtors). The writ petitions, transferred cases and transfer petitions are accordingly dismissed in the above terms, without order on costs," the 82-page judgement said. Now if a corporate debtor faces insolvency proceedings then the same proceedings can be "triggered" against individual guarantors too, it said.

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Official Covid-19 death data vastly undercounted: WHO

PTI ■ UNITED NATIONS

At least 3 million people are estimated to have died from the Covid-19 globally in 2020, about 2 times higher than the 1.8 million official fatality figure reported by countries to the World Health Organization (WHO), a "significant undercount" of total deaths directly and indirectly attributed to the coronavirus, the global health agency said on Friday. The WHO, in its World

Health Statistics report, said as of December 31, 2020, Covid-19 had infected over 82 million people and killed more than 1.8 million worldwide. "With the latest Covid-19 deaths reported to WHO now exceeding 3.3 million, based on the estimates produced for 2020, we are likely facing a significant undercount of total deaths directly and indirectly attributed to Covid-19," WHO said in the report.

Continued on Page 2

KEEP YOUR KIDS SAFE:

- Keep children indoors
- Vaccination for parents and other elders in the family
- If child has fever/ cough/ sore throat/ cold, etc, or vomiting/diarrhoea get Covid testing
- Use teleconsultation facility from hospitals
- If tested for Covid, maintain home isolation
- If child is having fast breathing,



KEEP THE COVID AT BAY

- severe cough, high fever, vomiting or diarrhoea, bring to hospital;
- Parents will need to watch for these danger signs at home and bring child to hospital at the earliest
- Majority have mild disease
- Even moderate to severe Covid has good outcome provided children reach medical facility on time
- Keep in touch with your pediatrician/ nearby hospital with a pediatric facility

Made-in-India vaccine to come from foreign soil

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Faced with the target of making available 216 crore Covid-19 vaccines by December-end, the Government is identifying manufacturing sites for indigenously-developed Covaxin outside India. The Centre is also taking up with vaccine manufacturers like Moderna, Johnson and Johnson and others the issue of granting voluntary licence to third-party manufacturers here on transfer of technology. The move follows complaints from various States about the shortage of vaccines which is hampering its nationwide vaccination programme launched on January 16. Officials in the Union Health Ministry said World Health Organization (WHO) will also be approached to help it step up Covaxin production. These issues were discussed in an inter-ministerial meeting on May 18 to deliberate upon the options, including voluntary licence, compulsory licence and Government use authorisation under the Patents Act, 1970, available to increase the availability of drugs and vaccines used for treatment of Covid-19, the officials said. The Ministry of External Affairs has also been asked to



take up the matter with AstraZeneca, the maker of Covishield, to encourage them to grant more voluntary licences in India. The MEA and the Department of Biotechnology (DBT) will also prepare a roadmap to address raw material supply constraints for Covishield and identify the sources of raw material while as for Pfizer vaccine, the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) will take up the matter with MEA, Niti Aayog and Law Secretary to prepare a status report on issue of indemnity and liability agreement being proposed by vaccine manufacturer.

Three public sector companies — Haffkine Biopharmaceutical Corporation Ltd, Mumbai, a PSU under the Maharashtra government; Indian Immunologicals Limited (IIL), Hyderabad, a facility under National Dairy; and Bharat Immunologicals and Biologicals Limited (BIBCOL), Bulandshahr, a PSU under the DBT are being roped in for manufacture of the vaccine.

Desi Covid antibody test kit just at ₹75

DRDO product to hit market in June

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Days after launching an anti-Covid drug, the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) on Friday came out with an indigenously designed antibody detection-based kit named Dipcovan. A Delhi-based pharmaceutical company will produce this kit costing ₹75 only. The kit is expected to hit the market in June. Giving details here about the kit, officials said it can detect both spike as well as

nucleocapsid (S&N) proteins of SARS-CoV-2 virus with a high sensitivity of 97 per cent and specificity of 99 per cent. The kit was developed in association with Vanguard Diagnostics Pvt Ltd, a development and manufacturing diagnostics company based at New Delhi. The Dipcovan kit was developed indigenously by the scientists, followed by extensive validation on more than 1,000 patient samples at various Covid designated hospitals in Delhi. Three batches of the product were validated during last one year, they said.

Modi on Covid19 handling has been marked as "manipulated media" by Twitter. The Government has described the step as "totally unwarranted" and "unilateral" and asked Twitter to reverse it "in the interests of fairness and equity". The Congress had requested Twitter to remove tweets by the BJP spokesperson and other BJP leaders, citing its police complaint calling the so-



Continued on Page 2

Modi chokes while talking of Covid deaths

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Remembering numerous people who died of Covid-19, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday turned visibly emotional as he offered his condolences to them. While addressing doctors, paramedical staff, and other frontline health workers from Varanasi, his home constituency, the Prime Minister choked and stopped for a while to collect himself. "This virus took away so many people who were close to us. I offer my deepest condolences to their families," said Modi. The effect of the pandemic has been so vast that despite all efforts, numerous lives were lost, said a teary-eyed PM. All the while, he went on to caution against the "new challenge of black fungus" saying



the country must be prepared to fight the potentially fatal condition that is increasingly seen in Covid patients in the country. "In recent days we have a new challenge of black fungus. It is important to prepare systems to tackle it," said the PM. He said vaccinations should be a mass movement in the battle against Covid.

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India didn't show public support, but understood situation: Israel envoy

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Israel on Friday said India may not have made a public expression of support to Israel during the last few days, but it understood what Israel was doing and why, Israel Charge d'affaires Rony Yedidia Clein said here. "Just imagine what would have happened if rockets had been fired on Jerusalem on the first day of the campaign? Every country has the right to defend its sovereignty and its citizens... Loss of life is tragic," she said. Making these assertions while lauding the truce reached between Israel and Hamas on Thursday, she also said, "So far



it has been quiet. So far, the calm has been kept. We hope that it remains that way and that there will not be any firing from Hamas." Interacting with media in a virtual conference, she said the future course of the ceasefire will be determined by ground realities.

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BJP's 'Cong toolkit' marked as 'manipulated media' by Twitter

Govt describes step as 'totally unwarranted', 'unilateral'; asks Twitter to reverse it

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

BJP national spokesperson Sambit Patra's tweet alleging the Congress unleashed "toolkit" to discredit the Government and Prime Minister Narendra

Modi on Covid19 handling has been marked as "manipulated media" by Twitter. The Government has described the step as "totally unwarranted" and "unilateral" and asked Twitter to reverse it "in the interests of fairness and equity". The Congress had requested Twitter to remove tweets by the BJP spokesperson and other BJP leaders, citing its police complaint calling the so-

called "toolkit" as fake. Fact-checking website Alt News said the "All India Congress Committee (AICC) Research Department" letterhead on the documents was forged and raised questions on the content, saying the BJP had not shared the originals. The Government termed the Twitter tagging of Patra's tweet as "unilateral", "prejudged and prejudiced" and "totally unwarranted" and "deliberate

attempt to colour and influence the "fair investigation" by the local law enforcement agency. BJP spokesperson's May 18 tweet had contained screenshots of a purported Congress "toolkit" to allegedly defame the Government and the Prime Minister. By Thursday evening Twitter flagged Patra's tweet as "manipulated media". According to sources, the Union Government has asked Twitter to remove the tag for

"tweets on toolkit to defame Government's Covid-19 efforts" as the matter is pending investigation before a law enforcement agency. The Centre has sought Twitter "to remove the tags affixed prejudicially to certain tweets in recent days in the interests of fairness and equity... Investigation will determine the veracity of the content, not Twitter," sources said.

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Chipko movement leader Bahuguna dies of Covid-19



PNS ■ DEHRADUN/NEW TEHRI

World renowned environmentalist and Chipko movement leader Sunderlal Bahuguna passed away on Friday. The 94-year-old Bahuguna was undergoing treatment at All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) in Rishikesh since May 8 after testing positive for Covid. Expressing grief on the demise of the veteran environmentalist, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said it was a "monumental loss" for the nation, adding he manifested the centuries-old Indian ethos of living in harmony with nature. Among the pioneers of the Chipko movement, Bahuguna had adopted the principles of Mahatma Gandhi in his life. He was born on January 9, 1927, at Marora village in Tehri district.

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CAPSULE

RAM RAHIM ON PAROLE TO MEET AILING MOTHER
Chandigarh: Dera Sacha Sauda chief Gurmeet Ram Rahim Singh, who is currently lodged in a Rohtak jail, was on Friday granted one-day parole to meet his ailing mother, officials said.

13 NAXALS KILLED IN ENCOUNTER IN GADCHIROLI
Mumbai: At least 13 Naxals were killed in an encounter with police's C-60 commandos in Gadchiroli district of Maharashtra early on Friday, officials said.

OLI, OPP ALLIANCE STAKE CLAIM TO FORM GOVT
Kathmandu: Nepal's political crisis deepened on Friday as both embattled Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli and the Opposition parties staked a claim for the formation of a new government by submitting letters comprising signatures of lawmakers to President Bidya Devi Bhandari.

Goa court acquits journalist Tarun Tejpal in 2013 sexual assault case

Goa CM Sawant says State Govt will challenge Tejpal's acquittal in HC

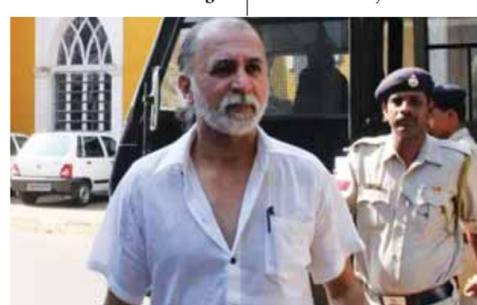
PNS ■ NEW DELHI/PANAJI

A Goa fast track court on Friday acquitted journalist Tarun Tejpal in a 2013 case of sexually assaulting a former female colleague in an elevator of a luxury hotel in Goa. Following the court verdict, Goa Chief Minister Pramod Sawant said the State Government will challenge Tejpal's acquittal in the High Court. Additional sessions judge Kshama Joshi acquitted Tejpal, who was present in the court along with his family members,

when the judgment was pronounced early on Friday. "The court has acquitted Tejpal of all the charges. A detailed order about it will be made available later," advocate Suhas Velip, junior to advocate Rajiv Gomes, who represented Tejpal in the court, told reporters. Defendant's lawyer Gomes died of Covid-19 last week. After the court verdict, the prosecution also said it will challenge the order in the High Court. Earlier, the court had adjourned pronouncement of the verdict in the case on three occasions, citing various reasons. Initially, the court was to deliver the verdict on April 27, but the judge had adjourned it to May 12. On May 12, it was further adjourned to May 19. However, it was again

adjourned to May 21. Public prosecutor Francis Tavora told reporters that the session's court order would be challenged in the High Court. "As soon as we get the detailed written order, we will approach the High Court challenging it," he said.

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High-profile acquittals: Thanks to shoddy probe, delayed justice

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Shoddy probe and protracted legal proceedings invariably lead to acquittals in high profile cases. From the latest acquittal of journalist Tarun Tejpal, the prosecution has lost its cases in the politically sensitive Babri Masjid demolition

case, infamous 2G scam case, sensational Aarushi Talwar murder case, Salman Khan hit-and-run case, and coal scam case among several such instances. **BABRI DEMOLITION:** In September last year, a special court in Lucknow acquitted all the 32 accused persons, including BJP veterans LK Advani, Murli Manohar Joshi, Kalyan Singh and Uma Bharti among others, in the 1992 Babri Masjid demolition case. The case relates to the razing of the disputed Ramjanmabhoomi-Babri Masjid structure in the temple town of Ayodhya.

2G SCAM: Likewise, in the 2G spectrum cases, which had rocked the Manmohan Singh-led UPA-II Government, the prosecution failed to secure a single conviction and all the high-profile accused, including

former Telecom Minister and prime accused A Raja and DMK leader Kanimozhi, were acquitted by a special court here in Delhi in December 2017. The court ruled that the case was "baseless" and the scam was created by artfully arranging a few selected facts and exaggerating things beyond recognition to astronomical levels. Special CBI Judge OP Saini, who adjudicated all the 2G matters, had also let off the promoters of Essar Group and Loop Telecom.

AARUSHI TALWAR MURDER CASE: In October 2017, the Allahabad High Court acquitted dentist couple Nupur and Rajesh Talwar in the 2008 sensational murder of their teenage daughter Aarushi and domestic help Hemraj.

Air India passengers' data leaked after cyberattack

New Delhi: Air India's passenger service system provider SITA faced a sophisticated cyberattack in February leading to leak of personal data of certain number of the national carrier's flyers, an official statement said on Friday.

Personal data — including name, date of birth, contact information, passport information, ticket information and credit card data — which was registered between August 11, 2011, and February 3, 2021, has been leaked of a certain number of Air India's passengers, the statement issued by the airline

said. "While we and our data processor continue to take remedial actions... We would also encourage passengers to change passwords wherever applicable to ensure safety of their personal data," it said.

Data of 4.5 million passengers — which includes Air India's passengers — across the world has been "affected" due to the cyberattack on SITA, the statement said.

SITA is based out of Geneva in Switzerland. "Air India would like to inform its valued customers that its passenger service system provider has informed

about a sophisticated cyber attack it was subjected to in the last week of February 2021," the airline said. While the level and scope of sophistication is being ascertained through forensic analysis and the exercise is ongoing, SITA has confirmed that no unauthorised activity has been detected inside the system's infrastructure after the incident, it added.

"Air India meanwhile is in liaison with various regulatory agencies in India and abroad, and has apprised them about the incident in accordance with its obligations," the airline said. **PTI**



Jammu & Kashmir national highway wears a deserted look during Covid-induced curfew on Friday. **PTI**

Handled over 100 air ambulances for Covid +ve since April: Delhi Airport

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi airport on Friday said it has handled 100 movements of air ambulance services for Covid-19 patients since April, as Indian in abroad opting for medical charter flights to carry their loved ones has increased the growth of private jets.

"With around 12 aircrafts currently permitted to operate from the airport, nearly 100 movements of Covid positive patients have been registered during the past month. These aircraft are available with medevac operations," Delhi airport said. "At this time of need, Delhi Airport has been tirelessly supporting the Government in its fight against the pandemic. The GA Terminal with adjoining Aircraft Parking Stands has been handling air ambulance service to all Indian airports and several International destinations like Germany, Dubai, Zurich, Kathmandu, Dhaka, etc.," A Delhi International Airport Limited (DIAL) spokesperson said.

Kejriwal, US envoy discuss cooperation to address Covid-19

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and H.E. Daniel B. Smith, Charge D'Affaires, the United States of America (USA) on Friday discussed how both can work together to address the Covid pandemic.

In their video conference, both also said that once the Covid pandemic situation gets better, they would hold the discussions in person.

Leaders prayed for the safety of the people in both nations. Kejriwal conveyed his best wishes for H.E.'s good health and prosperity.

Rajasthan reports 700 black fungus cases: Health Min

Jaipur: About 700 cases of black fungus infection have been reported among the cured Covid-19 patients in Rajasthan, Health Minister Raghu Sharma said on Friday.

The State Government has made it a notifiable disease and declared it an epidemic, he said. Sharma said a protocol has been fixed for the treatment of this disease, cropping up owing to the misuse of steroids in the treatment of Covid-19 patients.

Under the protocol for the treatment of black fungus infection or mucormycosis, the quantity of steroids being given in the treatment of Covid-19 has also been asked to be reduced and it should be given only as much as required.

He said the Government has issued a rate list for the treatment of this disease in private hospitals. A separate wing has been set up at Sawai Man Singh Hospital in Jaipur for its treatment. He said the Government has allowed nine government and 11 private hospitals across the state for the treatment of the black fungus infection.

These hospitals specialise in the treatments of nose, ear, larynx and eyes.

The Minister said the teams of the Medical and Health Department, which are conducting door to door survey, have also been asked to report black fungus symptoms immediately so that treatment can be started at the earliest. **PTI**

Over 1,000 black fungus patients admitted in Guj

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

More than 1,100 mucormycosis patients who had recovered from Covid-19 are undergoing treatment at Government hospitals in four major cities of Gujarat, officials said on Friday.

The State Government has declared mucormycosis a pandemic and notifiable disease under the Epidemic Diseases Act, which means the hospitals need to notify the government about suspected and confirmed cases of this fatal fungal infection, an official release said.

Hospitals are also required to follow guidelines on screening, diagnosis and treatment of mucormycosis (also called black fungus) issued by the Centre and the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), it added.

While there is no data on the exact number of mucormycosis cases in Gujarat as yet, more than 1,100 patients are currently admitted to government-run hospitals in Ahmedabad, Rajkot, Surat and Vadodara cities.

The highest 450 patients are admitted to the Rajkot civil hospital, 350 to the main civil hospital of Ahmedabad, around 110 in two state-run hospitals in Surat city and around 225 patients are receiving treatment in government hospitals in Vadodara city including 148 at SSG hospital, local officials told **PTI**.

As per a rough estimate, 70 to 80 persons with confirmed mucormycosis are being admitted to these hospitals every day since the second wave of coronavirus pandemic began in Gujarat in March, officials said.

Lord Jagannath's chariot construction begins in bio-bubble

PTI ■ PURI

The Shree Jagannath Temple Administration (SJTA) on Friday started chariot construction activities at 'Ratha Khala' (chariot yard) in the highly protected bio-bubble, official sources said.

With 10 more persons testing positive for Covid-19, the number of such servitors increased to 18. However, none of the Covid-19 positive servitors had so far entered into the Ratha Khala, Puri district collector Sarthak Verma told reporters. He said the district administration introduced the bio-bubble system.

"The bio-bubble has been

ensured at Ratha Khala site. Only authorised personnel are allowed inside the site. Specific police arrangement and barricading has been done for that, reviewed the security arrangement at Ratha Khala site, Puri SP said in his official twitter post.

The bio-bubble is an arrangement where the people can work safely without interference of outsiders. The people are protected as all the persons entering the bio-bubble zone must be Covid-19 negative.

Once a servitor report for duty, the SJTA first takes his sample and he stays in isolation at Shree Gundicha Bhakta Niwasi till arrival of the test results. "If test report comes negative, then only

he is allowed to enter the Ratha Khala or sent to COVID-19 facility.

A COVID-19 negative report is mandatory to enter into the bio-bubble zone," an SJTA official said. The decision on adopting the bio-bubble technique was taken after eight servitors tested positive for the virus recently.

"The bio-bubble will keep the servitors, who are engaged in construction of chariots, safe from Covid-19 infection as they will not come in contact with outsiders. Only those associated with the chariot construction work will be allowed to enter the bio-bubble starting today," said the district collector.

Modi chokes while talking...

From Page 1

"Vaccination has provided protection to our frontline workers, who could serve the people. In the coming days, we will be extending vaccine protection to everyone," said the PM while addressing doctors, paramedical staff, and other frontline health workers from Varanasi, his home constituency.

"Varanasi has set a great example by the way it has equipped Pandit Rajan Mishra Covid hospital and increased the number of oxygen beds and ICU beds in the city, in such a short span of time," Modi said as he spoke about the numerous people who had died of Covid-19. Calling for special attention to rural areas, he also unveiled a new slogan "Jahan Bimar, Wahin Upchar" and appreciated the micro-containment zone implemented by the city. "I thank every Kashiwasi, especially our doctors, nurses, technicians, ward boys, ambulance drivers, the work you all have done is commendable," he said.

Modi referred to the threat to children and said they needed to be protected in the fight against Covid.

"There is a need to protect our children against Covid-19. We have had successes in the past in battling diseases which affect children, and we have successfully dealt with those illnesses and ensured the safety of our children. We must implement best practices and do all we can to ensure children are safe," he said and praised UP Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath's role in containing the disease affecting children.

BJP's 'Cong toolkit' marked...

From Page 1

"The Ministry of Electronics and IT has written a strong communication to the global team of Twitter, registering its objection to the use of 'manipulated media' tag on certain tweets made by Indian political leaders with reference to a toolkit created to undermine, derail and demean the efforts of the government against the Covid-19 pandemic," sources added. In the communication, the Ministry pointed out that one of the parties concerned had complained to the local law enforcement agency questioning the veracity of the toolkit and the same was under investigation. It noted that even as the local law enforcement agency was undertaking the investigation, Twitter had unilaterally drawn a conclusion in this matter and arbitrarily tagged it as 'Manipulated Media'. Such tagging by Twitter appears prejudiced, prejudicial and a deliberate attempt to colour the investigation by the local law enforcement agency. The Ministry has termed such unilateral action by Twitter an effort to influence the fair investigation process and a clear overreach, which is totally unwarranted," sources said.

This action not only diluted the credibility of Twitter as a neutral and unbiased platform facilitating exchange of views by users, but also put a question mark on its status as an "intermediary," the sources quoted Ministry as observing.

Chipko movement...

From Page 1

His father Amba Dutt was a forest officer in the then kingdom of Tehri. Bahuguna's life took a turn after he came in contact with freedom fighter Shri Devi Suman when he was 13-year-old.

Inspired by Suman, he jumped into the freedom movement at an early age. He also launched an agitation against the Tehri State.

A man of sharp intellect, he was educated at the Government inter college in Tehri and after graduating from Lahore in 1947, he became active in the Praja Mandal movement against the Tehri State. In the 1970s, he launched a campaign on environmental protection, which had a huge impact across the country.

A supporter of public struggles, he had refused to accept the Padma Shri in 1981 demanding a ban on felling of trees. He launched agita-

tions against the liquor mafia, environmental protection and against the Tehri dam.

After his refusal to accept the Padma Shri, tree felling was banned in areas at and above altitude of 1,000 metres. This benefited the environment of Uttarakhand and other Himalayan states. Bahuguna also undertook a 5,000 kilometre march from Kashmir to Kohima in support of conservation of the Ganga and environment. He also headed the protest against the Tehri dam for a long time and continued to remain opposed to dams.

Following his demise at noon, PM Modi tweeted, "Passing away of Shri Sunderlal Bahuguna Ji is a monumental loss for our nation. He manifested our centuries-old ethos of living in harmony with nature. His simplicity and spirit of compassion will never be forgotten. My thoughts are with his family and many admirers. Om Shanti."

Setback for delinquent...

From Page 1

"Likewise, a personal guarantor to a corporate debtor, facing insolvency, can be subjected to insolvency proceedings. All this is to be resolved and decided by NCLT. In other words, the amendment by Section 60(2) too achieved a unified adjudication through the same forum for resolution of issues and disputes concerning corporate resolution processes, as well as bankruptcy and insolvency processes in relation to personal guarantors to corporate debtors," the verdict said. The judgement came on as many as 75 petitions, including some transfer petitions of firms, individuals and by those who had given personal guarantees for loans advanced to their firms. The plea filed by one Lalit Kumar Jain, against the notification was taken up as the lead matter.

The common question in all the pleas assailed the "the vires and valid-

ity of the notification" of the Central Government by alleging that the power conferred under the IBC could not have been resorted to in the manner as to extend the provisions of the Code to personal guarantors of corporate debtors.

The verdict rejected the plea that Centre exceeded its power conferred upon it by Parliament under IBC by roping in personal guarantors. "Parliamentary intent was to treat personal guarantors differently from other categories of individuals. The intimate connection between such individuals and corporate entities to whom they stood guarantee, as well as the possibility of two separate processes being carried on in different forums, with its attendant uncertain outcomes, led to carving out personal guarantors as a separate species of individuals, for whom the Adjudicating authority was common with the corporate debtor to whom they had stood guarantee," it held.

Desi Covid antibody...

From Page 1

The antibody detection kit was approved by Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) in April this year. In May, the product received the regulatory approval from the Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI), Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO) to manufacture for sale and distribution.

Dipcovan is intended for the qualitative detection of IgG antibodies in human serum or plasma, targeting SARS-CoV-2 related antigens. It offers a significantly faster turn-around-time as it requires just 75 minutes to conduct the test without any cross reactivity with other diseases. The kit has a shelf life of 18 months.

Industry partner Vanguard Diagnostics Pvt. Ltd will commercially launch the product during the first week of June 2021. Readily available stock at the time of launch will be 100 kits (approx. 10,000 tests) with a production capacity of 500 kits/month after the launch. It is expected to be available at about Rs 75 per test.

The kit will be very useful for understanding COVID-19 epidemiology and assessing an individual's previous SARS-CoV-2 exposure. Defence Minister Rajnath Singh appreciated the efforts of the DRDO and the industry in developing the kit at the time of need.

India didn't show public...

From Page 1

Justifying her country's military action, she said, "We do feel satisfied that we have had very precise hits on Hamas' infrastructure. We have been able to greatly degrade their capabilities of hitting or striking at Israel. We do feel that the underground infrastructure (of Hamas) was very severely damaged. We had a large amount of targets which were successfully hit."

Moreover, Israel neutralised a vast majority of capabilities of Hamas and of Islamic Jihad, she said, adding, "So, I believe that we've had good results for this campaign and hopefully going forward there won't be any more strikes from Hamas towards Israel. But going forward we need to see that the calm remains on the ground." Clein said the Israeli military campaign was successful and "we gave a crushing blow to Hamas and their terror infrastructure. We hit hundreds of rockets at Hamas targets and have destroyed their underground rocket making and storing infrastructure around Gaza."

Among those eliminated were top leaders of Hamas, including their heads of cyber, design and engineering projects and the brigadier commander of Gaza city, she said, adding a number of buildings housing Hamas's offices and infrastructure were also destroyed. Informing that so far the ceasefire was holding, the Israeli envoy said, "We hope that going forward, Palestine will reject the Hamas leadership." She hoped that the new leadership would have moderates who will see the advantages of having peace with Israel. In fact, she reiterated that Hamas was worried that Palestine would go the way of the neighbouring Muslim nations and try to normalise ties with Israel. Palestine is gearing up for elections.

The Israeli envoy claimed that her country got "unprecedented support from countries around the world" and said some European nations flew the Israeli flag from their official buildings in solidarity.

High-profile acquittals: Thanks...

From Page 1

In its 263-page verdict of the High Court junked the trial court conviction, saying neither the circumstances nor the evidence was enough to hold them guilty.

The couple was sentenced to life by a Ghaziabad special court on November 28, 2013 for the double murder that shook the nation with its element of gruesome filicide. However, the CBI has challenged the acquittals and the matter is now pending before the Supreme Court.

SALMAN KHAN HIT-AND-RUN CASE: The Bombay High Court had in December 2015 acquitted the actor of all criminal charges for lack of substantial evidence. He was acquitted seven months after the sessions court held him guilty. The actor was accused of running his car over some persons sleeping on the pavement in suburban Bandra in Mumbai in 2002. One person died in the mishap. The trial court had awarded him a five-year jail term.

Official Covid-19...

From Page 1

It said the term "excess deaths" describes deaths beyond what would have been expected under "normal" conditions.

"Excess deaths" captures not only confirmed deaths, but also Covid-19 deaths that were not correctly diagnosed and reported as well as deaths attributable to the overall crisis conditions.

WHO said these estimates provide a more comprehensive and accurate measure when compared with confirmed Covid-19 deaths alone.

"All countries must have the necessary capacity and resources to accurately collect and use health data even in the midst of an ongoing crisis," WHO Director-General Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said.

"The Covid-19 pandemic has shown the importance of data and science to build back more resilient health systems and equitably accelerate towards our shared global goals," he said.

The report noted that some countries only report Covid-19 deaths occurring in hospitals or the deaths of people who have tested positive for Covid-19. In addition, many countries cannot accurately measure or report cause of death due to inadequate or under-resourced health information systems.

Goa court acquits...

From Page 1

Talking to reporters, Sawant said, "We will not tolerate any injustice to be meted out to the women in Goa. We will challenge the district court's order before the High Court soon in this case."

The Goa CM said he has personally discussed the issue with the public prosecutor and the investigating officer in the case about challenging the verdict in the High Court. Sawant claimed that there was enough evidence against the accused. The Goa police had registered an FIR against Tejpal in November 2013, following which he was arrested. The Goa crime branch had filed a 2,846-page charge sheet against Tejpal, who has been out on bail since May 2014. During the trial, the prosecution examined 71 witnesses and cross examined five defence witnesses. The case of the prosecution mainly relied on the statement of the victim and averments of some of her colleagues besides electronic evidence including e-mails and WhatsApp messages.

He faced trial under major Indian Penal Code (IPC) sections 341 (wrongful restraint), 342 (wrongful confinement), 354 (assault or criminal force with intent to outrage modesty), 354-A (sexual harassment), 354-B (assault or use of criminal force to woman with intent to disrobe), 376(2)(f) (person in a position of authority over women, committing rape) and 376(2)(k) (rape by a person in a position of control).

After the verdict, Tejpal issued a statement through his daughter Tara who read it outside the court building in Mapusa town near Panaji, in which he thanked the court for its "rigorous, impartial and fair trial".

"The past seven-and-a-half years have been traumatic for my family as we have dealt with the catastrophic fallout of these false allegations on every aspect of our personal, professional and public lives," he said. "We have felt the boot of the State, but all through it we have cooperated fully with the Goa police and the legal system, through hundreds of court proceedings," he said.

He further said, "It is with profound respect that I thank this court for its rigorous, impartial and fair trial and for its thorough examination of the CCTV footage and other empirical material on record.

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कार्यालय नगर पालिक निगम, भोपाल
केन्द्रीय कर्मशाला (मैके.शाखा)
निविदा सूचना

क्र. 122/021/022

क्र. 122/021/022 के.कर्म./2021
भोपाल, दिनांक 05.05.2021
नगर निगम भोपाल केन्द्रीय कर्मशाला के द्वारा विभिन्न प्रकार के स्पेयर्स पार्ट्स क्रय किये जाने हेतु ऑनलाइन निविदा निम्नानुसार आमंत्रित की जाती है।

क्र.	निविदा क्र.	सामान का विवरण	अनुमानित लागत	घरोहर राशि	निविदा फार्म का मूल्य	प्रदाय अवधि
1.	2021_UAD_143461_1	SUPPLY/SERVICE OF ORIGINAL LAND GENUINE AUTO SPARE PARTS OF DIFFERENT TYPE OF VEHICLES	19000000/-	190000/-	125000/-	मौग अनुसार

BID SUBMISSION END DATE- 19.06.2021 TIME- 05:30 PM
BID OPENING DATE- 21.06.2021 TIME- 12:00 PM

निविदा से संबंधित अन्य विस्तृत जानकारी वेबसाइट mptenders.gov.in पर देखी एवं केन्द्रीय कर्मशाला (मैकेनिकल) से कार्यालयीन समय में प्राप्त की जा सकती है।

उपायुक्त परिवहन शाखा नगर निगम भोपाल

Kids, teens...

From Page 1

The State authorities feel that this figure may go up to 10 per cent in the next wave, if the Covid preventive steps among kids were not implemented strictly. The issue was, flagged by Prime Minister Narendra Modi recently in his interaction with district magistrates when he asked them to be vigilant on severity and infections in children in their areas.

Paediatricians said unlike mild infections or no symptoms, as was the case during the first

Covid wave last year, many children including infants as young as eight months old are exhibiting symptoms even severe one like persistent fever and pneumonia. Some are too sick, they said.

"The reasons behind the surge can be lax behaviour, more transmissible strains or more awareness about testing. But a noticeable medical difference in the second wave is that infected children are more symptomatic now and there is mortality too," said Dr Nita Radhakrishnan, HOD, Department of Paediatric

Haematology-Oncology, Super Speciality Paediatric Hospital and PG Teaching Institute (SSPHPGT), Noida. She added.

Prof DK Gupta, Director of SSPHPGTI added that their hospital has managed 190 children with Covid-19 so far that includes 131 during the first wave. "More than fifty children had co-morbidities while the majority were managed symptomatically. At least five kids died who had other illnesses like meningitis, sepsis, heart disease etc," he said about the patients in their hospital.

Experts say as the virus has

mutated and the chances of further mutation cannot be ruled out, it can affect children in the coming days, especially if they share treatment wards with the adults. Dr KK Kalra, former medical superintendent at Chacha Nehru Bal Chikitsalaya, Delhi felt that as adults will already be vaccinated or infected, viruses will move to the susceptible group i.e. children. Hence it is important to keep them safe, he added.

"Timely preparedness is the need of the hour. Dedicated facilities such as paediatric intensive care unit (ICU) and

neo-natal ICU should be earmarked in government and private healthcare centres," said the doctors even though they expressed doubt, given the crumbling health system in the wake of Covid-19.

"We have eight children admitted to the hospital with severe symptoms of Covid-19 presently including an eight months old. The others are less than 12 years in age. They have high fever, pneumonia, dehydration and loss of taste, among others," added Dr Suresh, medical director of Lok Nayak Hospital.

High death rate in city due to infections in peak period

CHANDAN PRAKASH ■ NEW DELHI

The national Capital has been reporting a high death rate even after the Delhi Government resolved the oxygen crisis and the shortage of beds. However, experts say that the number will come down drastically in a week or two. Doctors at various hospitals attributed the high number of deaths in Delhi as compared to the number of cases, to the critical patients who were admitted to hospitals earlier during the peak of the outbreak.

death rate consists of the data of patients who were admitted to hospitals with severe complications weeks ago and have been succumbing to the infection over the days.

Dr Kanwar added that even as the number of cases reported in the national Capital has gone down in the last one week, the Current Fatality Rate (CFR) will continue to be relatively higher for some time as some of the critical patients who were admitted during the peak period and who had gone on to ventilators and were struggling for their lives in ICUs finally succumb to the virus infection.

"The fatal disease with a longer morbidity period tends to have a significant lag period

between the fall in new cases and in mortality. The current CFR tends to go up temporarily as many critical patients do not survive," he explained.

Dr Anant Mohan, Head of Pulmonary Medicine at AIIMS, Delhi, said that the high number of recorded deaths in the city was the result of patients admitted to ICUs with severe Covid-19 infection in April and the first week of May. Now, the fatality rate will come down in days to come as the situation has improved. With the cases going down, the number of deaths will also start falling.

Dr Arvind Kumar, Chairman of Institute of Chest Surgery, Medanta Hospital, Gurugram said: "The deaths being reported this week are a



result of the infections which occurred two weeks ago when the number of Covid cases were very high. Those who got infected during the peak and were admitted in hospitals will continue to die over the next one or two weeks."

Now that the number of cases reported is less compared to April, the death rate will come down in three weeks from now, he added.

Explaining it further Dr Kumar said that death does not occur the same day if a person is infected with Covid as the virus causes fever for about five to seven days and then most of the lung involvement manifests between eight to 14 days. Depending on the line of treatment, the level of care and any secondary complications, the patients either survives or dies.

"The death can take place in the second, third, fourth and fifth week," he said.

Dr Rommel Tickoo, Director, Internal Medicine, Max Healthcare said that the

DATE	DEATHS	CASES	POSITIVITY RATE (%)
15 May	337	6430	11.32
16 May	262	6456	10.40
17 May	340	4524	8.42
18 May	265	4482	6.89
19 May	235	3846	5.78
20 May	233	3231	5.50
21 May	252	3009	4.76

death rate now is a result of a high number of severe cases reported all at once earlier. "Thousands of people caught infection at the same time and many of them were admitted in ICUs with severe complications. Many of them are still critical and dying. The number will gradually come down along with the fall in cases," he added.

Experts also stressed that Delhi has passed its peak since the initial wave of the Covid-19 hit the city as the positivity rate came down to 4.76 per cent on Friday from about five times that figure only a few weeks ago.



Beneficiaries arrive for Covid-19 vaccination at Connaught Place in New Delhi, on Friday

CM honours another Covid Warrior



STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Friday provided financial assistance of ₹1 crore to the family of Nitin Tanwar who died due to Covid.

Kejriwal said that Nitin Tanwar, a primary school teacher, was posted at the MC Primary School at Naraina. "He continued to serve people during the Corona crisis. The Government will also provide a job to his wife in a Delhi Government school," he said.

"Tanwar was a very hard-working and dedicated teacher in our Delhi Government school. He was given various duties during the corona crisis. He passed away after getting infected while being on Covid duty last year.

"Corona Warrior Nitin Tanwar, who worked as a teacher in a primary school died of corona infection. Met his family at their Narayana residence and handed over a check of ₹1 crore. I hope that the family will get some respite with this amount," he tweeted in Hindi.

Delhi in safe zone: Positivity dips to 4.76%

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The positivity rate in Delhi has come down to 4.76 per cent on Friday while 16,712 Covid beds and 1748 ICU beds are vacant in hospitals, Delhi Health Minister Satyendar Jain said. The World Health Organisation has declared Covid positivity rate below 5 per cent to be within the safe zone.

Delhi recorded 3,009 Covid-19 cases and 252 fatalities on Friday. This is the third consecutive day when Delhi's count of daily new cases has remained below 4,000. The positivity rate in the city stood at 5.5 per cent on Thursday.

"We can see a prominent downward trend in Covid cases. We have dropped down significantly from 28,000 cases to about 3000 hence this is a

hopeful sign. The positivity rate is now below five per cent. However, we cannot afford complacency and must follow covid-appropriate behavior by all means," he added.

Asserting the situation of Covid beds in Delhi so far, Jain said that there are nearly 28,500 beds in Delhi as of now and 16,712 beds are vacant. Approximately 1748 ICU beds are vacant."

The Minister also highlighted upon the shortage of vaccines and stated that Covaxin is finished for 18-44 age groups and Covishield is also nearly finished with which a lot of centres are closing down from today.

The vaccine supply is completely controlled by the centre and we can inoculate only what we are receiving from them," he added.



Vacant beds at the CWG Village Covid-19 Care Centre near Akshardham, in New Delhi on Friday

BJP accuses Delhi Govt of criminal negligence

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi BJP president Adesh Gupta accused the Delhi Government of "criminal negligence" saying that the death rate in the national Capital went up due to reduction in corona testing.

Addressing a joint Press conference along with the Leader of the Opposition in Delhi Assembly Ramvir Singh Bidhuri, MPs Hansraj Hans and Gutam Gambhir, Gupta said that the AAP Government changed its direction and reduced the testing when the pandemic's second wave was at its peak in Delhi.

Presenting the data, he said that 1.14 lakh tests were done on April 10 and there were 10,774 positive cases. On April 12 and 13 respectively, 1.02 lakh tests were done and the number of positive cases was 13,468.

Then 1.08 lakh tests were done the next day with 17,823 positive cases being recorded. "The tests started coming down from here as 98,957 tests were conducted on April 15 and 78,767 on April 20 and the number further came down to 57,690 on April 25.

Similarly, testing was reduced to 50 per cent in May. On May 14, it was 56,811 with 6,430 positive cases while on May 16.

Delhi recorded 197 cases of black fungus, says Jain

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Health Minister Satyendra Jain on Friday said that 197 cases of black fungus have been reported in the national Capital so far including non-residents who have come to Delhi for treatment.

Jain said that black fungus is happening due to increase in blood sugar levels and decreased immunity by taking steroids." Corona patients who have been given steroids during treatment should be vigilant for one week after its closure and do not leave the house, be extra vigilant and minimize social interaction," he said.

The Minister also talked about the problem of shortage of black fungus medicine in the entire country including Delhi. "The central Government is controlling the medicines of black fungus.

They are giving medicines according to State wise quota. They have allocated 2000 medicines for Delhi. The Delhi Government will give medicines to hospitals as soon as we get them. We can only give it to hospitals as this cannot be treated at homes," he said.

Jain cautioned Covid-19 patients against taking steroids without doctor's advice.

"This is very dangerous. A patient's immunity becomes zero when he/she takes steroids. Black fungus, which is found in soil or decaying matter inside homes, doesn't affect healthy people.

Chances of infection are more in those with low immunity," he said.

He also highlighted that the black fungus or Mucormycosis can be treated through the standard protocol only and not at home.



DDC of Delhi delivers 2,300 oxygen concentrators

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Using a unique tech-based solution, the Dialogue and Development Commission of Delhi has delivered over 2300 oxygen concentrators to several Delhi Government hospitals to help them in the treatment of patients in this difficult time. Elaborating on the move, Vice Chairperson DDC Jasmine Shah said that all sections of the society should come forward and support the efforts initiated by the Delhi Government to fight Corona.

Several donors have come forward to give critical medical supplies to Delhi Government hospitals, he said. "To address this concern, DDC collaborated with the Boston Consulting Group (BCG) and Blowhorn, a logistics start-up, working on a voluntary basis to develop a state-of-the-art QR code based tracking system for donated medical equipment within a very short span of time.

Gurugram Covid-19 recovery rate rises to 91.89%

STAFF REPORTER ■ GURUGRAM

The recovery rate of coronavirus patients in Gurugram within the last two weeks is steadily improving and has touched 91.89 per cent as compared to 87 per cent earlier.

Explaining the reason behind this success, district officials said that to combat Covid infections, an action plan has been prepared by the district administration, that is focusing on testing, tracing and treatment.

"To prevent virus infections, around 164 teams of the health department are working in a planned manner in seven high-risk urban and rural areas of the district.

Also, a dedicated team of the health department is monitoring the condition of home isolation patients," Yash Garg, Deputy Commissioner Gurugram said.

For the last one week, the daily health bulletin has put the number of Covid patients in Gurugram at below 1,500.

Delhi Police files chargesheet in Red Fort violence case

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Police has filed a charge sheet in the Republic Day violence before the concerned court. The charge sheet included statements of the several accused persons and also the evidence collected relating to the violence. Around 16 people have been named in the charge sheet and 13 of them are on bail.

Around 3422 charge sheet was submitted before the Tis Hazari's Duty Magistrate Sahil Monga on May 17 against 16 persons including Punjabi actor, Deep Sidhu, Iqbal Singh, Jugraj Singh, who raised Nishan Sahib at the Red Fort, Maninder Singh Moni, who was seen in a video swinging two swords at Fort and Khempreet Singh, who assaulted police personnel on duty.

On January 26, the tractor parade by the protesting farmers that was to highlight the demand of the farmer unions for repealing the three new

agriculture laws, had turned violent as the protesters deviated from the pre-designated routes, attacked police personnel, overturned vehicles and hoisted a religious flag on the ramparts of the iconic Red Fort.

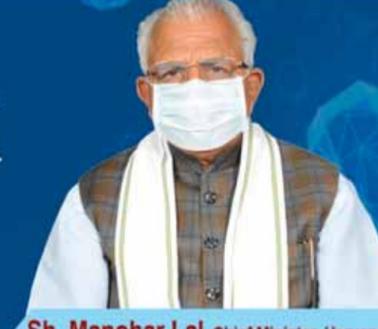
Later, on February 9, police arrested Deep Sidhu on February 9 and alleged that he had instigated the violence and was the key conspirator. Sidhu had gone missing after videos and photos of him surfaced from the Red Fort violence on January 26 and he had been regularly posting videos on Facebook denying his involvement in the violence.

Sidhu was granted bail on April 26 after being denied bail on multiple occasions with respect to the Republic Day violence.

Meanwhile, on March 10, the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) accused the Samyukt Kisan Morcha (SKM) of violating permission granted for taking out Kisan Tractor Parade.



Haryana Government Started COVID-19 Related State and District-Level Helpline Numbers



Sh. Manohar Lal, Chief Minister, Haryana

State Level Helpline Numbers

8558893911

(For Entire State) & **1075** (Except Gurugram & Faridabad)

1	CHARKHI DADRI	1950, 01250-222555	15	KAITHAL	1950, 01746-224240, 234280, 224235
2	GURUGRAM	1950	16	ROHTAK	1950, 01262-244163, 9468090380
3	KARNAL	1950, 9817701572	17	SIRSA	1950, 01666-248882, 248140
4	KURUKSHETRA	1950	18	SONEPAT	1950, 0130-2221500, 7494871950
5	MAHENDRAGARH	1950, 9306754767	19	FARIDABAD	1950, 0129-2221000, 2221001, 2221002, 2221003, 2221004
6	PALWAL	1950, 01275-240022	20	HISAR	1950, 01662-278501, 278502, 278503, 231137, 9416495690, 9416793841
7	PANCHKULA	1950, 0172-2590000	21	JHAJJAR	1950, 01251-297193, 297393, 297416, 297417, 297418, 297419
8	PANIPAT	0180-2970406	22	NUH	1950, 1800-180-1256, 01267-282002, 7082626686
9	REWARI	1950			
10	YAMUNA NAGAR	1950, 01732-237801			
11	AMBALA	1950, 7496854623, 9729179275			
12	BHIWANI	1950, 01664-256033, 9817887242			
13	FATEHABAD	1950, 01667-230018, 8607775529			
14	JIND	01681-245206, 246151, 246150			

For the information and complaints regarding COVID-19 related vaccines, essential medicines, availability of oxygen or beds in hospitals, COVID treatment/Ayurveda Consultations etc. as well as complaints regarding lockdown violation, food, overcharging for beds in hospitals and financial assistance or scheme being given to BPL families by the State Government, contact at District-wise helpline numbers.

Information, Public Relations & Languages Department, Haryana | www.prharyana.gov.in | @Cmohry | @DiprHaryana

S Sanitization
 M Mask
 S Social Distancing

Iron out differences in party: Sonia to Rahul

DEEPAK KUMAR JHA ■
NEW DELHI

After a loss of face for the Congress in the recent Assembly elections, the internal squabbling within Punjab and once again in Rajasthan State unit in the midst of pandemic has drawn huge concern of the high command as in both the States the party is in power.

AICC sources said that Congress president Sonia Gandhi has asked former party chief Rahul Gandhi to handle the matter who during the next few days will be interacting one to one with each MLAs from both the States, which is likely to be first of its kind efforts from Rahul or Sonia.

To iron out the differences in Punjab Congress and Government, sources said Rahul will be conducting one-on-one meeting with State Ministers, MLAs and MPs over the next few days. As per the plan beginning with Punjab, the former party chief who has faced severe criticism for losing elections after elections, will schedule to meet on virtual mode atleast 15 party leaders each day.

Sources said after the Punjab leaders declined to meet Harish Rawat on a digital platform, he is scheduled to visit the State hold initial talks with the dissident leaders.

The other issue on agenda of Rahul meeting, is to sort out the differences between Sidhu and CM as the former contin-



ue with his criticism of the latter through social media. In one of his message on Twitter, Sidhu also urged the MLAs and party work to apprise the party high command about the problems persisting within Amarinder

Sonia too has been in constant touch with Punjab CM Capt Amarinder Singh enquiring about state politics and the pandemic together, sources said.

While the factionalism led by Navjot Singh Sidhu continues, some of the party leaders are annoyed with the CM over the delay in giving justice to the families of the Kotkapura police firing incidents.

"The adverse high court judgment on the Kotkapura

police firing cases has created a crisis in the party. The party high command is working out a formula to make the CM take on the perpetrators of the police firing case," said a party MLA over phone to The Pioneer.

Punjab Congress chief Sunil Kumar Jakhar on Thursday cautioned party workers stating that the party high command was watching and he mentioned that there are few leaders who were always trying to seek opportunities in crisis (like pandemic) or by creating a crisis.

While in Rajasthan the immediate worry is the resignation of party MLA Hemaram Choudhary, a sharp critic of Rajasthan chief minister Ashok

Gehlot, and pro Sachin Pilot camp, cause of concern in Punjab which will go for assembly polls next year is the huge rift between various factions.

Rahul is scheduled to conduct the meeting one virtual mode as per his health condition since he is recovering from post covid and the sources said the meeting has been necessitated after Punjab MLAs declined to meet the State Incharge senior party leader Harish Rawat.

Choudhary resignation though is yet to be accepted by Rajasthan assembly Speaker CP Joshi and Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot but he mentioned that he will speak on the reasons that led to his quitting the assembly once it is accepted. This is second time resignation by Choudhary after Congress came to power in 2018.

Hemaram Choudhary is a six-time MLA from Gudamalani in the Barmer district and was among the 19 MLAs who rebelled against Ashok Gehlot last year same time when the then Deputy CM Sachin Pilot had revolted and threatened to exit from the Gehlot government. The situation continued for almost two months until a peace was brokered between Gehlot and Pilot by Sonia, Rahul and his sibling and party general secretary Priyanka Gandhi.

Before Rahul to reach him to pacify so that the Gehlot

government is once again not on the verge of a collapsed at the hands of BJP, Rajasthan Congress president Govind Singh Dotasara has made efforts to reach out to Choudhary and assured the party leaders that he would be able to convince him to withdraw the resignation letter.

"Hemaram is a senior and respected leader of our party. I have spoken to him after the information about his resignation as MLA. This is a family matter, it will be resolved soon," Dotasara tweeted.

This is the second time since his election in the December 2018 state polls that Hemaram Choudhary has sent across his resignation letter. He had first resigned in 2019 during the first session of the reconstituted assembly, reportedly because he was miffed that Gehlot did not induct him into his council of ministers.

Hemaram Choudhary, who was revenue minister in Gehlot's cabinet in 2008-2013, had offered to quit before the 2013 elections over differences with another MLA.

While AICC leaders ruled out any rebellion brewing up again in Rajasthan politics, the BJP which has been eyeing to wrest power from Gehlot after engineering a successful attempt in Madhya Pradesh last year following the exit of Jyotiraditya Scindia, the BJP said Hemaram Choudhary's resignation letter reflected that there was no internal democracy within the Congress.

AMPHOTERICIN-B

Five more firms OK'd to make drugs to combat black fungus

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

To supplement the domestic availability of the drug for treatment of dreaded black fungus, the Union Health Ministry on Friday said licence has been given to five more manufacturers for production of Amphotericin-B, used in the treatment of black fungus, and they will start producing 1,11,000 vials of the drug per month from July. Meanwhile, in May 2021, 3,63,000 vials of Amphotericin-B will be imported, thereby resulting in total availability in the country (inclusive of the domestic production) of 5,26,752 vials.

The five companies that have been given go ahead for drug production are NATCO Pharmaceuticals, Hyderabad, Alembic Pharmaceuticals, Vadodra, Gufic Biosciences Ltd, Gujarat, Emcure Pharmaceuticals, Pune and Lyka, Gujarat.

The move follows severe shortage of the anti-fungal drug across the country even as various States and UTs are reporting an increasing number of patients suffering from Covid complications in the form of Mucormycosis, popularly known as Black Fungus.



There are five existing manufacturers of Amphotericin-B in the country and one importer. These are Bharat Serums & Vaccines Ltd, BDR Pharmaceuticals Ltd, Sun Pharma Ltd, Cipla Ltd, Life Care Innovations and Mylan Labs (importer).

"The production capacity of these companies was extremely limited in the month of April 2021. As a result of the hand holding by the Centre, these domestic manufacturers will cumulatively produce 1,63,752 vials of Amphotericin-B in May 2021. This will be further ramped up to 2,55,114 vials in the month of June 2021.

"In May 2021, 3,63,000 vials of Amphotericin-B will be imported, thereby resulting in

total availability in the country (inclusive of the domestic production) of 5,26,752 vials. 3,15,000 vials will be imported in June 2021. Hence, along with the domestic supply, the countrywide availability of Amphotericin-B will be enhanced to 5,70,114 vials in June 2021," the statement added.

According to the government, these companies will start producing 1,11,000 vials of Amphotericin-B per month from July 2021. The Union Health Ministry and Deptt of Pharmaceuticals are together trying to proactively facilitate these five manufacturers to prepone some of this production so that these additional supplies begin in June 2021.

Army Chief reviews readiness of troops at LAC

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In an effort to rule out any surprises by China, Army Chief General MM Naravane on Friday reviewed the operational readiness of the troops at the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in Arunachal Pradesh. He is on two-day visit commencing Thursday.

Incidentally, he had said on Wednesday the Indian forces are ready and deployed in adequate numbers at the LAC adding it will not be taken by surprise. This observation came in the backdrop of China holding its annual military exercise now in its area opposite Eastern Ladakh. Last year, it diverted some forces from the exercise to intrude into India leading to ten-month long stand-off.

As regards his visit to the eastern sector in the last two days, officials said here on Friday, Naravane arrived at Dimapur in Nagaland on Thursday to review the operational readiness along the Northern borders of Arunachal Pradesh and the security situation in the hinterland in the Northeastern region.

"On arrival at the Corps headquarters in Dimapur, the Army Chief was briefed by Lt Gen Johnson Mathew, General Officer Commanding of Spear Corps and the Division Commanders on the prevailing situation and operational preparedness along the Northern borders," the Army said.

It said the Chief of Army Staff complimented all ranks for maintaining excellent vigil and exhorted them to stay alert and keep watch on activities along the LAC. On Wednesday, Naravane said the Army will maintain an enhanced presence on the entire northern front from Ladakh to Arunachal Pradesh till "de-escalation" is achieved.

In view of the border row with China in eastern Ladakh, the Army last year significantly ramped up deployment of troops in all sensitive areas along the nearly 3,500-km-long LAC including in the Sikkim and Arunachal sectors.

The Indian Air Force (IAF) also deployed additional fighter jets and attack helicopters in key bases looking after the airspace along the LAC in the Arunachal sector.

Procuring jab MEA Min's main focus during US visit

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

As India faces shortage of anti-covid vaccine, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar's main focus during his US visit next week will be procurement of these vaccines from there. An estimated 80 million doses of vaccine are available there.

During his five-day visit starting May 24, the minister besides pressing for early procurement of the vaccines is also likely to seek raw material to boost domestic production. He may also explore possibilities of joint production of the much-needed vaccine here or in the US.

Announcing the schedule, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said here on Friday Jaishankar will hold discussions with US Secretary of State Antony Blinken and meet other senior officials of the Biden administration. It will be the first visit by a senior Indian minister to the US after President Joe Biden assumed office in January.

There is a view in India that the Defence Production Act (DPA) of the US has put some restrictions on the export of raw materials by American companies. In early February,

the US government invoked the DPA to limit exports of the raw materials to expand domestic vaccine production. Hit by a devastating second wave of the coronavirus pandemic, India has been focusing on ramping up domestic production of COVID-19 vaccines as well their procurement from abroad.

"In Washington DC, the External Affairs Minister will hold discussions with his counterpart Secretary of State Antony Blinken. He will also be meeting Cabinet members and Senior Officials of the Administration dealing with the bilateral relationship," the MEA said in a statement.

It said he will have two interactions with business forums on economic and COVID-related cooperation between the two countries. Jaishankar had met Blinken earlier this month on the sidelines of a meeting of foreign ministers of G-7 countries in London. The MEA said Jaishankar will also meet UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres in New York.

On Thursday, the ministry spokesperson Arindam Bagchi had India is engaged with American entities for procure-

ment of COVID-19 vaccines and their possible manufacturing in India subsequently.

The US announced earlier this week that it will share an additional 20 million coronavirus vaccine doses with other countries in addition to the 60 million it has already committed. The Biden administration has not yet announced the possible recipients of the vaccine doses.

Recently, Charge D'Affaires of the US embassy here Daniel B Smith said the US was looking at joint production of Johnson and Johnson's COVID-19 vaccines in India and ways to help manufacturers like the Serum Institute of India (SII) to boost production.

As India was facing a rapid increase in coronavirus infections, the US sent six plane loads of life-saving supplies in support of the country's fight against the pandemic. Earlier this month, the US sent to India raw materials for vaccine production which it said would enable the manufacture of 20 million doses of the Covishield vaccines.

Providing raw materials for the production of coronavirus vaccines was a major component of the Biden administration's announcement on medical aid to India.

ED searches Kalra premises in money laundering link

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate on Friday searched the premises linked to businessman Navneet Kalra and his associates in connection with a money laundering probe linked to a recent case of alleged hoarding and black-marketing of oxygen concentrators which are in high demand amid Covid-19 pandemic surge.

The searches are being conducted at various locations in the national Capital under provisions of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), agency sources said.

Through the searches, the ED is seeking to gain additional evidence to take the money laundering probe forward, they said.

The ED had recently booked Kalra and others under the anti-money laundering law after taking cognisance of a Delhi Police FIR filed on May 5 as PMLA comes under the ambit of a predicate offence.

Following registration of the case, the Delhi police searched some restaurants and premises owned and linked to Kalra.

The police had recovered more than 500 life-saving oxygen concentrators from the searched premises. The police alleged that they were being hoarded and sold in the black market on a high premium.

Kalra has denied any wrongdoing and claimed the consignment was meant for regular sale.

Earlier, the police produced Kalra before a court that sent him to 14-day judicial custody.

Rebel YSR Cong MP gets bail, SC says ill-treated in custody by police

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Friday granted bail to rebel YSR Congress MP Krishnam Raju in the sedition case registered against him by the Andhra Pradesh police. The vacation Bench of Justices Vineet Saran and BR Gavai said Raju was possibly ill-treated while in police custody. During the previous hearing, the Court had ordered Raju's medical examination.

"Charges against the petitioner (Raju) are not such that custodial interrogation would be required. Considering the totality of the plea and the health condition of the petitioner since he has undergone open heart surgery, we deem it fit that petitioner be enlarged on bail," said the apex court while prohibiting the MP from interacting with media on the matter under probe.

Raju is required to furnish a bond of Rs 1 lakh and two sureties of the same amount before the trial court within 10 days. On perusing Raju's medical reports, the Court found that he had suffered a fracture to his toe among other injuries.

Raju and Chief Minister Jaganmohan Reddy are in loggerheads for some time. He had approached Courts to cancel the bail given the Chief Minister in corruption cases and all of a sudden Andhra Pradesh Police slapped sedition charges on the MP.

Severity of Covid-19 may decrease over decade: Study

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In what could come as a relief during Covid-19 times that has ravaged the world, a study has said that over the next decade, the severity of Covid-19 may decrease as populations collectively develop immunity and the novel coronavirus could cause no more than common cold-like coughs and sniffles.

Published in the journal Viruses, the prediction is based on mathematical models that incorporate lessons learned from the current pandemic on how our body's immunity changes over time. "This shows a possible future that has not yet been fully addressed," said Fred Adler, a professor of mathematics and biological sciences at the University of Utah in the US.

"Over the next decade, the severity of COVID-19 may decrease as populations collectively develop immunity," Adler said.

The study suggests that changes in the disease could be driven by adaptations of our immune response rather than by changes in the virus itself. Although the SARS-CoV-

2 virus is the best-known member of the family, other seasonal coronaviruses circulate in the human population, and they are less dangerous.

The researchers noted that some evidence indicates that one of these cold-causing relatives might have once been severe, giving rise to the "Russian flu" pandemic in the late 19th century.

The parallels led the scientists to wonder whether the severity of SARS-CoV-2 could similarly lessen over time.

They built mathematical models incorporating evidence on the body's immune response to SARS-CoV-2.

Analysing several scenarios and their versions set up a situation where an increasing proportion of the population will become predisposed to mild disease over the long term.

"In the beginning of the pandemic, no one had seen the virus before. Our immune system was not prepared," Adler explained.

The models show that as more adults become partially immune, whether through prior infection or vaccination, severe infections all but disappear over the next decade, the

researchers said. Eventually, the only people who will be exposed to the virus for the first time will be children who are naturally less prone to severe disease, they said.

"The novel approach here is to recognise the competition taking place between mild and severe Covid-19 infections and ask which type will persist in the long run," said Alexander Beams, study first author and graduate student at University of Utah.

"We have shown that mild infections will win, as long as they train our immune systems to fight against severe infections," Beams said. However, the researchers noted that the models do not account for every potential influence on disease trajectory.

For instance, if new virus variants overcome partial immunity, Covid-19 could take a turn for the worse, they said. The team also noted that these predictions will hold up only if the key assumptions of the models hold up. "Our next step is comparing our model predictions with the most current disease data to assess which way the pandemic is going as it is happening," Adler added

Rainfall season begins, S-W monsoon advances into S-Andaman Sea, says IMD



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) on Friday said that southwest monsoon has advanced into the south Andaman Sea on Friday morning. The development also marks the start of the four-month rainfall season. The IMD has already predicted that the monsoon is expected to be normal this year.

Meanwhile, a low-pressure area is expected to develop over the central and adjoining southeast Bay of Bengal and this system is most likely to intensify into a cyclonic storm by May 26. "In association with the strengthening and deepening of the southwesterly winds, the southwest monsoon has advanced over the southwest and southeast Bay of Bengal, south Andaman Sea and

Nicobar islands," the IMD said in its special weather update, issued on Friday afternoon.

With the arrival of the monsoon, light to moderate rain is forecast till Sunday over the Andaman and Nicobar islands. Squally winds with the speed of around 50 km/hour to 60km/hour could blow along the southeast Bay of Bengal and south Andaman Sea from Friday onwards, the IMD said.

The IMD said that the cyclone, once formed, is expected to travel towards either coasts of Odisha or West Bengal, where the Met department was warned of heavy rainfall to commence from May 25. Sea conditions will be rough to very rough over southeast Bay of Bengal & south Andaman Sea from 21st May onwards till 23rd May.

Have common vaccination policy: IIT urges Centre

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

With the vaccination drive open to everyone above the age of 18 years, the Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) have asked the Central Government to look into the feasibility of having a common vaccination policy for its students, especially the research scholars who visit the laboratories.

In a review meeting of the IITs and other top chains like NITs, IISERs, on Thursday evening, the officials of the institutes requested Union Education Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal 'Nishank' for inoculation of all their students, so that they can safely return to their respective campuses. With shortage of vaccinations in the country, the administration of top-engineering colleges urged the government to step in.

During the meeting of IITs, IISc, NITs, and IISERs along with the Education Ministry, the number of rising COVID-19 cases among students were discussed along with online classes as well as the implementation of the new National Education Policy.

All the IITs demanded a common policy on vaccination for our research scholars, espe-

cially those who visit laboratories, to get vaccinated on priority. At present at IITs we have vaccination centers for the priority groups, where the central government is providing the vaccines. We cannot use them for people below 45 years old as state government's need to provide for this section. State governments are all struggling and there is a paucity of vaccines," a Director of one of the IIT told The Pioneer.

A senior Ministry of Education official said said the demand for vaccination for researchers who visit labs was taken up in the meeting which is of utmost importance to encourage research in the fight against covid as well.

An IIT-Delhi internal survey last month with 3,910 students as part of the findings, the results showed that almost 22 per cent of the students had tested positive for Covid-19 during the March-April period this year whereas 61 per cent saw at least one family member testing positive for the deadly viral infection. Keeping the survey results in view, the authorities of IIT-Delhi had relaxed norms which included flexibility in attendance as well as work-related deadlines. Last month, 60 students

were found positive for the virus in the IIT-Roorkee which led to sealing five hostels. Similarly IIT-Jodhpur witnessed 65 positive cases among students, due to which, G 3 block of the campus was declared as a containment zone.

Sharing details about the meeting, an official said Pokhriyal "commended the institutes in developing low-cost RT-PCR machines, kits, ventilators, mathematical modelling of predicting the trend of COVID-19 and successfully placing them at the disposal of State Health Departments. Many of the research products have been commercialized through the incubation cells and startups set up by these institutes."

An official statement from the Ministry added, "researchers developed Corona testing kit 'Corosure', research for the development of a vaccine, which can be stored at room temperature, Genome sequencing to identify the variants of Corona Virus, 'COVIRAP' device for rapid diagnostic of pathogenic infection, methods to optimize the use of Oxygen in ventilators, development of Oxygen concentrators, low-cost portable ventilators, etc."

NARADA CASE

Cal HC orders house arrest of 4 leaders

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

In a twist to the legal tangle over the arrest of four senior Trinamool Congress politicians including two Bengal Ministers, an MLA and a former Minister a two-judge Bench of the Calcutta High Court on Friday put them under house-arrest following a split of opinion between the judges on whether they should be granted bail or kept in judicial custody.

All four will now be placed under house arrest, the court ruled. The order of house arrest was passed by acting Chief Justice Rajesh Bindal following a difference of opinion between him and Justice Arijit Banerjee who ordered the four leaders'

release on bail in the six-year-old Narada payoff case.

The Court rejected the CBI's plea that being influential persons the foursome could influence and manipulate witnesses and refused to stay the house arrest order.

While senior counsel Abhishek Manu Singhvi argued in favour of an interim bail pending the constitution and hearing by a larger bench the Court said retained its order for house arrest granting however the Ministers leverage of being virtually consulted by the officers of their respective departments on important issues like handling of the pandemic situation.

Singhvi said, "House arrest

is no less than arrest. They should be released" as an "Interim situation should be freedom" as being ministers and MLAs there was no possibility of flight risk. The Court however said that a release could not be ordered till the matter was disposed of by a larger Bench a time frame for formation of which was however not given.

The four accused Firhad Hakim, Subroto Mukherjee (both ministers), Madan Mitra, an MLA and a former Minister, and Sovan Chatterjee — a "TMC-turned-BJP-turned-neutral" politician and a former minister— were arrested on Monday morning by the CBI in the Narada pay off case where

all the four and at least seven others were seen on a video accepting cash for benefit from a sting journalist. The incident took place in 2014 but it was not released before the 2016 Assembly elections.

In a high-pitch drama that followed their arrests thousands of people gathered at the Nizam Palace office of the CBI where the foursome was kept. Even Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee too staged a sit-in at the same office for more than six hours demanding their release.

In the evening a local CBI court granted bail to the four accused after the CBI failed to produce them personally at the court following the ruckus outside its office. Soon after the

High Court admitted an appeal filed by the CBI late on Monday evening and stayed the bail which was heard on Friday.

While three of the four accused were currently in the hospital getting treated for their ailments Hakim was in the Presidency Jail hospital where he was being treated for mild fever. Hakim was likely to be shifted to his house whereas the other accused would stay put in the hospital, sources said.

Meanwhile, even as the parties prepared for a hearing before a larger Bench of the High Court the CBI sources said that the Agency was planning to move the Supreme Court seeking to quash the High Court order of house arrest.

Mamata to contest bypoll from Bhawanipore

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee who roared back to power for the third consecutive time in a keenly fought March-April State elections would contest in a bypoll from the Bhawanipore seat — her home turf for years to get an entry into the State Assembly.

Banerjee lost to her former close-confidant Suwendu Adhikari who later joined the BJP in a close contest at Nandigram in East Midnapore where she was defeated by a wafer-thin margin of 1,927 votes.

Banerjee who was sworn in as the Chief Minister has to win a membership of the House

within six months of swearing-in. According to Article 164 of the Constitution a Minister including the Chief Minister who does not become an MLA within six months has to resign.

State Agriculture Minister and the sitting MLA and from Bhawanipore Sobhandeb Chattopadhyay who on Friday submitted his resignation to Speaker Biman Banerjee said that he had done so out of his own will and "there was no pressure from the party to do so."

He said "the way Mamata Banerjee has fought against the evil forces is an example for the entire country and it is necessary that she continues to lead the House ... and for that Bhawanipore is the best place

from she should be an MLA."

Chattopadhyay would contest from Khardaha seat in North 24 Parganas which was also won by the TMC by more than 28,000 votes. The TMC candidate however succumbed to corona infections soon after the elections.

Banerjee who resides at Bhawanipore has been an MLA from the area since 2011 but left it in 2021 for Nandigram which she called "a lucky place for me." Incidentally the TMC had trailed BJP from the Bhawanipore Assembly segment — which falls in Kolkata South parliamentary constituency — in 2019 general elections by a few thousand votes.

Rajiv Gandhi assassination: Stalin urges Prez to release 7 convicts

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ CHENNAI

While Tamil Nadu Congress Committee paid homage to Rajiv Gandhi, the former Prime Minister on his 30th death anniversary at Sriperumbudur, 30 km from Chennai, where he was murdered by the terrorists of the dreaded Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam in this day in 1991, Muthuvel Karunanidhi Stalin, Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, wrote a letter to the President of India asking him to release the seven convicts in the murder case.

S Nalini, Murugan, Santhan, Perarivalan, Jayakumar, Robert Payas and P Ravichandran, the accused in the Rajiv Gandhi Murder case were sentenced to death by the Supreme Court. But the death sentences of six persons were commuted to life imprisonment by the Supreme Court of India while that of Nalini was commuted under Article 161 of the Constitution.

The DMK, the AIADMK

and other Dravidian outfits were trying to get the assassins released claiming that they have put in nearly three decades of hardship in jail as part of the imprisonment.

K S Alagiri president, TNCC, KV Thangabalu, former TNCC president and AICC leader C D Meyyappan led the party cadre at Rajiv Gandhi Memorial at Sriperumbudur in paying homage to the departed leader. Speaking to reporters, Meyyappan said he was making use of the anniversary to plead with the Tamil Nadu Government to help realize the dreams of Rajiv Gandhi. "Navodaya Vidyalaya, a public school in the lines of high end schools was a dream project of Rajiv Gandhi. He wanted all children in the country to get quality education free of cost all over India. This was part of the New Education Policy drafted by him during his tenure as Prime Minister," said Meyyappan.

He pointed out that Tamil Nadu is the only State in India

that continues without even a single Navodaya Vidyalaya. "My request is that the Tamil Nadu Government allows the setting up of such schools in the State," he said. Tamil Nadu is the only State in the country which does not have a single Navodaya Vidyalaya though all districts in rest of India boast of such concept school.

The Dravidian parties' hatred for Hindi and Sanskrit is the reason behind their opposition towards Navodaya Schools, said Dr Y R Johnson, a former principal of Navodaya Schools.

"The Dravidian leaders are against teaching Hindi and Sanskrit because they identify these languages with Hindutva. But the truth is that there are no rules that Hindi and Sanskrit should be taught in Navodaya Schools. These languages are optional in nature. I had pleaded with Stalin whom he came to Kanyakumari for election campaign to establish such schools in Tamil Nadu," Dr Johnson told *The Pioneer*.

Maha cases drop marginally

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Maharashtra on Friday recorded 1,263 Covid-19 deaths—including 708 old unaccounted deaths that were added to the day's cumulative tally, while the infections dropped marginally to 29,644.

A day after the State logged 984 deaths and 29,911 infections, the infections dropped to 29,644 while the State added 1,263 deaths — comprising 369 that occurred in the last 48 hours, 186 that took place last week and 708 old unaccounted deaths that were added to the state's daily Covid-19 toll.

With 1,263 new deaths, the total number of deaths in the State climbed from 85,355 to 86,618. Similarly, with 29,644 new infections, the total number of cases climbed from 54,97,448 to 55,27,092.

As 44,493 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 that had breached the 50 lakh mark on Thursday, increased from 50,26,308 to 50,70,801 on Friday. The recovery rate in the state went up from 91.34 per cent to 91.74

per cent. The total "active cases" in the State dropped from 3,83,253 to 3,67,121. The fatality rate in the state went up from 1.55 per cent to 1.57 per cent.

With 54 fresh deaths, the Covid-19 toll in Mumbai increased from 14,410 to 14,464, while the infected cases went up by a relatively low 1415 to trigger a jump in the infections from 6,92,785 to 6,94,200.

The situation in Pune improved vastly as the "active cases" dropped from 64,084 to 58,840.

Mumbai with 28,579 active cases stood second in the state, followed by Thane (26,248), Nagpur (19,745), Solapur (18,881), Ahmednagar (18,479), Satara (17,513), Nashik (16,618), Amravati (9,927), Beed (9,734), Chandrapur (7,713), Jalgaon (7,696), Osmanabad (7,240), Aurangabad (7,056), Latur (5,024), Jalna (4,952) and Buldhana (4,814).

Of the 3,24,41,776 samples sent to various laboratories across the state so far, 55,27,092, have tested positive (17.04 per cent) for Covid-19 until Friday. Currently, 27,94,457 people are in home quarantine while 20,946 people are in institutional quarantine.

13 Maoists gunned down by commandos in Gadchiroli

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

In what is being seen as the second biggest success after they eliminated as many as 40 naxalites in two separate operations in May 2018, the anti-naxal commandos of the Maharashtra Police on Friday morning gunned down 13 Maoists, including 7 women, in a fierce gun-battle in the deep forests of Kotmi in Etapalli taluka of Gadchiroli in eastern Maharashtra.

After the gun-battle that lasted for more than 90 minutes, the elite C-60 commandos of the Anti Naxal Squad (ANS) of the Gadchiroli police recovered a huge cache of arms, ammunition and explosives, including one AK-47 rifle, SLR, Carbine, 303 and 12 bore rifles and an Improvised Explosive Device (IED) from the spot. Among those killed were a naxal operative identified as one Satish, a member of the north Gadchiroli divisional committee of CPI (Maoist).

The encounter between the ANS commandos and Maoists took place between 6 am and 7.30 am when the former were carrying out a combing operation in the Kotmi forest AREA. Some 60 to 70 began firing at the ANS commandos, numbering more than 100,

from a hilltop at around 6 am. The commandos retaliated, killing 13 Maoists on the spot. Those Maoists killed in the encounter comprised seven women and six men.

In a bid to loot the arms and ammunition being carried by the police party, the Maoists fired indiscriminately at the ANS commandos. "At that the ANS commandos asked them lay down their arms and surrender. However, the Maoists opened fire at the commandos more intensely. The commandos had no alternative but to retaliate. Seeing the increased intensity of the firing from the commandos in the encounter that went on for 90 minutes, the naxals fled the scene," a statement issued by the Gadchiroli police said.

Friday's operation is being seen as the second biggest success after the security agencies gunned down 40 suspected Maoists in two separate anti-naxal operations in Gadchiroli district of eastern Maharashtra on May 22, 2018.

The elimination of 13 Maoists came three weeks after the ANS' C-60 commandos gunned down two hardcore Maoists — Vinay Lalanarote (31) and Vivek alias Suraj alias Manohar Kanu Narote.

P-305 mishap toll at 60, cops book barge captain for culpable homicide

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Four days after the accommodation barge Papaa-305 sank amid Cyclone Tauktae off the Mumbai coast claiming at least 60 lives and seeing many more go missing, the Yellowgate police on Friday booked the Master of the barge and others for culpable homicide not amounting to murder.

The development came on a day the management of Oil and Natural Gas Commission (ONGC) announced a relief of ₹2 lakh to the families of each those killed in the mid-sea mishap and ₹1 lakh to those who survived the mishap. Simultaneously, M/s Afcons Infrastructure Ltd. (AIL) is working on the compensation for the affected crew, which will be operationalized soon.

Acting on a complaint lodged by the Barge chief engineer Rahman H. Shaikh who was among the survivors rescued by the Indian Navy earlier this week, the Yellowgate Police Station filed a First Information Report invoking charges of culpable homicide not amounting to murder against the Master of the Barge Papaa-305 and others.

The police registered under Sections 304(II) (an act done

with knowledge that it is likely to cause death), 338 (causing grievous hurt by an act endangering life or personal safety of others) and 34 (common intention) of the Indian Penal Code.

Confirming the development, Mumbai Police Spokesperson and Deputy Commissioner of Police S. Chaitanya said, "The captain of the barge acted negligently on the warnings issued related to Cyclone Tauktae and that allegedly led to the mishap due to which we have registered an offence. We have so far mentioned the barge's captain and others in the FIR. On the basis of the findings of the investigation, we will book more officials."

Meanwhile, the toll in the mid-sea mishap involving the accommodation barge Papaa-305 went up to 60 as eleven more bodies were recovered by the Indian Navy on Friday. Another 15 oil workers are still missing.

"Sixty mortal remains were recovered from under the sea. Search and Rescue operations for remaining others are continuing. There are in all 188 survivors — 186 from Papaa-305 and two from tug Varaprada," Defence spokesperson Mehul Karnik said.

Covid claims 467 more lives in TN

CHENNAI: Tamil Nadu saw 467 people succumbing to Covid-19 on Friday, according to the Directorate of Public Health and Preventive Medicine release.

The 12 hours ended Friday 6 PM saw 36,184 people getting diagnosed with the pandemic across the State. Tamil Nadu has 2.74 lakh patients undergoing treatment for Covid-19 as on Friday evening.

More than 1.65 lakh persons were subjected to RT-PCR test across the State, said the release. J Radhakrishnan, Principal Secretary, Health, told reporters that the hike in the number of patients across the State was in expected lines. "The second wave of Covid-19 is getting peaked up in Tamil Nadu. It will peak by May 31 and then we will see a reduction. We are seeing 35,000 cases per day across the State. This will come down shortly. The neighbouring States of Kerala and Karnataka has crossed the peaking and the pandemic is on the wane in these States," said Radhakrishnan.

There are ten districts in the State with more than 1,000 cases. Chennai has the highest number of new cases on Friday as 5,913 new persons were diagnosed with Covid positive. PNS

43 more succumb to coronavirus in J&K

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

For the first time in the last three weeks a silver lining emerged on the horizon as the Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir reported less than 50 deaths due to Covid 19 on Friday. A total number of 43 patients succumbed to the virus, 27 in Jammu division and 16 in Kashmir division.

Meanwhile, J&K reported first death due to black fungus after a 40-year-old Covid-19 recovered patient died of mucormycosis at Government Medical College (GMC) hospital. Since May 1, a total number of 1,135 patients succumbed to the deadly virus across J&K. Out of these 720 deaths were reported across Jammu division and 415 patients died across Kashmir division.

The patient care services were badly affected across Jammu region due to lack of facilities and poor management of the available resources and manpower. Significantly, the positivity rate across Jammu district, which reported 423 deaths since May 1, dropped below 7 percent while the overall positivity rate of J&K stood at 8.15 percent on Friday. According to the media bulletin, "4,466 more Covid-19 patients were recovered and discharged from var-

ious hospitals including 1,730 from Jammu Division and 2,736 from Kashmir Division".

According to the Principal of GMC, Jammu Dr Shashi Sudan Sharma, the patient, who died due to 'black fungus' suffered from a high degree of diabetes of 900 level and was immunocompromised when he was shifted to the hospital. He must have taken a lot of steroids resulting in the uncontrollable diabetes level resulting in diabetic ketoacidosis syndrome, she said.

The patient had tested negative of Covid-19 before he was admitted to hospital for the fungal infection. Deputy Commissioner Jammu, Anshul Garg, Friday said the overall positivity rate which was above 10 percent in the first week of May has dropped to below 7 percent in the last few days.

He said despite the decreasing trend in positive cases, the District Administration has not lowered its guard and it is taking all measures to combat Covid-19 pandemic.

"Equivalent emphasis has been given on testing in urban as well as rural areas. Around 7 thousand to 8 thousand tests are being conducted on a daily basis out of which 50% have been conducted in rural areas," he informed.

Chhattisgarh CM transfers first installment of input subsidy for 2021 under RG Kisaan Nyay Yojana



New Delhi: For the second consecutive year, Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel transferred ₹1,500 crore to 22 lakh farmers of the State as the first installment of agricultural input subsidy under Rajiv Gandhi Kisaan Nyay Yojana for kharif season 2020-2021.

The Chief Minister also transferred the amount of ₹7 crore 17 lakh directly to the accounts of villages and cattle rearers as payment for the dung procured from 15 March to 15 May, under the multi-pronged Godhan Nyay Yojana of Chhattisgarh government. Besides, he also transferred ₹3.6 crore to the gauthan samitis and women self-help groups.

SRM Hospital opens Covid care centre with 200 beds



Kattankulathur: SRM Medical College Hospital and Research Centre (SRM MCHRC), Kattankulathur has set up a Covid care centre with 200 bed capacity in the campus. Out of this 200 bed facility, 100 beds will be for allopathic treatment.

It was inaugurated by Pro-Vice Chancellor, Medical Health Sciences, SRM MCHRC Prof. Lt. Col. Dr. A. Ravikumar. Also present were SRM Institute of Science and Technology's Registrar (Interim) Dr. S. Ponnusamy, Medical (Dean) Dr. A. Sundaram and Dental (Dean) Dr. Vivek among others.

As per the Govt. guidelines and AIIMS Delhi guidelines, only patients with moderately and severe disease are admitted to the hospital.

Lockdown extended till May 30 in Kerala

KOCHI: Lockdown in Kerala has been extended to May 30, taking into consideration the hike in the daily Covid-19 cases in the State. This was announced by Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan in his daily press briefing on Friday.

Vijayan, who was sworn in as Chief Minister for the second term on Thursday had some good news for the people of the State. "Since there has been improvement in the Covid-19 position in the districts of Thiruvananthapuram, Ernakulam and Thrissur, the triple lock down in force in these districts is being withdrawn from Saturday. But Malappuram district where the situation remains unchanged would continue to be under triple lock down," said Vijayan.

The Chief Minister said that

29,673 new persons were diagnosed with Covid-19 on Friday. The death toll on Friday was 143. The Test Positivity Ratio as on Friday was 23.3 per cent, he said.

The State subjected 1,33,558 persons to RT-PCR Test on Friday, said Vijayan. The Chief Minister said there was a discernible reduction in the number of Covid-19 cases while the death toll remained on the high side. "Doctors have told us that the fatalities would be higher for the next few weeks and we have to be cautious," he said.

Kerala is in the process of setting a vaccine manufacturing facility in the State, disclosed the chief minister. He said the Government is in talks with leading vaccine manufacturers for vaccine manufacturing in the State. PNS

Kind Attention Rail Passengers

IMPORTANT NOTICE

This is notified for the information of rail passengers that the timings of the following Special Trains will be revised due to speed enhancement/operational requirements as under:-

02425/02426 New Delhi - Jammu Tawi - New Delhi Rajdhani Superfast Special Train								
TRAIN NO. 02425				TRAIN NO. 02426				
Existing Timings		Revised Timings		STATIONS	Existing Timings		Revised Timings	
ARR.	DEP.	ARR.	DEP.		ARR.	DEP.	ARR.	DEP.
---	21:10	---	20:40	New Delhi	05:00	---	05:55	---
01:16	01:26	00:28	00:38	Ludhiana	00:05	00:15	01:40	01:50
03:40	03:42	03:10	03:15	Pathankot Cantt	21:32	21:34	23:05	23:10
---	---	03:44	03:46	Kathua	---	---	22:25	22:27
05:45	---	05:10	---	Jammu Tawi	---	20:10	---	21:25

Days of Run: 02425 from New Delhi on 28.05.2021 and 02426 from Jammu Tawi on 29.05.2021

02422/02421 Jammu Tawi - Ajmer Jn. - Jammu Tawi Superfast Special Train								
TRAIN NO. 02422				TRAIN NO. 02421				
Existing Timings		Revised Timings		STATIONS	Existing Timings		Revised Timings	
ARR.	DEP.	ARR.	DEP.		ARR.	DEP.	ARR.	DEP.
---	18:10	---	18:15	Jammu Tawi	08:15	---	07:35	---
19:20	19:22	19:15	19:17	Kathua	06:40	06:42	05:31	05:33
20:00	20:05	19:55	20:00	Pathankot Cantt	06:05	06:10	04:57	05:02
21:55	22:00	21:50	21:55	Jalandhar Cantt	04:15	04:20	03:15	03:20
22:55	23:05	22:50	23:00	Ludhiana Jn	03:15	03:25	02:20	02:28
00:55	01:00	00:41	00:51	Ambala Cantt Jn.	01:25	01:39	00:57	01:02
01:53	01:55	01:39	01:41	Karnal	23:59	00:01	23:28	23:30
03:55	04:25	03:50	04:15	Delhi Jn.	22:00	22:30	21:45	22:10
04:55	04:57	04:43	04:45	Delhi Cantt	21:12	21:14	20:57	20:59
05:11	05:13	05:01	05:03	Gurgaon	20:53	20:55	20:40	20:42
05:22	05:24	05:12	05:14	Garhi Harsaru Jn.	---	---	---	---
06:13	06:15	06:04	06:06	Rewari	20:15	20:17	19:57	19:59
06:50	06:51	06:40	06:42	Khairthal	18:56	18:57	18:49	18:51
07:13	07:16	07:04	07:07	Alwar Jn.	18:35	18:38	18:28	18:31
07:42	07:44	07:33	07:35	Rajgarh	17:58	18:00	17:56	17:58
08:11	08:13	08:00	08:02	Bandikui Jn.	17:33	17:35	17:35	17:37
08:32	08:34	08:22	08:24	Dausa	17:07	17:09	17:09	17:11
09:28	09:30	09:17	09:20	Gandhi Nagar Jaipur	16:28	16:30	16:28	16:31
09:50	10:00	09:50	10:00	Jaipur	16:10	16:20	16:10	16:20
10:41	10:43	10:41	10:43	Phulera Jn.	15:14	15:16	15:15	15:17
11:23	11:25	11:23	11:25	Kishangarh	14:33	14:35	14:31	14:33
12:20	---	12:10	---	Ajmer Jn.	---	14:05	---	14:05

Days of Run: 02422 from Jammu Tawi on 28.05.2021 and 02421 from Ajmer Jn. on 29.05.2021

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PAPER WITH PASSION

SC to lenders' aid

The apex court's ruling gives teeth to the banks' recovery process against the defaulters

The financial lenders have got relief with the Supreme Court upholding a Government notification for invoking personal guarantees of promoters whose companies have defaulted on bank loans. The banks can now file for personal bankruptcies against promoters whose companies are facing debt resolution from the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT). The Government enacted the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code in 2016 to deal with the inability of banks to get back defaulting loans. Within a few months, over 50 companies ended up with the NCLT and personal guarantees given by the defaulting promoters were sought to be invoked. At that point, several promoters moved the High Courts and finally the Supreme Court transferred the cases to itself. In 2019, the Government amended the Code by bringing in the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (Insolvency Resolution Process for Personal Guarantors to Corporate Debtors) Regulations, 2019. The notification empowered the lenders to invoke the defaulters' personal guarantees. The apex court clubbed all the 70-odd petitions that challenged the "personal guarantors" clause of the notification. The Supreme Court not only upheld the constitutional validity of the notification, it also held that even after a resolution formula is worked out for the corporate debtor, the personal guarantor continues to be liable for any balance amount remaining. This ensures that the liability of the personal guarantor does not end even after a resolution formula is worked out for the corporate debtor and proceedings can be initiated against the promoter and personal guarantor and co-guarantors, if any, as well.

The Supreme Court's decision has now provided teeth to the banks' recovery processes. They can pursue both the personal guarantors and the corporate debtors simultaneously. The banks or other lenders can directly invoke the personal guarantees of the promoters even as the bankruptcy proceedings against the promoters' companies go ahead. In technical parlance, the promoters who give personal guarantees will have to deal with their insolvency on their own, even by selling their private assets, if they have to, and will not hamper the insolvency cases against the corporate debtors. The promoters will now be made to reach a settlement with the banks in the form of a one-time settlement or a repayment plan and give an undertaking that they will not impede the resolution process of the corporate debtor. It gives a filip to the banks' attempts to clean up the huge amount of bad loans without writing them off as NPAs. The apex court dismissed without costs all the petitions by, among others, Anil Ambani of R-Com, Sanjay Singhal of Bhushan Power and Steel, Videocon's Venugopal Dhoot and Kapil Wadhawan of Dewan Housing Finance Limited, all of whom have stood personal guarantees for loans and were then found defaulting. The decision plugs a major loophole in the bankruptcy law and acts as a powerful deterrent against the defaulters.

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PICTALK



Devotees at a newly built temple, dedicated to 'Corona Devi', at Irugar in Coimbatore

When the calendar doesn't go full circle

The strictly lunar character of the Hijri calendar renders it unsuitable for civil use; the Empires had to depend upon solar calendars



PRİYADARSHI DUTTA

The switchover from Ramadan (or Ramzan), the ninth month of the Islamic Hijri calendar, to Shawwal on the 29th, abounds in uncertainty and excitement. The sighting of the lunar crescent (*Hilal* in Arabic) on the western horizon — in a slender time-frame between sunset and moonrise — would herald the new month. The first day of Shawwal is celebrated as Eid-ul-Fitr. A non-sighting could merely extend the Ramadan by another day. On the 30th day, the moon sighting becomes redundant as no Hijri month could be longer. It would automatically lead to Shawwal and, therefore, the Eid. This phenomenon of reckoning is not specific to Ramadan and Shawwal but applies to all 12 Hijri months. However, moon sightings keep in news only for the commencement of Ramadan, Shawwal and Dhu-al-Hijjah for their religious significance.

Moon sighting is a big game in Pakistan. Disproportionate amounts of resources are allocated for it. The *Ruet-e-Hilal* committee announces the beginning of every Hijri month based on intelligence received from various sources. The principal source is Pakistan's meteorological department, which maintains 288 observation centres across the nation. They even employ theodolites, a precision instrument with movable telescopes.

"The problem of determining the day when the new lunar crescent can be seen first at any site of observation has remained an open problem since antiquity. The phenomenon remains important for beginning a lunar month in a purely observational lunar calendar," observes Muhammad Shahid Qureshi. Qureshi completed his PhD on the comparative study of mathematical models for earliest visibility of the crescent moon from the University of Karachi in 2007.

Why have lunar observations remained a thorny issue since ancient times? This is because the mean value of the moon's synodic revolution around Earth is 29 days, 12 hours, 44 minutes and 2.87 seconds. Still, significant variations are possible on



account of the eccentricities and perturbations of the orbits of Moon around Earth and Earth around the Sun, informs late Sir Harold Spencer Jones, former Astronomer Royal of Britain. The total range of variation is about 13 hours.

Qureshi's dissertation informs that the earliest mathematical model of lunar crescent visibility was worked out by Muslim astronomers at the Abbasid court of Al-Mamun in the ninth century. Among those astronomers was Al-Battani. In modern times, Schmidt, Fortheringham, Maunder, Bruin, Schaefer, Ilyas and Odeh, among others, have contributed to better predictability.

The Hindu religious calendar is also based on lunar months. The months are, however, determined by calculations rather than observations. It is based on the concept of *tithi*, where each *tithi* in the series represents 12 degrees of progressive angular separation of the Moon from the Sun. Every *tithi*, beginning from Shukla Pratipada to Amavasya, could have religious significance for the Hindus. It is surprising why medieval Muslim mathematicians/astronomers failed to

develop a lunar calendar based on calculation to simplify things. They rather went in for complicated models merely to predict the crude principle of lunar sightings, which remain at the mercy of several meteorological factors. Between the eighth and 19th century, well over 200 location-specific *zijs* (astronomical handbooks) were compiled in the Islamic world, informs Stephen P Blake in *Time in Early Modern Islam*.

The lunar crescent (*Hilal*) could not be visible before Shukla Tritiya, if not Chaturthi, on account of its faintness and slenderness. In the 21st century, we have apps like MoonCalc, which provide location-based information on the timing and trajectory of the moon. Yet, the Muslim world insists on the naked eye sighting (*Ru'ya*), which now includes telescoping sighting, where split verdicts are common.

The most disadvantageous aspect of the Hijri calendar is its purely lunar character. The year comprises 354 days (12 lunar cycles of 29½ days each). The intercalation used by the pagan Arabs, to keep the year abreast of the seasons, was prohibited by Prophet Mohammed as per a command

in the *Quran* (9:36-37). So, the calendar became out of sync with the seasons. The religious austerities/festivities freely wander through the year, advancing by 11 days *vis-à-vis* the Gregorian calendar every year.

Islamic civilisations, however, could not live by religion alone. While the Hijri calendar satisfied liturgical purposes, it could not sustain the agrarian, revenue and administrative work. Blake, in his study of Sa'avid, Ottoman and Mughal Empires in Iran, Turkey and India, found that each one used solar calendars whether Zoroastrian, Julian or Indic (Saka Samvat) sometimes modifying it to their needs.

Seljuk ruler Jalal al-Din Malik Shah (1055-92), who set up Islam's first astronomical observatory at Isfahan, used the services of famous astronomer and poet Omar Khayyam (1048-1132) to devise a solar calendar. He established a new era *Tarikh-i-Jalali* that began on Vernal Equinox (coinciding with Zoroastrian festival *Nau Roz*) on March 21, 1079. The Era was used in Iran until the Islamic revolution in 1979.

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



IT IS SURPRISING WHY MEDIEVAL MUSLIM MATHEMATICIANS/ASTRONOMERS FAILED TO DEVELOP A LUNAR CALENDAR BASED ON CALCULATION TO SIMPLIFY THINGS. THEY RATHER WENT IN FOR COMPLICATED MODELS MERELY TO PREDICT THE CRUDE PRINCIPLE OF LUNAR SIGHTINGS

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

THE MENACE OF MUCORMYCOSIS

Sir — As our country unitedly fights the second wave of the deadly COVID-19 virus, another worry, the black fungus, is creating havoc and causing concern. The Central Government has even advised the States to declare mucormycosis as an epidemic. This would mean that the health facilities will have to screen for the fungal infection and report it to the Government.

Mucormycosis or the black fungus infection is a rare but highly dangerous disease that is now increasing among the COVID-19 positive patients in India. The disease is caused by one's exposure to the mucormycetes mould and has a high mortality rate. It affects the ear, nose, throat and mouth, particularly in people with diabetes issues or whose immunity is compromised.

The use of steroids in COVID-19 treatment is being cited as a reason for the increase in its cases. Steroids help in fighting COVID-19 but could lead to higher sugar levels, making the patients vulnerable to mucormycosis. The mucormycosis menace is a new threat and the healthcare centres should spot out the disease at an early stage and nip it in the bud with the state-of-the-art medicines.

CKR Nathan | Ghaziabad

THE RHYTHM OF RELIGION

Sir — As temples in India are intermittently being closed during the pandemic, we all are very eager to visit the places of worship after a long gap. The accused Coronavirus has kept us away from our respective places of worship and from reaching out to the divine over the last nearly 14 months.

However, we very keenly wait for the reopening of the religious places so that we can once again worship God there. As soon as we enter a temple, its bells provide us solace and the will to worship the Almighty in a satisfying way. The sound of the bell has always been considered auspicious, which welcomes divinity and dispels evil.

The sound of a bell is said to disengage the mind from the ongoing thoughts, thus making it more receptive. Ringing a bell during prayers is said to help control the ever-wandering mind and focus on the deity.

Need to work in unison



Prime Minister Narendra Modi has left himself open to the charge of bypassing the State Governments by the manner in which he held virtual meetings with the district magistrates (DMs) and State officials to review the COVID-19 situation.

West Bengal Chief Minister (CM) Mamata Banerjee has taken great exception to the fact that she and her counterparts were denied a chance to speak at the meeting. For the reasons best known to him, Modi restricted his interaction to a few handpicked collectors from the BJP-ruled States.

The BJP's argument that Mamata tried to derail the meeting is weak in that it is based on the false assumption that a DM knows better than a CM. What is the point of the CMs attending such meetings if they are not

allowed to broach the relevant matters with the PM? This is the time for the Central and State Governments to be united in tackling the COVID-19 crisis. Right now, it is of the utmost importance that all the tiers of administration work in unison to achieve the common purpose of defeating the Coronavirus.

The realisation that we are all of the same kind — the humankind — rather than claiming or establishing superiority must dawn on all, including the tribe of our politicians. What is called "cooperative federalism" is what is best suited to our vast and diverse country. The object of the exercise of power should be public service and not personal aggrandisement. All those who fall in the national power structure — from the panchayat councillor to the Chief Ministers to the Prime Minister — are important in their own ways and responsible at their levels of governance, if not all of them in equal measure, and have their individually significant roles to play. The subservience of one to the other, or an expectation that this is how it should happen, is antithetical to democracy. The view of society as an organic whole is worth embracing.

G David Milton | Kanyakumari

There lies a real and inherent value to the temple bells that are used during household *pujas* during the pandemic.

CK Subramaniam | Chennai

MAHARASHTRA LOCKDOWN MAY BE EASED

Sir — As per reports, the Uddhav Thackeray-led Maharashtra Government may lift the lockdown restrictions gradually owing to a decline in the number of COVID-19 cases in the State. After weeks of continuing struggle, the signs of the ebbing of the second COVID-19 wave in Maharashtra are apparent as the positivity rate and the number of active cases have dropped by almost half in a month. Rajesh Tope, the State Health Minister, has indicated that the lockdown restrictions, extended till June 1, could be eased to some extent. The lockdown-like

curbs were first imposed in the State on April 5. The curbs were further tightened on April 15 with Section 144 of the CrPc, banning the assembly of five or more people at one place. A week later, on April 22, the Chief Minister announced a complete lockdown to control the deteriorating situation. On May 20, the daily positivity rate in the State was 10.6 per cent, the lowest in months. It was 9.3 per cent in mid-February, when the second wave began, and rose to 29 per cent by April 4. With the increase in testing, it has been steadily declining since. With this, there is good chance of the lockdown getting lifted.

Bhagwan Thadani | Mumbai

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

Face-off

The bad blood on display during the PM's recent meeting with the DMs leaves much to be desired

Another unsavoury episode of calling each other names has erupted between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee. Though the Prime Minister displayed dignity in not responding directly to Mamata's diatribe, his aides didn't let go of the chance to take on the feisty Chief Minister. The issue snowballed from a recent meeting that Modi had called with the District Magistrates of 10 States, including the ones not ruled by the BJP. Soon after the meeting ended, a furious Mamata launched a frontal attack on Modi, alleging that she was not allowed to speak and that the 24 Pargana's District Magistrate was given precedence over him. Claiming that she and the other Chief Ministers attending the meeting felt insulted, Mamata wondered why they were even invited to the meeting if the Prime Minister wasn't willing to listen to their problems. While the BJP may have a point in its claim that Mamata had sought to interrupt the meeting, the fact still remains that "glorified clerks" like the District Magistrates cannot substitute people's elected representatives. While the Government's appointees derive their power from the official rule-book, the elected representatives are directly reflective of the people's wishes.

Therefore, the BJP's argument that the West Bengal Chief Minister had sought to derail the meeting is weak in that it is based on the assumption that a DM knows better than a Chief Minister. What actually is the point of the State leaders attending such meetings if they are not allowed to broach the relevant matters with the Prime Minister? At a time when the country is reeling under the second wave of the pernicious virus and the fears of a third wave unleashing itself on humankind are well nigh, the Central and the State Governments must stand united in tackling the COVID-19 crisis. Ironically, the meeting had been called to discuss COVID preparedness. As the unitary authority, the Centre is vested with enormous powers; it should exercise these with responsibility; it should not rely on these or invoke these to bypass elected State Governments to have its way. What has been called "cooperative federalism" is what is best suited to our vast and diverse country. The object of the exercise of this power, in fact all the cumulative power at the command of the authorities, should be public service and not personal aggrandisement.

SOUND BITE

The special task force (to deal with the third COVID-19 wave) has been formed under my chairmanship. It will contain 15 members.



Goa Chief Minister — Pramod Sawant

To protect your health and limit the spread of COVID-19, we're extending travel restrictions between Canada and the US until June 21.

Canadian Prime Minister — Justin Trudeau

Both the mediums (TV and OTT) have their share of challenges. As actors, our job is to act in any medium.

Actor — Sidharth Shukla

Anil Kumble has given me a few sleepless nights as a batsman. He was not your orthodox leg-spinner.

Former Sri Lanka captain — Kumar Sangakkara

Getting the IP rights waiver for vaccines will not be enough. We should expand COVID-19 vaccine production and end export restrictions.

WTO director-general — Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala



FIRST COLUMN

PATENT WAIVER ALONE WON'T HELP

There are three ways to overcome the issues facing us in our anti-COVID fight



UTTAM GUPTA

One of my close friends called up a few days back to discuss renovation of his Amidst exponential increase in demand for vaccination, Indian policy makers are looking for all possible options to ramp up supplies. A major hindrance in the way is the intellectual property rights (IPRs) associated with new drugs which are mostly discovered and developed by multinational pharmaceutical companies. For instance, Covishield was discovered and developed by Astra-Zeneca in collaboration with Oxford University; a license for its manufacture has been given to Pune-based Serum Institute of India (SII).

The most crucial of these rights relates to patent. The patent granted to an innovator company for a new drug gives a period of 'market exclusivity' during which no other firm can manufacture and sell the said drug unless it has prior consent of the



patent holder. For Covishield, only SII has the license to produce and royalty is also pretty high. There are three ways to overcome these barriers. First, a compulsory license (CL) — a flexibility available to developing countries under the TRIPS agreement — authorizes a generic firm to manufacture and market a patented product without prior consent of the patent holder. A CL under Indian Patent (Amendment) Act, 2005 can be issued for "private commercial use" if the patent holder has not taken steps to make the product available in "sufficient" quantities or price charged is "unaffordable." The government can also issue the CL citing circumstances of "national emergency or for public non-commercial use." But, this by itself does not assure that they will be able to produce. Unlike generic medicine, vaccine is an organic entity and making it is a different ball game altogether. Even an easy protein (AstraZeneca vaccine is much more complex containing a bio-engineered adenovirus that expresses the Sars-Cov-2's spike protein) is far more advanced and complex than a drug like, say, paracetamol.

As for the power of copying the product or the method, the generic manufacturer can't get a clue merely by studying a patent as it does not divulge the specifics. By issuing CL, the government may cross the patent barrier but for access to know-how, the generic manufacturer will still have to go to the innovator. Add to this, the problem of sourcing raw materials and other components needed for making the vaccine. We have already seen how in case of Covishield, in the initial stage, the production was hamstrung due to issues in importing raw material. This is when the SII has a license from AstraZeneca. What would happen if we go into confrontation mode - inevitable when CL is issued?

A second option is to seek temporary waiver of TRIPS provisions to deal with public health emergencies. India along with South Africa had submitted a proposal in October, 2020 and has already received support of majority of members including USA. If approved, this will give global legitimacy to several companies for producing the vaccine without having to seek nod of the innovator. But, the big question for now is whether the proposal will be cleared at all. A third option is 'voluntary license' (VL), an authorization given by the patent holder to a generic company allowing it to produce the patented drug. The license sets quality requirements and defines the markets in which the licensee can sell the product. In the present crisis situation VL offers the best bet the Indian company need not worry about technical knowhow and raw materials.

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

Decoding the complex electoral regionalism

The West Bengal Assembly election results have left several political pundits, including those within the BJP itself, scratching their heads in wonder



PRASENJIT BISWAS

The Bharatiya Janata Party's loss of an over-hyped West Bengal election only created confusion about the best electoral strategy of its victory machine. While it brought the hound of 'Sonar Bangla', it failed to run with the hare of Bengali nationalism. Its image of a prosperous future 'Bangal' lost to the Bengali intellect-driven, genteel and even maternal nationalism. The hyped 'Sonar Bangla' and 'asolporiborton' of Prime Minister Narendra Modi met the firewall of Bengali nationalism. Bengal sidestepped them by reviving a kind of 'Bengal first and Bengali first' narrative, instead of BJP's thrust on 'Let's make Bengal great again'. The irony of Bengal's election result was so sharp on the BJP that Prime Minister's allusion to Gopal Krishna Gokhale's dictum, "What Bengal thinks today, India will think tomorrow" got rephrased as "what Bengal thinks in 2021, India will think in 2024". On the flipside, the BJP held onto its project of a unitary powerful centre against Bengal's indivisible Bengali identity.

While the BJP in Bengal did not or rather preferred not to come to terms with Bengali nationalism and its sensitivities, the case of Assam is just the opposite. Like Congress of yore, BJP in Assam came to terms with indigenous ethnic nationalism of various communities and tried to arraign them against a common enemy of 'illegal immigrants'. In the case of Bengal, the BJP's emphasis on changed demography in border areas due to illegal immigration from Bangladesh coupled with Mamata Banerjee's appeasement of Muslims and neglect of Hindus to become a two-pronged campaign aimed at altering the settled contours of Bengali nationalism. The BJP wanted to create a segment of Bengalis buying ideas of anti-Muslim Hindu nationalism, who would also buy into the perception of an incoming corporate-business nexus that BJP's Hindi-Hindu nationalism might facilitate. To counter this mismatch, Mamata just had to allude to Bengal's tradition of social harmony and her robust social security programmes as being the core of her philosophy of governance. In effect, nothing such as appeasement theory, illegal immigrants, Hindu victimization, Gujarat and Uttar Pradesh models of Vikas could stand up to her play of Bengali nationalism. A nationalism that includes all with their distinctive linguistic and cultural traits brought together under Mamata's social security programmes covering women, SCs, STs and minorities in areas of employment, education, healthcare and housing. Her campaign drew more resonance than the BJP's identity-based nationalism.

This contest between regional nationalism and centrist nationalism in Assam assumes a very different shape. Assamese middle class and elite-driven nationalism always constructed an outer limit of Bengalis of East Bengal origin, who are often categorized as Bangladeshis. Based on this perception, the BJP could successfully turn upper rungs of Assamese society against main opponent Congress' dalliance with All India United Democratic Front (AIUDF) of Maulana Badruddin Ajmal as partnering with a party of illegal immigrants. The incumbent chief minister Himanta Biswa Sharma termed 'Miyas' or so called illegal immigrants as a threat to Asomiya Vaishnavite culture and to Asomiya identity at large. It created a toxic mixture of anti-immigrant sentiments with pro-Asomiya



THE BJP WANTED TO CREATE A SEGMENT OF BENGALIS BUYING THE IDEA OF ANTI-MUSLIM HINDU NATIONALISM, WHO WOULD ALSO BUY INTO THE PERCEPTION OF AN INCOMING CORPORATE-BUSINESS NEXUS THAT THE BJP'S HINDI-HINDU NATIONALISM MIGHT FACILITATE. TO COUNTER THIS MISMATCH, MAMATA JUST HAD TO ALLUDE TO BENGAL'S TRADITION OF SOCIAL HARMONY AND HER ROBUST SOCIAL SECURITY PROGRAMMES

The author is a philosopher and an independent political analyst based in Shillong. The views expressed are personal.



native identity, which can act as the main plank of Assamese ethno-nationalism. It is here that Hindutva nationalism gelled with Assamese nationalism to present itself as an open ally of the latter. This strategy of not pursuing a Centrist Hindu nationalism in Assam, in contrast to BJP's Bengal strategy, gave it the biggest electoral benefit. It stopped the Congress-led alliance in establishing a larger alliance with Assamese nationalist political outfits like the Assam Jatiyo Parishad (AJP) led by erstwhile student leader Lurinjyoti Gogoi and also with Rajgor Dol (RD) led by Akhil Gogoi. Anti-BJP votes suffered a split between Congress and these regionalist outfits in crucial seats of upper Assam. This success story scripted singlehandedly by BJP's new Chief Minister of Assam Himanta Biswa Sharma has catapulted Assamese regional nationalism as an indispensably of BJP's centrist Hindutva nationalism.

In Bengal, Hindutva nationalism's projection of Hindi as its lingo met its toughest political resistance in Bengali linguistic nationalism that abhorred undue dominance by Hindi in the state. This emerged as the most important strand of cultural resistance that could make Mamata label BJP campaigners as 'outsiders'. In electoral terms, this resistance left Bengal's native Hindi speakers in a dilemma, as their votes lost their counterweight to Bengali voters. Further, BJP's projection of Muslims as illegal immigrants and as tormentors of Bengali Hindus in the partition days and later in East Bengal stirred the dormant Bengali imagination of a unified Bengali national identity that already rose much above such narratives of vio-

lence and division of countries. BJP's mouthing of Bengal-turning-into-Bangladesh internally rewired the historic bond between Bengal and Bangladesh. Prime Minister Modi's visit to Bangladesh to offer prayers at Orakandi temple of the Guru of Motuacommunity only substantiated existence of such umbilical emotional bond. In effect, the Prime Minister stirred that strand of Bengali nationalist sentiment which rises above territorial and political divisions and finds its 'roots' in larger history, for example, in the episode when Jogen Mandal, the Dalit Bengali leader ceded Dalits from upper caste dominated 'bhadralok' Bengali society. Mamata's outsider jibe at such politically pregnant acts of BJP's campaign to win over Bengal's Dalits pointed out exclusivism played by outsiders within Bengali linguistic and cultural identity. BJP's attempted exclusivism created a furore when the image of Kazi Nazrul Islam, the quintessential rebel Bengali bard and musician, was removed from campaign stage of the Prime Minister even as he was delivering a campaign speech barely a kilometer away from poet Nazrul's birthplace. Bengali firewall against exclusivism and outsiders trying to take over Bengal only got vindicated when Central forces fired at Sitalkuchi, leaving four Bengali Muslims dead.

BJP's electoral play of religious card only stifled its headway into the state. By pitching NRC and CAA, the BJP created an impression among Bengalis that it wants to play with their 'citizenship'. BJP fuelled anti-CAA sentiments in Assam were much restrained this

time. It could just wade through because the opposition lacked unity in Assam. In Bengal, the BJP wanted to gain advantage by division of minority votes after a prominent Muslim cleric floated the Indian Secular Front (ISF). Already incensed by politics of polarization, the ordinary Bengali voter could realize the danger of division of minority votes by Left-Congress-ISF combine. The fear of common man in Bengal precipitated further as the Left alliance inched towards a policy of 'enemy's enemy is my friend' in relation to TMC and BJP. As a result, Left-Congress-Indian Secular Front might have increased its vote share to nearly 10 per cent, but it won just one seat in Muslim majority constituencies. The Left and the Congress drew a total blank. The common Bengali voters were made aware of the fact that BJP's plank of conducting NRC in Assam has got a large number of Bengali Hindus excluded from it. Hence, it will now be a difficult proposition for Assam's Himanta Biswa Sharma to maintain a balance between BJP's core Bengali Hindu voters and Assamese nationalists who aim to turn away Hindu Bangladeshis from Assam. The thin electoral marriage between BJP's centrist Hindutva nationalism and Assamese nationalism can break anytime because of BJP's mismatched game of NRC and CAA.

The election results showed the electoral efficacy of regional nationalism. Whether BJP can make itself a part of this regionalism, or a new alignment of regional parties shall emerge as a winning combination is a matter to be keenly watched now.

POINT COUNTERPOINT

IN 2019, I BEGAN & ENDED MY ELECTION CAMPAIGN IN PUNJAB SEEKING PUNISHMENT FOR THE 2015 SACRILEGE ISSUE CULPRITS & THE ONE SHIELDING THEM.

— CRICKETER-TURNED-POLITICIAN
NAVJOT SINGH SIDHU



IT IS AN ORGANISATIONAL ISSUE. WE ARE WATCHING IT AND WILL TAKE A CALL ON IT (WHEN THE RIGHT TIME COMES).

— CONGRESS GENERAL SECRETARY
KC VENUGOPAL

Rural India needs new approach to tackle the pandemic

Most habitants of the hinterland believe that COVID is restricted to the urban areas; they are immune to it owing to a healthy lifestyle

I went to my village in Meerut district of Uttar Pradesh during Holi (March 2021) and found that no one was wearing a mask or adopting prescribed COVID-appropriate norms. I was told that villagers had natural immunity due to their hard working lifestyle in the fields, healthy environment and simple eating habits. They firmly believed that Covid was mainly restricted to the urban areas. Even the administration implicitly accepted this and no efforts were made to educate or improve health infrastructure in rural areas.

However, the second wave of COVID has been devastating. Everyone is caught unawares. Even now the perception is that the villagers will be all right if they get infected because their life style will protect them. There is still resis-



DINESH KUMAR TYAGI

(The author is Managing Director, Common Service Centre (CSC) e-Governance. The views expressed are personal.)

tance in rural India for getting vaccination which is now identified as one of the best ways for dealing with covid and as a long-term, sustainable solution. The challenges for addressing the pandemic in rural India needs a different approach.

Advocacy about following the prescribed norms, dealing with misconception, and convincing for vaccination for all eligible person need to be factored in any approach designed for dealing with covid pandemic for Rural India. Utilisation of ASHA (Accredited social health activist), Anganwari workers, Auxiliary Nursing Midwives, Self Help Groups and Panchayat functionaries are important for a sustained campaign to create awareness and influence villagers for vaccination. Local level 'Covid prevention champions'



need to be designated in every panchayat to motivate and educate the community. Vaccination camps in villages will help in making access easy and affordable. Fully vaccinated Panchayats can be rewarded, same for districts too, to encourage competition.

The government can also utilise the Common Service Centres across the country for

this rural initiative. There are CSCs in almost all the 2.54 lakh Panchayats in the country. The village-level entrepreneurs who operate the CSCs can help in registration of villagers for vaccination. They can also be effective local level influencers as they are already involved in mobilising the community for various government schemes and programs. More than 70,000

CSCs are operated and managed by women and their credibility within the community is higher. Most CSCs are now extending banking services to rural population during the pandemic, specially farmers who get the PM Kisan Samman Nidhi fund, Jan Dhan Account holders, Ujjwala beneficiaries and pensioners under various govt schemes. They even visit homes to extend the banking services for the old, infirm and sick. With such a large customer base and local influence, CSCs with appropriate incentive can play a significant role in extending support to government for dealing with the COVID pandemic in rural areas.

CSC telemedicine service is also very popular in rural India. It helps connect a person to through video link with doctors of allopathy,

ayurveda and homoeopathy medicine. Medicine too is dispensed online through the CSCs. Citizen consultation with doctors during the pandemic through CSC can benefit a large section of the rural population, particularly in cases of people with mild infection.

CSC has also provided mobile vans to 29 district-level Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) societies. They have computers and connectivity and are used for creating awareness, vaccine registration and teleconsultation. In some places with the support of the district administration, CSC vans are also being used for antigen tests. Surveys, testing and online data entry work can be effectively taken up as well. With the CSCs conducting the seventh economic census digitally (more than 40 cr house-

holds surveyed), each village now has a trained person for whose services can be utilised for epidemiological studies on virus behaviour patterns at the local level. As these reports will be available online and instantly, any strange patterns can be immediately noticed and diagnosed.

The villagers can also use the CSC Grameen e-stores - the hyper local e-commerce platform was launched last year - to place orders for essential items online without having to go out to shop. The CSCs are in an advanced stage of enabling delivery of medicine to villagers and supportive roles in conducting diagnostic tests. Rural India is complex and has unique behaviour norms and, therefore, needs an innovative approach to deal with the COVID pandemic.

Israel, Hamas agree to ceasefire

PTI ■ JERUSALEM

Israel and the Palestinian militant group Hamas have agreed to a ceasefire, bringing to an end 11 days of bombardment, the heaviest flare-up since the 2014 Gaza War, that has left over 240 people dead and threatened to destabilise the volatile region.



Palestinians wave national flags at al-Aqsa mosque complex in Jerusalem on Friday

The ceasefire, which followed mounting pressure from the US, Egypt and other international brokers to halt the violence, came into effect on Friday.

The Israeli Security Cabinet voted to accept the ceasefire late Thursday as the Israeli south and Gaza remain inflamed.

The Security Cabinet unanimously agreed to a "mutual and unconditional" cessation of hostilities, according to a statement from Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's Office.

"The political leadership emphasised that reality on the ground is what will determine if the campaign continues or not," the statement said.

Netanyahu did however inform the Israel Defence Forces (IDF) to prepare for a scenario in which Hamas did not respond to Egypt's ceasefire offer.

Celebratory demonstrations took place in the Gaza Strip and West Bank as well, following the ceasefire.

Fireworks, singing, and parades down the streets could be seen in uploaded videos on social media.

Both Israel and Hamas have claimed victory in the conflict that has left over 240 people, including an Indian caregiver in Israel, dead.

Soumya Santosh, 30, was killed in a rocket attack by Palestinian militants from Gaza. Santosh, who hailed from Kerala's Idukki district,

worked as a caregiver attending to an old woman at a house in the southern Israeli coastal city of Ashkelon.

Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi thanked US President Joe Biden for his role in the success of the Egyptian brokered ceasefire between Israel and Hamas.

He added that both see the urgency in managing the conflict between the parties through diplomacy.

Biden hailed the ceasefire, saying both Palestinians and Israelis deserve to live safely.

Palestinians see victory in Gaza truce as Israel warns Hamas

Gaza City: Palestinians rallied by the thousands Friday after a cease-fire took effect in the latest Gaza war, with many viewing it as costly but clear victory for the Islamic militant group Hamas. Israel vowed to respond with "a new level of force" to any further hostilities.

The 11-day war left more than 200 dead — the vast majority Palestinians — and brought widespread devastation to the already impoverished Hamas-ruled Gaza Strip. But the rocket barrages that brought life to a standstill in much of Israel were seen by many Palestinians as a bold response to perceived Israeli abuses in Jerusalem, the emotional heart of the conflict.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu warned against further attacks, saying, "If Hamas thinks we will tolerate a drizzle of rockets, it is wrong." He vowed to respond with "a new level of force" against aggression anywhere in Israel.

UN: Gaza has significant trauma, medical needs

Geneva: The World Health Organization has tallied "significant trauma needs" in Palestinian areas, where at least 243 people have been killed during 11 days of fighting between Palestinians and Israelis.

WHO spokeswoman Margaret Harris said a total of 8,538 people had been injured across Palestinian areas during the violence, and 30 health facilities in Gaza had been damaged — with one clinic fully destroyed and another sustaining significant damage. She said damage to infrastructure was impeding the access of ambulances.

The comments to a U.N. Briefing in Geneva came as humanitarian aid workers assessed the fallout from the latest fighting between Hamas militant fighters and Israeli forces.

Fabrizio Carboni, regional director for the Near and Middle East at the International Committee of the Red Cross, estimated there were "several hundred" pieces of unexploded ordnance strewn about in Gaza and said medical supplies were a pressing need.

Nepal PM Oli, Opp alliance stake claim to form Govt

PTI ■ KATHMANDU

Nepal's political crisis deepened on Friday as both embattled Prime Minister K P Sharma Oli and the Opposition parties staked a claim for the formation of a new government by submitting letters comprising signatures of lawmakers to President Bidya Devi Bhandari.

Prime minister Oli reached the President's Office Shital Niwas a couple of minutes ahead of the Opposition leaders. He submitted the letter claiming support of 121 lawmakers from his own party CPN-UML and 32 lawmakers of Janata Samajbadi Party-Nepal (JSP-N) for his reappointment pursuant to Article 76(5) of the Constitution.

JSP-N president Mahantha Thakur, JSP-N Parliamentary Party leader Rajendra Mahato and PM Oli had signed the letter submitted to the President, CPN-UML leader Bishnu Rimal was quoted as saying in The Himalayan Times.

Earlier, Nepali Congress President Sher Bahadur Deuba claimed to have garnered the support of 149 lawmakers. Deuba, along with the leaders of Opposition parties, reached the President's Office to stake

claim for the post of prime minister. The Opposition's decision came after Prime Minister Oli reportedly expressed unwillingness on Thursday to undergo another floor test to prove his government's majority in the House of Representatives.

Leaders of the Opposition alliance including the Nepali Congress (NC), CPN (Maoist Center), the Upendra Yadav-faction of Janata Samajbadi Party (JSP) and the ruling CPN-UML's Madhav Nepal faction claimed to have the support of 149 lawmakers of the House of Representatives (HoR), said Nepali Congress senior leader Prakash Man Singh.

The number includes 61 MPs of Nepali Congress, 48 of Maoist Center, 13 of JSP and 27 of UML. The leaders from the Opposition alliance left for the President's official residence, Shital Niwas, to submit the signatures of 149 lawmakers recommending Sher Bahadur Deuba's appointment as the

prime minister. Deuba, 74, is the president of the Nepali Congress and served as the prime minister of Nepal on four different occasions; first from 1995 to 1997, then from 2001 to 2002, again from 2004 to 2005, and from 2017 to 2018.

The veteran politician currently serves as the Leader of the Opposition since the 2017 general elections. He is also the current president of the Nepali Congress, having been elected to the position in 2016.

The ball is now in the court of President Bhandari. President Bhandari had given the parties a deadline until 5:00 pm, Friday, to present their claim.

On Thursday, the government had recommended the president to initiate the formation of a new government pursuant to Article 76 (5) of the Constitution of Nepal as Prime Minister Oli was not 'in the mood' to withstand another floor test.

Nepal Prez to consult experts on Govt formation: Report

Kathmandu: Nepal President Bidya Devi Bhandari on Friday told the Opposition alliance that she will seek advice from constitutional experts before taking a call on government formation after her office registered separate premiership claims from it and Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli, according to a media report.

Both Oli and Opposition leader Sher Bahadur Deuba presented their claims to the president on Friday, minutes before the 5:00 PM deadline set by Bhandari for the parties to stake a claim to form a new government.

Oli was the first to declare that he had the support of 153 lawmakers of the House of Representatives, a day after recommending to the president to initiate the process for formation of a new govern-

ment in accordance to Article 76(5) of the Constitution, citing that he does not have adequate support to go through another floor test.

The letter he submitted had his signature along with the signatures of Janata Samajbadi Party-Nepal chair Mahanta Thakur and the party's parliamentary party leader Rajendra Mahato.

Likewise, Nepali Congress President Sher Bahadur Deuba along with other leaders of the Opposition alliance reached Shital Niwas with signatures of 149 lawmakers including 27 lawmakers from the Khamal-Nepal faction of the CPN-UML. The president apparently told the Opposition leaders that she would take a call after consulting constitutional experts, *The Himalayan Times* reported.

Hong Kong says Taiwan 'grossly interfered' in its affairs

Hong Kong: Hong Kong's government on Friday said it has pulled all of its staff out of Taiwan and accused the island's government of having "grossly interfered" in the semi-autonomous Chinese city's internal affairs.

Taiwan responded by saying Hong Kong had politicized a connection that was dedicated to serving the public, and that it supports universal values of free speech and assembly.

Hong Kong said its Economic, Trade and Cultural Office will remain closed while it closely monitors development and considers the way forward "in a holistic manner."

Relations between the sides have deteriorated in recent years as Beijing tightens its control over Hong Kong and ratchets up diplomatic, military and economic pressure on Taiwan, which it claims as its own territory, to be brought under its control by force if necessary.

Myanmar poll chief considers dissolving Suu Kyi's NLD

AP ■ NAYPYITAW

The head of Myanmar's military-appointed state election commission said on Friday that his agency will consider dissolving Aung San Suu Kyi's former ruling party for its alleged involvement in electoral fraud and have its leaders charged with treason.

Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy party first came to power after a landslide 2015 election victory, and won an even greater majority in last November's general election. It was set to start a second term in February when the military seized power in a coup, arresting her and dozens of top government officials and party members.

Junta leader Senior Gen. Min Aung Hlaing cited electoral fraud as the justification for the army's takeover, saying



Representatives of various political parties attend a meeting organised by the Union Election Commission on Friday

"there was terrible fraud in the voter lists." The army-backed Union Solidarity and Development Party, which suffered unexpectedly heavy losses in the election, made similar allegations.

Independent observers dispute the assertions of widespread irregularities. Political parties were called

to discuss planned changes in the electoral system at a meeting Friday. There, Union Election Commission chairman Thein Soe said an investigation of last year's election that would soon be completed showed that Suu Kyi's NLD had illegally worked with the government to give itself an advantage at the polls.

The NLD also won a 1990 election, but the military stepped in to prevent it from taking power

"We will investigate and consider whether the party should be dissolved, and whether the perpetrators should be punished as traitors," he said.

The NLD, which has thrown its weight behind the mass popular movement against the military takeover, has faced constant harassment since the coup, with its members arrested and offices raided and closed.

The junta initially announced that it would hold new elections a year after taking power, but later hedged and said the delay could be up to two years. Before the start of democratic reforms a decade ago, Myanmar was ruled by the military for 50 years.

The NLD also won a 1990 election, but the military stepped in to prevent it from taking power.

NORTHERN RAILWAY
NOTICE
Sh. Sachin S/O Sh. Om Pal, Assistant Loco Pilot/Shakur Basti resident of Village-Aurangabad, Post- Aurayee, Distt. Sant Ravidas Nagar, Madhni. Uttar Pardesh-221301, is hereby informed through this notice that you are running unauthorized absent since 30.05.2018 to till date. In this context, SF-5(Major Penalty) had already been issued to you. You are being advised to attend this office within 10 days after publication of this notice; otherwise ex-parte action under DSAR 1968 will be initiated against you.

UJVN Limited
H.O.: "UJJWAL", Maharani Bagh, G.M.S. Road, Dehradun-248006
Telephones: 0135-2763808, Fax: 0135-2763508
CIN No. U40101UR2001SGG025866, Website: www.ujvn.com

Corrigendum-02 Date: 21.05.2021
Amendment in Section-I Point No. (3): Eligibility Criteria and date extension of e-tender NIT:01/UJVNL/EE (M&G)/KPS/2021-22 for "Design, manufacture, testing, delivery, installation and commissioning of 12.5 MVA, 6.6/132 kV generator transformer at Kuhlal Power House" is hereby made as follows:
1. Bidder should be original manufacturer or authorized dealer of the manufacturer. In case, bidder is authorized dealer, similar experience shall be counted of the Original Manufacturer subject to:
2. Bidder has been authorized by the same original manufacturer earlier for transformer work/supply.
3. The Authorized dealer must have carried out installation, testing commissioning of 12.5 MVA, 6.6/132 kV or higher rating new transformer during last 07 years"
Last date of submission of bids on website : 28.05.2021, 17:00 Hrs.
Last date of submission of hard copies of bids : 31.05.2021, 15:00 Hrs.
Date of opening of tender : 01.06.2021, 11:00 Hrs.
All other terms and conditions of the tender shall remain unchanged.
For Fuller & Further details kindly visit e-procurement portal "http://ukenders.gov.in"
Executive Engineer (M&G), Kuhlal

NORTHERN RAILWAY
NOTICE INVITING TENDER
Name of work and its location: 30-Elect-38-T-2020-21-E3 Provision of portable DG set for emergency power supply over Delhi division. (Covid coaches)
Approx cost of the works: Rs. 54.48 lacs
Address of the office: Sr. Divl. Elect. Engineer/General, New Delhi.
Earnest Money: Rs. 00.00
Date & time of submission of tender: 16.06.2021, 12:00 Hrs.
Opening of tender: 16.06.2021, 12:00 Hrs.
Website & notice board: www.ireps.gov.in & Sr. Divl. Elect. Engineer/General, New Delhi.
1093/2021
Serving Customers with a Smile

SEARCH FOR MISSING GIRL
General public is hereby informed that this Girl Name: Kanti Devi @ Rinky, D/O Munish Kumar, R/o Village Kuniya Chachora, P.O. Umarsad, P.S., Madanapur, Disstt. Shahjahanpur, UP. Age: 18 years 6 months, Height: 5'3", Complexion: Fair, Face: Long, Built: Thin, Wearing: Yellow suit and Red salwar, has been missing from her house since 16.05.2021 at 7:00 am. In this regard a DD No. 38A/2021 dated 16.05.2021, has been lodged at P.S. Bharat Nagar, North West, Delhi. Sincere efforts have been made by local police to trace out information about this Girl but no clue has come to light so far. Any person having any information or clue about this Girl kindly inform to the following.
E-Mail: cbc@cbi.gov.in SHO
Website: http://cbi.nic.in P.S. Bharat Nagar, North West, Delhi
Fax: 011-24368639 Ph. 011-27301200, 8750870222
Ph: 011-24368638, 24368641 DP/801/NW/2021

Public Notice
I Deepak Verma resident 1804, Nimbus, Paramount Symphony, Crossing Republic, Ghaziabad, 201016, Uttar Pradesh. I have disowned my son Kamaldeep Verma from all my movable immovable property. Only he will be responsible for all his actions and transactions.

PUBLIC NOTICE
This is to inform to all concerned and publically announced that I am the son of Late Shri Radha Charan Sharma S/o Late Shri Bihari R/o A-207, Sector-46, Noida, District Gautam Budh Nagar, U.P. My father Late Shri Radha Charan Sharma has expired on 16.04.2021. Whereas my father Late Shri Radha Charan Sharma is the owner of Residential Plot No. AG-01, Sector-63A, Noida. Whereas at the time of his life, he had executed a will in my name in respect of above mentioned Plot as his love and affection. The said will is registered in the office of Sub Registrar Noida, vide Book No. 3, Volume No. 861, Pages 267 to 284 Document No. 198 Dated 23.03.2019. Further publically announced that apart from the name of my father he also known and called as Radhey Shyam and Radha Charan Sharma urf Radhey Lal that i.e. nick name of him. Which name of him entered in the abovementioned Will. Radhey Shyam and Radha Charan Sharma urf Radhey Lal all the names of one and the same person. More clarify that his name entered in some documents as Radhey Shyam. But his name was Radha Charan Sharma urf Radhey Lal. So it is informed to all concerned that the Plot No. AG-01, Sector-63A, Noida is going to transfer mutate in favour of my self Gyandhra Sharma S/o Late Shri Radha Charan Sharma R/o A-207, Sector-46, Noida, District Gautam Budh Nagar, U.P. through above notated registered will anyone has / have any objection regarding above notated clarification and transfer / mutation of the said property in my name he / she may file his / her objection along with the sufficient proof in the Residential Plot Department of the Noida Authority within 30 days from the date of Public Notice of this notice.
Gyanendra Sharma

PUBLIC NOTICE
This is to inform to all concerned that Mr. Vinod Kumar Son of Late Shri Mangal Ram R/o Flat No. 26, Sector-28, Noida had sold Commercial Shop No. 31, Brahmaputra Shopping Center, Sector-28, Noida, Distt. Gautam Budh Nagar, UP, on General Power of Attorney basis to the following persons:
General Power of Attorney was executed on 14-11-2017 in favour of Mrs. Soniya Sahni wife of Shri Rajiv Sahni resident of Flat No. 26, Sector-28, Noida duly registered in Sub registrar Noida on dated 14-11-2017 and Agreement to Sell was not registered. So it is informed to all concerned that the said Commercial Shop No. 31, Brahmaputra Shopping Center, Sector-28, Noida, Distt. Gautam Budh Nagar, UP, is going to be transferred in favour of Shri Rajiv Sahni Son of Shri Jaspal Sahni resident of Flat No. 26, Sector-28, Noida. If anyone has/have any objection he/she may file his/her objection along with the sufficient proof in the Commercial Department of the Noida Authority within 30 days from the date of publication of this Notice.
Updesh Kumar (Advocate)

Joe Biden signs Bill to address hate crimes against Asian-Americans

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

US President Joe Biden has signed a legislation to address the sudden increase in hate crime against Asian-Americans in the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic and expressed hope that such crimes would now be more accurately counted and reported so that it can be ended.

"It will provide resources to create specialised hate crimes units that will also help states create hotlines for hate crimes at state and local levels that will be accessible for people with limited English proficiency. And it provides resources for training for state and local law enforcement to identify, investigate, and report these heinous crimes," Biden said after signing the legislation which has become a law after his assent.

Earlier this week, the House of Representatives passed the Senate-approved version of the Covid-19 Hate Crimes Act with an overwhelming bipartisan vote. This bill was introduced by

Senator Mazie Hirono and Representative Grace Meng in the House, and incorporated the Jabara-Heyer NO HATE Act.

This legislation will address the current rise in anti-Asian hate and improve the reporting of hate crimes. Biden also urged people to change their mind and heart.

"But of all the good that the law can do, we have to change our hearts. We have to change the hearts of the American people. I mean this from bottom my heart — hate can be given no safe harbor in America. I mean it: no safe harbor. It can't be dismissed like, Well, that's just what happens. My sister, Valerie, and I talk about it all the time. You've got to speak up. Speak up and speak out," he said.

Senator Hirono said after a year in which the Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAP) community experienced a horrifying rise in hate crimes and incidents driven by racist and inflammatory language during the pandemic.

Dalai Lama's successor has to be approved by Beijing: China's white paper on Tibet

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

Beijing: China on Friday asserted that any successor to the present Dalai Lama should be approved by it, ruling out recognition to any heir nominated by the India-based Tibetan spiritual leader or by his followers.

The reincarnation of the Dalai Lama and other grand Living Buddhas has been subjected to approval by the central government since the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911), claimed an official white paper issued by the Chinese government here.

The document has also asserted that Tibet was an inseparable part of China since ancient times.

"In 1793, after dispelling Gurkha invaders, the Qing government restored order in Tibet and promulgated the Imperially Approved Ordinance for Better Governance of Tibet, improving systems by which the central government-administered 'Tibet,' the white paper titled 'Tibet Since 1951: Liberation, Development and Prosperity' said.

BSES Yamuna Power Limited, New Delhi
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NOTICE INVITING TENDER Date: 22.05.2021
Sealed tenders under two Bid System (Unpriced & Priced) is invited for following jobs:

NIT No.	Brief Work Description	Estimated Cost (₹)	Cost of EMD (₹)	Due Date & Time of Submission	Date & Time of Opening
CMC/BY/21-22/RS/SV/16	SURVEY, DESIGN, ENGINEERING, MANUFACTURING, SHOP TESTING, INSPECTION, PACKING & DISPATCHES, TRANSPORTATION, LOADING, UNLOADING, STORAGE AT SITE, ERECTION & INSTALLATION, ASSOCIATED CIVIL WORKS, COMMISSIONING, HANDING OVER TO BYPL INCLUDING COMPREHENSIVE MARINE CUM STORAGE CUM INSURANCE POLICY (MSE) ON 'SINGLE POINT RESPONSIBILITY BASIS' FOR GIS GRID SUBSTATION 'ON TURKEY BASIS' FOR 33kV/11kV 50 MVA LP. EXTENSION GRID SUBSTATION	₹ 20.00 Crore	₹ 20.00 Lakh	14.06.2021 15:00 Hrs	15.06.2021 15:00 Hrs

Cost of each Tender Documents: ₹1,180/-
For details in respect of Equipment/BOM/Services, Qualifying requirements, Terms & conditions, purchase/submission of tender documents, corrigendum etc. please visit our website www.bsesdelhi.com --> Tenders --> BSES YAMUNA POWER LTD --> Head (Contracts & Materials) Open Tenders.
Regd. Off: BSES Yamuna Power Ltd, Shakti Kiran Building, Karkardooma, Delhi-110032 | CIN: U40109DL2001PLC111525
TEL: 011-39897111 | Fax: 011-4124 7787 | Website: www.bsesdelhi.com

NATO to continue Afghan troop training after leaving country
AP ■ BRUSSELS
NATO will continue to train Afghan special forces outside the country after it winds up 18 years of security work in conflict-torn Afghanistan in coming months, the military organisation's top civilian official said Friday.
"As we end our military presence, we are opening a new chapter," NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg told reporters in Paris after talks with French President Emmanuel Macron that were focused on preparations for a summit of the alliance's leaders next month.
Stoltenberg said NATO's revised role would involve giving "advice and capacity-building support to Afghan security institutions, as well as continued financial support." He said NATO also plans "to provide military education and training outside Afghanistan, focusing on Special Operations Forces."
It was not immediately clear where the training will take place.

PRO-PALESTINE RALLY IN PAK: 7 KILLED IN BLAST
Islamabad: At least seven people were killed and 13 others injured when a bomb exploded during a pro-Palestine rally in Pakistan's restive Balochistan province on Friday, officials said. The rally was taken out to express solidarity with the people of Palestine, which over the last 11 days has been involved in a tense confrontation with Israel that has led to the death of over 240 people, and threatened to destabilise the volatile Mideast.

NAWAZ SHARIF'S LAND IN PAKISTAN AUCTIONED
Lahore: Over 11 acres of land owned by Pakistan's deposed prime minister Nawaz Sharif has been auctioned for PKR 112 million in the Punjab province of the country on the court's order. The Islamabad High Court had declared PML-N supreme leader Sharif a proclaimed offender in September, 2020 due to his failure to join the Toshakhana - gift repository - case.

HIZB UT-TAHRIR OPERATIVE ARRESTED IN BANGLADESH
Dhaka: Bangladesh police have arrested a 30-year-old operative of the banned Hizb ut-Tahrir militant organisation for alleged terrorism related offences.

Spain returns over 6,600 migrants to Morocco in border spat

AP ■ CEUTA (SPAIN)

Over 6,600 of the more than 8,000 migrants who swam or jumped over border fences into one of Spain's North African enclaves this week have been sent back to Morocco, authorities said Friday.

No fresh arrivals were recorded for the second day in a row in Ceuta, the Spanish city of 85,000 at the center of a diplomatic row between Spain and Morocco, after Moroccan authorities stepped up vigilance on their side of the border. But in nearby Melilla,

another Spanish territory 350 kilometres (220 miles) west along the Mediterranean Sea next to Morocco, border security forces on both sides repelled groups of youths trying to get into Spain. The Spanish government's delegation in Melilla said a few dozen made it in.

Relations between the two Mediterranean neighbours have dipped to a low over Spain's decision last month to grant entry for medical treatment to the man leading the movement that has fought for Western Sahara's independence since Morocco annexed the vast territory in the 1970s.

RBI Board OK's transfer of ₹99,122 cr as surplus to Govt



PTI ■ MUMBAI
The Reserve Bank of India on Friday approved the transfer of ₹99,122 crore as surplus to the central government for the accounting period of nine months ended March 31, 2021 (July 2020-March 2021), while deciding to maintain the Contingency Risk Buffer at 5.50 per cent.

Deputy governors Mahesh Kumar Jain, Michael Debabrata Patra, M Rajeshwar Rao, T Rabi Sankar attended the meeting.

Other directors of the Central Board, N Chandrasekaran, Satish K Marathe, S Gurumurthy, Revathy Iyer and Sachin Chaturvedi also attended the meeting. Debasish Panda Secretary, Department of Financial Services and Ajay Seth, Secretary, Department of Economic Affairs too attended the meeting.

During the meeting, the board, headed by Governor

Shaktikanta Das, "approved the Annual Report and accounts of the Reserve Bank for the transition period."

"The Board also approved the transfer of ₹99,122 crore as surplus to the central government for the accounting period of nine months ended March 31, 2021 (July 2020-March 2021), while deciding to maintain the Contingency Risk Buffer at 5.50 per cent."

RBI's higher payout to help Govt tide over revenue losses from lockdowns: Analysts

PTI ■ MUMBAI

After the RBI surprised the Centre with a record ₹99,122 crore in surplus transfer for FY21, analysts said this will help the Government tide over the revenue losses from lockdowns and extend more support to the pandemic-hit industries and the poor people.

In fiscal 2020, the RBI had paid only ₹57,128 crore in dividend to the government and the finance minister had budgeted only ₹45,000 crore from the central bank.

The higher payout followed the Bimal Jalan panel report that had set a new economic framework capital

buffer for the central bank along with the contingency risk buffer at 5.5 per cent.

So far, in response to the second wave of the pandemic, the government has set aside only ₹26,000 crore for free food distribution to 80 crore people.

Barclays India chief economist Rahul Bajoria said the upside surprise increases the spending bandwidth of the fiscally stretched Government, giving it more room to provide more relief to alleviate the impact of the second wave of the pandemic.

The dividend payout of ₹99,122 is 0.5 per cent of GDP, more than double of the budget estimate of ₹45,000

crore, and has been enabled by the increased returns from the RBI's domestic assets and changes in its accounting practices -- the RBI recently allowed itself to book profits on its forex transactions from a weighted average cost perspective.

"Our estimates show that this move could have helped the central bank boost yields on its foreign asset holdings. Further, increased holdings of Gsecs likely further amplified the central bank's income for the year," he said. The record dividend payout will relieve some of the fiscal pressure on the government, providing it with more room to spend in the current fiscal.

Forex reserves near record high, jump \$563 mn to \$590.028 bn

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The country's foreign exchange reserves rose by USD 563 million to reach USD 590.028 billion in the week ended May 14, RBI data showed on Friday.

The reserves had touched a lifetime high of USD 590.185 billion in the week ended January 29, 2021.

In the previous week ended May 7, 2021, the reserves had increased by USD 1,444 billion to USD 589.465 billion.

During the reporting week ended May 14, 2021, the rise in the forex kitty was mainly on account of an increase in foreign currency assets (FCA), a major component of the overall reserves.

FCA's jumped by USD 377

billion to USD 546.87 billion in the reporting week, as per weekly data by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI).

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

Gold reserves rose by USD 174 million to USD 36.654 billion.

The special drawing rights (SDRs) with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) increased by USD 2 million to USD 1,506 billion.

The country's reserve position with the IMF increased by USD 10 million to USD 4,999 billion in the reporting week, the data showed.

Sensex zooms 976 pts as financial stocks pump market mood

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Equity benchmark Sensex skyrocketed 976 points on Friday, led by gains in index heavyweights HDFC twins, ICICI Bank and SBI as steady earnings reported by key financial stocks lifted investor sentiment.

The 30-share BSE index ended 975.62 points or 1.97 per cent higher at 50,540.48, and the broader NSE Nifty soared 269.25 points or 1.81 per cent to 15,175.30.

HDFC Bank was the top gainer in the Sensex pack, rallying over 4 per cent, followed by SBI which zoomed after the lender posted robust quarterly earnings.

The country's largest lender reported an 80 per cent surge in standalone net profit at Rs 6,450.75 crore for the fourth quarter ended March 2021, aided by decline in bad loans.

IndusInd Bank, ICICI Bank, Axis Bank and HDFC were also among the gainers.

On the other hand, PowerGrid and Dr Reddy's were the laggards.

Binod Modi Head-Strategy at Reliance Securities, said domestic equities recovered sharply mainly led by strong rebound in financials.

"Steady earnings reported by BFSIs including SBI and emerging clarity about asset quality in the backdrop of receding daily caseload in second wave aided financials to rebound.

Barring pharma, buying momentum was seen across all sectors," he said.

Further, assumption of second wave of COVID-19 to peak by the end of May or mid of June holds true and adverse impact of second wave should not be felt beyond Q1 FY22, he noted, adding that a visible decline in daily caseload has offered comfort to investors.

Elsewhere in Asia, bourses in Shanghai and Seoul ended on a negative note, while Tokyo and Hong Kong closed with gains.

₹ climbs to 8-week high; rises 29 paise against US \$

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The Indian rupee surged by 29 paise to hit an eight-week high of 72.83 against the US dollar on Friday, tracking positive domestic equities and upbeat Asian peers against the American currency. At the interbank forex market, the local unit opened at 72.98 against the greenback and witnessed an intra-day high of 72.83 and a low of 73.09. It finally ended with a gain of 29 paise at 72.83 to the US dollar -- the level not seen since March 26.

On a weekly basis, the rupee has appreciated by 46 paise against the American dollar.

The dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against 0a basket of six currencies, fell 0.10 per cent to 89.71 on Friday.

Labour Ministry hikes variable dearness allowance for workers in central sphere

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Ministry of Labour & Employment on Friday announced a hike in variable dearness allowance for more than 1.5 crore workers in the central sphere by ₹105 to ₹210 per month.

The hike, which will be effective from April 1, 2021, will also result in an increase in rate of minimum wages for central sphere employees and workers.

It will be for scheduled employment in central sphere and applicable to the establishments under the authority of central Government, railway administration, mines, oil fields, major ports or any corporation established by the central Government. These rates are equally applicable to

contract and casual employees/workers.

Talking to PTI, Chief Labour Commissioner Central (CLC) DPS Negi said, "the dearness hike ranges from ₹105 to ₹210 per month for workers in the central sphere."

In a statement, the labour ministry said it has notified and revised the rate of Variable Dearness Allowance (VDA) with effect from April 1, 2021.

This will be a major relief to different category of workers engaged in various scheduled employments in the central sphere at a time when the country is struggling with the second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic, it added.

The VDA is revised on the basis of average Consumer Price Index for Industrial Workers (CPI-IW), a price

index compiled by the Labour Bureau.

The average CPI-IW for of July to December 2020 was used for undertaking the latest VDA revision.

Labour Minister Santosh Gangwar said the revision will benefit about 1.50 crore workers engaged in various scheduled employments in the central sphere across the country. "This hike in VDA will support these workers particularly in the current pandemic times".

The enforcement of Minimum Wages Act in the central sphere is ensured through the Inspecting Officers of Chief Labour Commissioner (Central) across the country for employees engaged in the scheduled employment in the central sphere.

HC STAYS ONGC TENDER

E-auction of natural gas from KG-basin till June 4

New Delhi:The Delhi High Court has put on hold state-run ONGC's notice inviting tender (NIT) and the consequent e-auction with regard to sale of natural gas from its block in the Krishna-Godavari (KG) basin in Kakinada, Andhra Pradesh.

A bench of Chief Justice D N Patel and Justice Jyoti Singh said a prima facie case is made out in favour of the petitioners - two GMR group companies - and balance of convenience was also in their favour, as finalisation of the bidding would cause irreparable loss to them. "We, therefore, stay the operation, implementation, execution and finalization of the NIT dated April 12, 2021 as well as corrigendum to the NIT issued on April 27, 2021 and the consequent e-auction, till the next date of hearing," the bench said in its May 20 order.

SBI Q4 profit jumps 80 pc to ₹6,451 crore on higher interest income, lower provisioning

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The country's largest lender State Bank of India (SBI) reported an 80.15 per cent jump in its standalone profit after tax (PAT) of ₹6,451 crore in the three months to March 2021, aided by higher interest income and lower provisioning for bad loans.

The lender had posted a profit after tax of ₹3,581 crore in the same quarter of FY20. For the full year, its standalone PAT grew by 41 per cent to ₹20,410 crore as against ₹14,488 crore in FY20. "We have further consolidated our performance in the previous quarter (Q4 FY21) both in terms of profitability and asset quality.

We have been able to deliver consistent improvement in all the areas of profitability despite the disruptions caused by the pandemic," its chairman Dinesh Khara told reporters.

Flipkart's kirana partners see 30% rise in average monthly delivery income

FIANS ■ BENGALURU

India's homegrown e-commerce marketplace Flipkart on Friday said that its kirana partners across the country registered an increase of nearly 30 per cent in average monthly delivery incomes in 2020.

According to insights by Flipkart, the average monthly delivery incomes for kirana partners in the south grew the most, followed by east, west and north.

Among the top cities, kirana partners from Hyderabad saw the highest growth followed by those from Ahmedabad, Mumbai, Bengaluru and Pune.

The kirana delivery programme continues to benefit scores of kirana partners, helping sustain them financially during the lockdown period, Flipkart said in a statement.

Most Indian firms witness data breach in past 1 year: Survey

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Most Indian companies (81 per cent) in a survey acknowledged to have faced data breach in the past year, with zero-day vulnerabilities and security loopholes in web application being common reasons across several organisations, cybersecurity firm

Barracuda Networks on Friday said.

This global survey was conducted by independent market researcher Vanson Bourne on behalf of Barracuda. It included responses from 100 application security decision makers in India responsible for their organisation's application development and security.

WESTERN RAILWAY TENDER FOR SUPPLY OF BOLTS WITH NUT

Tender Notice No.: WTR/17/2021/105
Date: 14/05/2021 Chief Engineer (Track Supply), Head Quarter Office, Old Building, 2nd Floor, Churchgate, Mumbai - 400020 Invites Tender No. 216010 for following work- Short Description: Supply of various types of bolts with nut and washer. Tender Quantity : 999.63 MT Date of Closing Tender: 11.30 Hrs. on 29/06/2021
Note: (1) Complete tender details, conditions, documents and corrigendum (if any) can be viewed on www.treps.gov.in. D-0120
Like us on www.facebook.com/WesternRly

Govt. of Bihar BHAGALPUR SMART CITY LIMITED
CIN: U93090BR2016SGC033046

NIT No: Notice Inviting Short Term E-Tender

Request for Proposal for Modernisation of Schools with 5 (five) Years Operation & Maintenance under Smart City Mission on Item Rate Contract in Bhagalpur, Bihar.

Sr. No.	Work Descriptions	Estimated Cost (Rs.) Inclusive of all Taxes, GST, etc.	Tender Process Fee	Tender Documents Fee (In Rs.)	Ernest Money Deposit (In Rs.)
1.	Request for Proposal for Modernisation of Schools with 5 (five) Years Operation & Maintenance under Smart City Mission on Item Rate Contract in Bhagalpur, Bihar.	Rs. 6,33,86,295/- (Rupees Six Crore Thirty-Three Lakhs Eighty-Six Thousand Two Hundred Ninety Five only)	As per e-proc norms. https://eproc2.bihar.gov.in/	Rs. 25,000/- (Twenty-five thousand only).	Rs. 12,67,750/- (Twelve lakh sixty seven thousand seven hundred and fifty only).

Tender Schedule:

Sr. No.	Activity	Date and Time
1	Bid Submission Due Date https://eproc2.bihar.gov.in/	12-06-2021 11:00 PM
2	Bid Open Date https://eproc2.bihar.gov.in/	14-06-2021 04:00 PM
3	Submission end date of hard copy/ Physical documents mentioned in RFP. Address: Chief Executive Officer, Bhagalpur Smart City Limited, Swami Vivekanand Path, Near Ghuran Peer Baba Chowk, Bhagalpur - 812001.	14-06-2021 03:00 PM
4	Prebid Meeting Start Date.	24-05-2021 11:45 AM
5	Venue Details: Conference Hall, Bhagalpur Smart City Limited.	24-05-2021 11:45 AM
6	Prebid Meeting End Date.	24-05-2021 01:00 PM
7	Prebid Query Submission end date and time. Email: info@smarcitybhagalpur.org	24-05-2021 10:00 AM

Note: NIT, RFP, Corrigendum (if any) etc. are also available on Company website <http://www.smarcitybhagalpur.org> for reference purposes only. For further details please visit website state.bihar.gov.in/prdbihar

Chief Executive Officer, Bhagalpur Smart City Limited.

PR. No. 01415(NI.Ni.) 2021-22

नोबल कोशिका के संशोधन में विस्तृत जानकारी एवं सहयोग हेतु Toll Free No. 104 पर संपर्क कर सकते हैं।

PUBLIC NOTICE

This is to inform to all concern and publically announce that I am the son of Late Shri Radha Charan Sharma S/O Late Shri Bhanu R/o A-207, Sector-46, Noida, District Gautam Budh Nagar, U.P. My father Late Shri Radha Charan Sharma has expired on 16.04.2021. Whereas my father Late Shri Radha Charan Sharma is the owner of Residential Plot No. A-23, Sector-100, Noida. Whereas at the time of his life, he had executed a will in my name in respect of above mentioned Plot as his love and affection. The said will is registered in the office of Sub Registrar Noida, vide Book No. 3, Volume No. 801, Pages 267 to 284 Document No. 198 Dated 23.03.2019. So it is informed to all concern that the Plot No. A- 23, Sector:100, Noida is going to transfer/mutated in favour of my self Gyanendra Sharma S/o Late Shri Radha Charan Sharma R/o A-207, Sector-46, Noida, District Gautam Budh Nagar, U.P. If anyone has/have any objection he/she may file his/her objection alongwith the sufficient proof in the Residential Plot Department of the Noida Authority within 30 days from the date of Public Notice of this notice.

Gyanendra Sharma

APPEAL FOR IDENTIFICATION

General public is hereby informed that an unidentified dead body of a male namely **Unknown, S/o: Unknown, R/o: Unknown, was found on 16.05.2021 at Road Side Near Lal Quila Metro Station Gate No.1, Chandni Chowk, Delhi.** In this regard DD No. 41A Dated: 16.05.2021 u/s 174 CrPC has been lodged at Police Station, Kotwali, Delhi. The dead body is preserved for 72 hrs. in the mortuary at Sabzi Mandi, Civil Line, Delhi. Identification of unidentified dead body of male is as under:

Name: Unknown, Age: About 35-40 Years, Height: 5'4", Complexion: Shallow, Face: Long, Built: Thin, Wearing: Yellow Colour Shirt and Blue Colour Lower Bared Footed.

If anyone have any information or clue about this male deceased may kindly be inform undersigned.

SHO
Police Station, Kotwali, Delhi
Ph.: 011-23977100, 23953442, 8750870121
DP/1208/N/2021

Appeal for Identification

General public is hereby informed that one person **Name: Unknown, S/o: Unknown, R/o: Unknown, Age: About 50/55 Yrs., Height: 5'7", Sex: Male, Complexion: Wheatish, Face: Long, Built: Thin, Injury Marks: Head Injury, Right hand and leg is broken, Wearing: Black and White Linedar Shirt & Blue Lower, Place of Recovery: Found dead on 18.05.2021 at K.M. Pol No. 4/17-19 South Line Rly Track Near Gali No. 2, Kanti Nagar, Delhi.**

In this regard FIR/DD No. 18A, U/s 174 Cr.P.C., Dated 18.05.2021 has been lodged at Police Station, Old Delhi Railway Station, Delhi. Any clue come to notice please inform undersigned.

SHO
P.S. Old Delhi Railway Station, Delhi
Ph.: 011-23961522, 23980685 & 8010602729
DP/145/RLY/2021

IMPORTANT NOTICE

It is notified for the information of rail passengers that the Railways have decided to cancel the following Special Trains due to low occupancy and other operational reasons as per the following details:-

CANCELLATION OF SPECIAL TRAINS	
Train No. & Name	Date(s) of Cancellation (from originating station)
02595 Gorakhpur - Anand Vihar (T) Special Express	24.05.2021 to till further advice
02596 Anand Vihar (T) - Gorakhpur Special Express	25.05.2021 to till further advice
05161 Muzaffarpur Jn. -Manduadih Special Express	24.05.2021 to till further advice
05162 Manduadih - Muzaffarpur Jn. Special Express	24.05.2021 to till further advice

All norms of the State and Central Government regarding COVID-19 including social distancing, sanitization etc., may be followed in the trains and at the Railway stations. All other precautions associated with COVID-19 should also be ensured.

For any kind information passengers are requested to contact RailMadad Helpline No. 139 or may visit Indian Railways website <https://enquiry.indianrail.gov.in> or NTES App.

RailMadad Helpline No. 139
Visit RailMadad website : www.railmadad.indianrailways.gov.in & download Railmadad app.

Please join us on [facebook](https://www.facebook.com/NORTHERNRAILWAY) [instagram](https://www.instagram.com/NORTHERNRAILWAY) [youtube](https://www.youtube.com/NORTHERNRAILWAY)

NORTHERN RAILWAY
Visit us at: www.nr.indianrailways.gov.in

1088/21

SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE



Bollywood
 'Dance to me is more than just art. It is a gift that brings people together.'
 —Govinda

SHORTCIRCUITS

ARMAAN MALIK

Echo was accepted when I met KSHMR right before the onset of the pandemic. He played some unreleased material including *Echo*. It just stuck, and I recorded my demo verse. Around mid-2020, Eric and I had this little interaction on Twitter and our teams got connected to discuss a potential collaboration.



ARMAAN RALHAN

The audience will not come and watch a film just because I am in it, because I have not earned their trust yet. So, as far as I am concerned, doing a film with people like Ranveer Singh (*Befikre*) or Jaideep Ahlawat and Fatima Sana Shaikh (*Ajeb Daastaans*) gives my work more eyeballs.



SAJID KHAN

I am missing Indian Pro Music League a lot. The energy of the show is very different, and I enjoy shooting for it. I must add that the show has also given me a chance to restore people's faith in me that I can make good music and take Wajid and my legacy forward.



ANSHUMAN JHA

I am not offered too many films that are in the commercial space, where I can express myself as an actor. When such an offer will come my way, I will explore that too. Usually for a new actor, if the film does not work, opportunities get narrowed. That happened to me. Also, I am not acting for fame and money.

LADY GAGA

It was the same pain that I felt when the person who raped me dropped me off pregnant. For a couple years, I was not the same girl. Even if I have six brilliant months, all it takes is getting triggered once to feel bad. I mean want to cut, think about dying, wondering if I'm ever gonna do it.



I M M E R S I V E 4 5 M I N U T E S

YOUR BODY, YOUR CHOICE

Journalist, speaker and award-winning author MEGHNA PANT tells AYUSHI SHARMA in a tête-à-tête that she wrote *The Terrible, Horrible, Very Bad Good News* to debunk everything we've been taught about motherhood, marriage and the biological clock

Thirty-four-year-old Ladoo, a simple, middle-class divorcee from Rishikesh, wants only one thing from life — a baby. She eats *gondh halwa*, drinks *badam milk* and takes folic acid to slow down her ticking biological clock and become the world's most fertile woman. When an accidental meeting with a gynecologist reveals that her 'eggs are drying up' and finding a sperm donor is her last chance of having a child, Ladoo races against time to find the right father for the baby, whose *kundali* matches hers, while addressing her own mixed feelings about whether 'Mr Right Donor' can also be 'Mr Right'. Along the way, Ladoo must figure out whether motherhood means marriage, whether being a single mother means loneliness, whether 'my body, my rules' apply to women, and whether doing something scandalous is outrageous or courageous. We talk to the author of the book — *The Terrible, Horrible, Very Bad Good News* — Meghna Pant, to find out the answers. Excerpts:

How did you conceptualise *The Terrible, Horrible, Very Bad Good News*? What went into its research?
 After I found myself childless and single at the age of 33, I spend years torturing myself and allowed society to shame me for my 'failure'. Despite having a good career, living around the world, surviving an abusive relationship, publishing books and winning awards, I let myself be told that I wasn't woman enough until I'd had a child. I was Ladoo. Fortunately, I met a wonderful man, got married, and — at age 37 and 39 — I had two beautiful daughters. After all the cautionary tales I'd been fed my entire life, of the difficulty older women have conceiving, I'd braced myself for futility. But both my pregnancies were natural and smooth. I worked till the day of my delivery. This led me to the obvious question: Was everything I'd been told about pregnancy and fertility a lie? It would seem so. Women's bodies

are stronger than they're given credit for. That's why I wrote about Ladoo, the protagonist of this novel. To debunk everything we've been taught about motherhood, marriage and the biological clock.

The plot says, "This humorous yet inspiring story of a small-town woman's fight against social stigma will resonate with every woman and man." How and why do you think so?
 I think women's issues are everyone's issues, and humour is essential for every gender as we try to survive this pandemic.

Mainstream cinema is now gradually warming up to the idea that there is no set age for motherhood with films like *Badhaai Ho...* How do you think your book can help shape public perception of pregnancy after a certain age?
 I want women to know that 'my body, my rules' apply to each and every one of them. Let no one tell you if you should have children, when you should have them, how you should have them, and what to do after you have them. Society is opinionated about everything a woman does with her body — from the way she chooses to dress, pleasure herself, the hours she occupies in public space to her biological clock — and yet assumes a wide distance when a woman's body is beaten, raped, mutilated or killed, just because she's a woman. F*** that hypocrisy. Your body, your choice — that's the main message of the book.

Why did it not occur to Ladoo that she could have simply adopted a child and fulfil her own desire of being a mother while, at the same time, giving a child a home? Does your book address this thought?
 The book addresses this. Ladoo wants to experience pregnancy and have her own biological child. Motherhood is more about emotions than biology, so we cannot



judge in what way a woman wants to have a child — whether it's through surrogacy, IVE, adoption or the traditional way.

Is comedy a good way to address social issues?
 It's the only way to communicate the truth without being offensive or pedantic.

How did you come up with the title?
 It is inspired by a sweet shop I saw in Lucknow, where my parents sometimes live. The protagonist's pet name is Ladoo and she becomes *badnam* after she decides to become a mother without getting married first.

How have your formative years influenced your writing?
 To be able to sit down and write about the world, it's crucial to first stand up and see what's out there. My parents worked for the government, so I've seen most of India (20 states). My studies and jobs have taken me from Zurich to Singapore to New York and Dubai. I've travelled to 34 countries across four continents and lived in eight differ-

ent cities. As a result, I've lived in more than 30 homes. This exposure has given me a wonderful platform to immerse myself in worlds and cultures different from mine. It's made me sensitive to what sets people apart and brings them together. I think travelling is the best way to absolve yourself from who you are. You realise the smallness of your fears and the largeness of your smiles.

As a child, I also read a lot. From Enid Blyton, Sidney Sheldon, Jeffrey Archer, Somerset Maugham, Ruskin Bond, Shakespeare and RK Narayan, the typical fare that Indian children growing up in the 80s-90s were given to read. *Gone With The Wind* was the first book I stayed up till six in the morning reading, and till today I don't think there is a book as perfect as that or a character as finely etched out as Scarlett O'Hara. Reading has had a definitive impact on my writing.

What does the future of the written world look like since we are swamped by digital entertainment?
 I don't buy into the competition between OTT and books. I think that both books and OTT are going to co-exist in the future. A good story must be told no matter what its medium is. I also think that OTT platforms are a fantastic way to scale your book and talent, if they fit, to a larger audience than you ever imagined. Therefore, as a writer, I see OTT as an opportunity and not a threat. We cannot hold it against someone that, if after a long day at work, they want to decompress by watching Netflix rather than reading a book. But humans need both sensory and semantic experiences to grow. That's where books come in. The joy of holding a book, of smelling it, of snuggling with it under your blanket, can never be replicated by digital entertainment.

My bigger concern is that nowadays people are more concerned about owning a book than consuming it, in a phenomenon known as antilibrary. That's fine, as long as it translates into sales for publishing houses, bookstores and authors, but if you want to go back to reading, it's not an either-or. Don't get FOMO (fear of missing out). Prioritise. Read during the weekends when you have time to immerse yourself in a book. Binge-watch during weekdays after work. Read in the mornings, watch at night. Read a book whose series you just watched. You can read and watch, without compromising one for the other.

Change is inevitable, let's celebrate it instead of diminishing it.

Reports implied that your book will soon be seen as a feature film, *Badnam Ladoo*. Do you think film adaptations do justice to the books they're based on? Why or why not?
 The book is under development with a big studio. Films take time to gestate, on average two to three years, and more during the pandemic. So, we'll have to be patient. But this is a film that people will love because it's entertainment with insight.

Books need only one person — the author — in order to work. But film adaptations need many people to come together to work. Adaptations can lift the book but never diminish it. For example, I think films like *Guide*, *The Namesake*, *7 Khoon Maaf*, *Omkaara* and *3 Idiots* have been better than the books, while films like *Slumdog Millionaire*, *Mistress of Spices* and *Atlas Shrugged* did nothing for the books, but could not take away from them being classics.

Can you share some anecdotes?
 I have a childhood friend whose nickname I've borrowed for the character of 4-10 (Four-Ten), the protagonist's best friend. All my characters are slivers begged and borrowed from real life.

(The book has been published by Penguin Random House India.)

S T U D I O C H A T 3 0 M I N U T E S

A 'small' tale

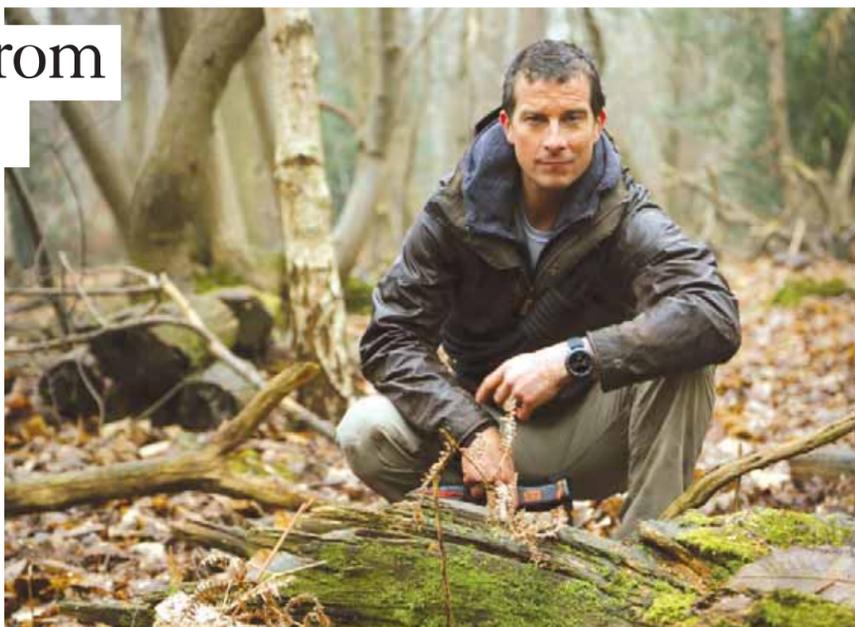


unique and hasn't been explored in the past. I also decided to not give the film a serious tone, purely because it becomes preachy. Issues like these, when addressed in a light-hearted manner become conversational and more acceptable. I am glad that this film is releasing on an OTT platform, we will be able to initiate this conversation with so many more people." Talking about his character,

Santosh added, "It was an absolute riot while filming this film. The writing, the direction was so spot on, that playing the character came easily to me. The fact that this topic is so ingrained in reality made it easy to portray the finer nuances of such a character. The film is an absolute delight to watch, and I can't wait for the audience to watch it." (The Telugu film premieres on May 27 on Amazon Prime Video.)

Lessons from the wild

Bear Grylls shares that the wild has taught him the importance of resilience and a never-say-die spirit



British adventurer and survivalist Bear Grylls says the wild has taught him the importance of resilience and helped him imbibe a never-give-up spirit.

"Life has truly been challenging for so many people around the world this last year, but if the wild has taught me anything, it is the importance of resilience and a never-give-up spirit," Grylls said.

Grylls will next be seen on *Sunday Thrills With Bear Grylls*, a two-hour special adventure stack starting May 23 that will present four thrilling, action-packed shows featuring Grylls. This India special will include shows such as *Running Wild with Bear Grylls*, *Get Out Alive with Bear Grylls*, *Mission Survive With Bear Grylls*, and *Britain's Greatest Adventurers With Bear Grylls*.

"With this special adventure programming across all these Sundays ahead, the goal is to take viewers with me on many journeys and expeditions to help them experience how the wild places can

transform us and inspire us to be stronger, more determined and to view the storms of life as times of opportunity. Together we can beat this and come through this challenging time," he said.

"We are committed to bringing ground-breaking stories and experiences that help people see, engage with and care about the world through an optimistic, energetic and hopeful voice. Bear Grylls has become the embodiment of adventure and outdoor survival and we are



excited to work with him and collaborate on a Sunday special that has been curated especially for our Indian viewers. We hope that this programming gives them an opportunity to explore the world of the wild and adventure and keep the spirits high alongside their favourite icon," said Kevin Vaz, President and Head, Infotainment, Kids and Regional Entertainment Channels, Star and Disney India.

(Sunday Thrills With Bear Grylls will air on National Geographic.)

Taking on a social stigma, one laugh at a time, *Ek Mini Katha* is a light-hearted film with a strong social message

Setting the premise of the film through a parents' point of view, *Ek Mini Katha* journeys through some of the hilarious 'incidents' of Santosh Shobhan's life. Santosh suffers from a psychological problem that causes him to be insecure about his 'size', which leads to some life-altering dilemmas. Struggling to find a solution, Santosh is at loggerheads with fate and erases the idea of marriage altogether until he meets Amrutha (essayed by Kavya Thapar), with whom he falls in love. Is there nothing a 'love story' cannot solve?

"A story like this needs fine storytelling and proper representation, and I feel fortunate to have collaborated with Merlapaka Gandhi, who is the writer of this film and an accomplished director himself. Watching actors like Santosh, Kavya and Brahmaji bring to life a simple yet relevant situation so seamlessly was a wholesome experience. *Ek Mini Katha* will not only make audiences laugh, but will also make them ponder about some of these issues," said debutant director Karthik Rapolu.

Gandhi, of the *Venkatadri Express* fame, added, "This story is very close to my heart. I wanted to write something that is

VERVE 45 MINUTES

'HEAL YOURSELF'

Social health entrepreneur and nutritional therapist RACHNA CHHACHHI specialises in the reversal of chronic lifestyle diseases without medication and is WHO-certified in preventing malnutrition in infants and children. At the launch of her new book, *Alive!*, she shares some food for thought in a conversation with CHRISTY VARGHESE

◆What led you to conceptualise the book?

I hail from the corporate sector and I was in a senior management position when I experienced my health breakdown and emerged triumphant in a battle against rheumatoid arthritis. Truth be told, I could have sworn I was living a healthy life. It is hard to explain what one experiences while dealing with a chronic disease or when you are bedridden and told that there would be no end to the pain, fatigue and brain fog. Then suddenly that same person experiences life again. Such miracles are what led me to write *Alive! Lifestyle Changes to Age-Proof Your Mind and Body* — to help others improve their quality of life. The book highlights what worked for me and thousands of my patients, across 27 countries, in a clinically evidenced manner.

People out there who think they are living a healthy life are most likely missing out on a few critical steps. I am certain my book lists out the steps people tend to overlook. My recommendation, no, my prescription is based on the experience of healing others, clinically backed via their blood work results and other health reports. This book is a result of my emotional journey of healing while scientifically proving why it works.

◆Can the methods highlighted in your book work for everyone? The general consensus on self care is that one should explore and discover what works best for them on an individual level.

When you read the book, you will see that I have interviewed people across varying age groups who have benefited from the lifestyle highlighted in the book. From millennials to people who have clocked the 80-year mark, I believe, I interviewed over 50 people across the globe and I have quoted most of them in my book. The only common factor among them all was how they were following a set of practices and all of them happened to be disease-free. While some of them were suffering from serious health concerns and recovered after adopting such a lifestyle, others possessed a natural disposition to follow this path and, hence, seemed

wise. The book further provides clinical evidence as to why the practises are helping people across age groups and borders. I have summarised their habits and given a scientific explanation as to why their methods worked and then formulated the practises highlighted in the book.

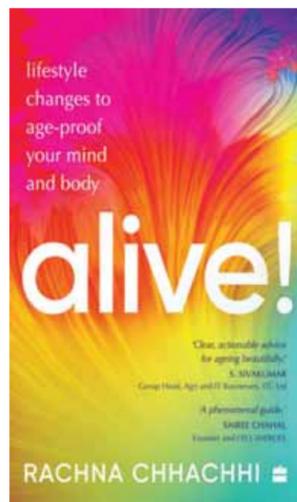
◆During WFH, people exert themselves throughout the day and thus, feel drained towards the end. Devoting time and energy to self-care might seem hard. Is there a way around such limitations?

It has to be noted that in a typical Indian household odds are that we don't get physical space, let alone emotional. There are two things one could do in these times. The first and most important one would be to move. The moment we start moving, blood circulation increases. And that is when something wonderful happens. Nutrients start travelling to the parts of the body where they are required. Mobility and circulation also result in thirst. When you start quenching your thirst, the digestive system is activated and in due time the liver releases toxins. The simple exercise of walking indoors for a couple of minutes after

every half an hour can go a long way. The other important thing is to create a space for self-nurturing. By spending just 20 minutes in the day, taking a break from

life, you can also increase your productivity. All you need to do is put on your headphones and listen to any playlist that you like, or you could also make use of the numerous guided meditation tracks and self-affirmation audio files found on YouTube or Spotify etc. Whatever works for you. Scientific evidence will back my statement that after spending 20 minutes daily, in the manner highlighted above, for three weeks you can repair your DNA. The practise and the explanation behind this methodology have been expanded upon in the book.

For those who are experiencing the 'Work From Home' lifestyle, I would



insist you do this after lunch, right in the middle of your working hours because that is when stress levels are highest. Additionally, lunch is usually your heaviest meal. Ayurveda and the Japanese encourage the practice of taking afternoon naps. This also has multiple scientific evidence such as reducing high BP and stress levels while strengthening the heart. The bottom line is, 20 minutes of mindful self-care in a day is all you need to observe some surprising health benefits.

◆The cosmetic industry has created a market for age-defying quick-fix solutions etc. However, ageing is a natural process, so do you think the everlasting urge to reverse the effects of ageing can be somewhat toxic?
 Ageing might be natural but accelerated ageing is not, and that is what causes diseases. People who exhibit accelerated ageing have high lev-

els of inflammation which is also the root cause for many lifestyle diseases such as high cholesterol, hypertension and most heart diseases, kidney diseases and even some forms of cancer. If you need to slow down your ageing process, there is a plan highlighted in this book that activates a gene called SIRT1, an anti-ageing gene.

Now when I say 'slow down the ageing process', I don't mean your wrinkles will disappear right away. However, yes, I do mean that you will decrease the risk of contracting diseases by reducing your levels of inflammation and your skin will reflect the same with a healthy glow. We meet so many people who may be 45 years of age and notice how some of them look a fresh 45 while others look a bedraggled and tired 45.

◆The book talks about being happy all the time. While that sounds good, would it be healthy to ignore other thoughts/feelings/emotions such as anger, jealousy, et al?

Never ignore emotions. You have to acknowledge and release them. And we have made it a habit to not acknowledge our thoughts and feelings. There is this widespread concept of 'hi, I am fine, we are fine and we are a happy family', and beneath that tagline of a happy family, relationships are crumbling. There is resentment that is building up. So the first step is to acknowledge that you have resentment and/or anger and/or fear. Such emotions also suppress the immune system, I have highlighted this in a chapter called *Fear And Your Mind*.

There are multiple ways to release such pent up energy. If you think that the person you resent can hear you out, you should initiate a conversation with them. If you feel they lack the ability to hear you out, then you should write your thoughts down or record them. The moment you release your resentment and anxiety, it is replaced by relief. The release of such energy makes space for some pleasant feelings and thoughts.

◆It is said that there is no shortcut to achieving your goals. But in these fast-paced times, if someone wanted a shortcut to improve their quality of life, what would you tell them?

I would tell them to focus on what

they eat. Of your meals, 50 per cent should be vegetables. It is the simplest way to reduce anger, fear and frustration while increasing the chances of being in a good mood as well as having a well-functioning digestive system, which reduces inflammation. It also strengthens the heart while helping you lose weight.

All you need to do is visually consider your plate. If half of your plate is filled with vegetables, it would be safe to assume that half of what you are eating is equal parts of carbohydrates and proteins. Do this for every meal over 10 consecutive days and you will see a noticeable difference.

◆What would you say is the most essential element of self-care?

I feel 'making time for self' is the key element. You need to go ahead and give yourself a break. I have observed people sitting idle and just mindlessly scrolling through their smartphones. Nobody pauses to calm the fluctuations of their mind. They are always busy diverting that energy because they know that if they sit with their thoughts, they will not like them. Most of us are in denial because the only alternative is to acknowledge the root of the problem; our immediate choices. So make time for yourself. Like your own company. Solitude is the soul's holiday. It is an opportunity to stop doing for others and to surprise and delight ourselves instead. In the end, people who really want to help themselves will find a way to do so.

◆You mentioned that, 'it's not about the years you live, it's about how much life you put in each year'. However, this seems contrary to your book, which focusses more on the aspect — how can we lead longer, healthier and happier lives?

Well, many might feel that the idea is somewhere striking a contrast. However, I think that both are important and closely related. If you take the effort to live on your own terms and be present every day while being mindful, you are alive. And when you experience this quality of life on a daily basis, you slowly but surely increase your lifespan. (The book has been published by HarperCollins Publishers India.)

DIALOGUE 30 MINUTES

During a recent joint interview with Oprah Winfrey to promote a mental-health series, The Duke of Sussex, PRINCE HARRY, revealed that he first saw a therapist approximately four years ago at the encouragement of his then-girlfriend Meghan



'I was afraid'

For Harry, returning to London to attend Prince Philip's funeral last month meant once more facing a place where he felt trapped and hunted by cameras. It would be a test of his ability to cope with the anxiety that was bubbling up again. "I was worried about it, I was afraid," Harry said during a recent joint interview with Oprah Winfrey to promote a mental-health series they co-created and co-executive produced for Apple TV+.

He was able to work through any trepidation using coping skills learned in therapy. "It definitely made it a lot easier, but the heart still pounds," said Harry, the Duke of Sussex and grandson of Britain's Queen Elizabeth II and her late husband Philip. In *The Me You Can't See*, Harry revealed that he first saw a therapist approximately four years ago at the encouragement of then-girlfriend Meghan (Markle). They'd had an argument and she recognised his anger seemed misplaced. The series is another chapter in the unprecedented openness that Harry has brought to his life and his royal family relationships since stepping away from his duties and moving with his wife to California. In March, he and Meghan gave a headline-making interview to Winfrey that elicited a rare public response from the palace. Harry's self-work may be rel-

atively recent but he and older brother William, The Duke of Cambridge, have long championed the importance of mental health. In 2016, Harry, William and his wife Catherine, the Duchess of Cambridge, launched *Heads Together*, an initiative to speak up and not be ashamed to ask for help when mental well-being is at stake.

Their collective work led to interactions with people across the globe, from all walks of life and they recognised a common thread. "Sharing your story in order to be able to save a life or help others is absolutely critical," said Harry.

Harry is practicing what he preaches and laying bare his own struggles with trauma and grief. He describes in *The Me You Can't See*, the instances of feeling helpless as a young boy while riding in the car with his mother, Princess Diana, who cried as they were surrounded by paparazzi and she struggled to drive.

Years later, Diana was killed in Paris after the car she and friend Dodi Fayed were riding in, crashed during a high-speed chase to flee cameras. Harry was 12 and suppressed his own feelings to meet the mourning public gathered outside Kensington Palace. Cameras rolled and snapped away as he walked behind her casket to Diana's funeral, alongside William, father Prince Charles, Philip and Diana's brother Charles Spencer.

Harry's revelations coincide with Queen Elizabeth's official confirmation a few months ago that he and Meghan will not return to their senior royal positions within the family, following a one-year trial period.

The couple now lives about 90 minutes north of Los Angeles in an exclusive area near Santa Barbara called Montecito. They count Winfrey, Katy Perry and Orlando Bloom as neighbours. The paparazzi still lurks but it's less

intense than in Los Angeles.

This new, outspoken prince who shares his emotions is a contrast to the "never complain, never explain," "keep calm and carry on" mantras that are part of the prototypical British way.

The British tabloids have had a field day picking apart his statements. Some royal commentators have also cried foul over a contradiction between seeking a private life yet granting interviews and revealing family strife.

Harry appears to be cautious in choosing what he wants to speak about, and neither he nor Meghan seem interested in sharing their every move with the world. They do not operate a social media account.

He is undeterred by naysayers, he says, because there's a greater good in being honest about his struggles. "I see it as a responsibility. I don't find it hard to open up," he said. "Knowing the impacts and the positive reaction that it has for

so many people that also suffer, I do believe it's a responsibility."

Winfrey was already working with Apple to develop a series on mental health when a conversation with Harry sparked the idea to join forces.

"We were having a conversation and I asked him, 'What are the two most important issues you think facing the world today?' And he said immediately, 'climate change and mental health.' She mentioned the project and Winfrey recalls him later saying, 'Oh, by the way, if you ever need any help with that... give me a call.' And I went and turned around and said, 'What's your number?'"

Winfrey's existing partnership with Apple created a rare opportunity to reach the vast number of people who use the company's devices, Harry said. "If that's in a billion pockets on a billion screens, then maybe we can really start a global conversation about this," he said.

Winfrey recalls some of her own childhood traumas in *The Me You Can't See*. In addition to her and Harry's stories, the series also features accounts from both regular people and celebrities including Lady Gaga and Glenn Close, who speak candidly about their own experiences with mental illness.

Winfrey said Harry pushed to present a global perspective. "This has got to be a world thing and not just a US thing," she recounted him saying, adding: "I think we've accomplished that really well."

Harry jokes he's "slowly catching up" to Winfrey's decades of inner-work and encouragement of others to do the same whether on *The Oprah Winfrey Show* or her *Super Soul Sunday* interviews on OWN. Even Winfrey said she's had a lot to learn.

"I have dealt personally with one of the girls from my school (Oprah Winfrey Leadership Academy for Girls in South Africa), who had schizophrenia," Winfrey said. "Only after hearing the doctor say that it's a diagnosis. It's not your life, it's not who you are; that I had my great awakening about it. That is not you. You are a person who has a diagnosis of schizophrenia. That is powerful."

—AP



Salute to love

During the 'Bollywood Queens Special' episode of *Super Dancer Chapter 4*, ARSHIYA SHARMA enthralled the judges with a rendition of one of Rekha's most iconic dance performances in Hindi cinema

This week on the 'Bollywood Queens Special' episode of *Super Dancer Chapter 4*, Arshiya Sharma, a contestant from Jammu, showcased a mesmerising dance performance on Rekha's iconic song *Salaam-e-Ishq Meri Jaan*. The judges were compelled to give a standing ovation for the beautiful act.

Judge Malaika Arora said, "Arshiya did a brilliant job. This is a very difficult song. Rekha ji has a superior quality about her and it is not easy for a child to perform with such maturity. I feel blessed and fortunate to be a part of this show and witness such ethereal performances."

Terence Lewis added with a wide smile, "You look just like another famous actor. Apart from looking beautiful, your dance moves are spot on as well. You have to let us know, Arshiya, whether you plan on becoming an actor..." Arshiya couldn't stop smiling after receiving such extravagant com-

ments from the judges.

Geeta Kapur was thrilled to witness her performance and expressed that Arshiya is naturally gifted and she has an exceptional mentor in Super Guru Anuradha. She further stated, "People think Bollywood dance is the easiest form of dance, but I feel it is the most difficult one out there. It is an amalgamation of many things like expressions, movements, grace and beauty. To express as much as required is an art. Today, we are giving a special tribute to Bollywood queens and they all have this specialty, a penchant for keeping viewers glued to the screen. And today Arshiya did just that, we were on the edge of our seats for the duration of her performance. And I am sure that those who would be watching this episode on their television sets are sure to be glued to their screens."

(To catch Arshiya's performance, watch the show today and on Sunday at 8 pm on Sony Entertainment Television.)

Eng Tests great preparation for WTC final: Southee

PTI ■ SOUTHAMPTON

Senior New Zealand pacer Tim Southee believes that the upcoming two-Test series against England would serve as "great preparation" for his team as it gears up for the marquee World Test Championship final against India here.

New Zealand are playing two Tests against England at the Lord's (June 2-6) and Birmingham (June 10-14). The WTC final is scheduled from June 18.

Asked if the focus will be on the WTC final, Southee said: "Anytime you get to play a Test match for New Zealand, it's an amazing opportunity and I don't think you treat them as warm-ups. Our focus is first and foremost on the two match series against England."

But the 32-year-old with 302 Test wickets didn't deny that it is indeed a great opportunity to gear up for the big battle against India.

...But great to have those matches leading to the final. So for us, it's great preparation for that final but we are looking at two-match series against a quality English side in their conditions," Southee said.

Southee also didn't feel that three Tests in three weeks will be much of a workload after a welcome break for many.

"It's exciting to play three Test matches in a short space of time," Southee said after his

first training session at the Ageas Bowl following a three-day hard quarantine.

"It is something that the team doesn't get to do that often. We've come off a bit of a break, which has been nice, and (we have) been able to get some conditioning into our bodies..." Southee said.

He believes that they will be ready to cope with the rigours with some quality training sessions in the next two weeks.

"So, the guys are refreshed in some sort of way, using the next couple of weeks to get ourselves prepared and ready to play three Test matches. They are in quick succession but we have had a chance to prepare physically leading into this with some strength and conditioning stuff.

"Now, it's just getting our loads to a point over the coming weeks so that we can rock on to those three Test matches."

He said stepping in to the Lord's ground will be emotional for them remembering the World Cup final which they lost on boundary countback.

"It's tough being emotional and caught up with it, you look at it as an amazing game of cricket, which did wonders for the one day game, from the players that were involved in it."

"It's one of those matches you relive and relive for the rest of your lives. When we turn up at Lord's there will be few guys



New Zealand pacer Tim Southee, right, chats with teammate Tom Latham, left, and Henry Nicholls, center, before the start of the team's indoor training session in Southampton on Thursday

who will have mixed emotions," Southee said.

The post-quarantine training in Southampton is also very helpful as they would play India at the same venue.

"I imagine we'll probably be in the same room when we come back and it's nice for the

guys who haven't been here to be able to come here and experience it," he said.

"And when you come back for the final, you're a little bit more comfortable having spent some time here."

At 32, Southee believes that he has many more years of

Test cricket left in him with a role model like James Anderson to emulate.

"Age is just a number and it's great to see guys like Jimmy bowl at 38, and it's a dream playing for your country and I would like to do it for many more years to come," he signed off.

ECB denies receiving BCCI request to tweak schedule

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The BCCI has not made any official request to alter the schedule for India's five-Test series against England for completing the postponed IPL, the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) said on Friday.

British media had reported about a possible approach from the BCCI to advance the first Test, starting August 4, by a week so that the remaining 31 matches of the League could be held.

However, the ECB said they plan to follow the original schedule since their Indian counterparts have not yet made any official request for a change.

"We talk to the BCCI on a regular basis about a wide range of issues especially as we address the challenges of Covid-19 but we have had no official request to change dates and are continuing to plan for the five Test series as scheduled," an ECB spokesperson told PTI when asked about the possible change in the schedule.

The BCCI stands to lose revenues to the tune of ₹2500



crore if the 2021 edition of Indian Premier League (IPL) is not completed.

Former England captain and renowned cricket writer Michael Atherton wrote in his column for *The Times* that the BCCI has enquired about the possibility of moving the final Test of the English summer to make room to complete the postponed IPL.

When approached, a BCCI source said the Board is certainly exploring options but the ECB has not been approached officially.

"The situation is pretty fluid now. There are options that are being explored but no official request has yet been sent. Obviously as Atherton wrote in his column, there are some specific enquiries being

made. Who said that enquiries mean official communications," a BCCI source said.

The Test series as of now is scheduled to conclude at the Old Trafford. The fifth Test will begin on September 10. The game match is expected to attract big crowd and the Lancashire county has already started selling the tickets.

If India make a formal request, the ECB will have to tweak the window for their ambitious project *The Hundred* along with limited overs series against Pakistan.

Pakistan will play three ODIs and as many Twenty20 Internationals between July 8 and 20. *The Hundred* will be played between July 23 and August 22.

SL players refuse to sign contracts

PTI ■ COLOMBO

Sri Lanka's leading cricketers Sled by Test captain Dimuth Karunaratne along with host of senior players, including Dinesh Chandimal and Angelo Mathews have refused to sign the central contracts offered by the board which they believe is far less compared to other countries.

If the dispute is not sorted in due course of time, it could well affect Sri Lanka's bilateral series with India in July, where six white ball matches is expected to fill the coffers of a cash-strapped cricket board of the island nation.

A statement from the attorney representing almost all top players including the Test skipper Karunaratne, Mathews and others said remuneration proposed to players are one third compared to some other cricket playing nations.

The SLC this week said that 24 of the leading players had been offered contracts under 4 categories and they had been given a deadline until June 3 to sign on dotted lines.

In the categories released only six players are in the category A and their annual pay ranges between \$70,000 to 100,000. Batsman Dhananjaya de Silva draws highest — 100,000 with the rest of them were to receive \$70-80,000.

Just for comparative analysis, India's group C (lowest category) centrally contracted players annually earn a retainer fee of ₹1 crore (\$137,000).

The Sri Lankan players



said in a joint statement that they were "shocked and dismayed" by SLC's decision to go public with specific payment details of players.

They feel that public disclosure has affected their peace of mind.

"These disclosures amount to a grave security concern to each and every player," it stated.

The chairman of the Cricket Advisory Committee (CAC) of the SLC Aravinda de Silva told reporters that they were forced to make harsh decision based on the past performances of the players.

The players however refused to take the entire blame for Sri Lanka's shoddy performances over the years.

They maintain the administrators and the local structure were contributory factors to Sri Lanka's decline in International rankings.

Players need to be more athletic: India W fielding coach

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India's women cricketers are not as athletic and strong as their foreign counterparts when it comes to running around the park and that is something fielding coach Abhay Sharma will work on extensively with them during the upcoming UK tour.

Sharma, who has worked a lot with the men's India U-19 team, was with the national women's team for the first time during the home series against South Africa in March.

Since the series was organised last minute, Sharma did not get a lot of time with the players but he is looking forward to working with them on an individual basis during the UK tour, starting June 16.

The Indian team is scheduled to play a Test, three ODIs and as many T20s against the hosts.

"Overall development is needed as far as fielding is concerned. The game is changing, you have to be more athletic. Technically, work needs



India opening batswoman Shafali Verma in action against South Africa

to be done. What I observed is that a lot of girls are struggling with their throwing techniques.

"If you develop wrong technique in your early days then it troubles you with injuries. Once the technical side is taken care of, then you can build on the strength part," Sharma said before entering the bio-bubble in Mumbai ahead of the UK tour.

In the home series against South Africa, Sharma observed that the opposition players were much faster in the field.

"This time I will interact with more on a one to one basis rather than group and assess what they feel about the game and then try and match up to my expectations.

"But as of now technically they really need to work hard. What I have noticed in women's cricket is that a lot of U-19 players are going on to play for the senior team. Workload is more on their shoulders and they are not that strong."

It was India's first series in 12 months and the players looked under

prepared. South Africa ended up winning both T20s and ODIs.

"We have to accept that there is a huge difference between foreign teams and our girls. The South African girls were more athletic, they cover the ground quicker and they are little stronger also," said Sharma.

"What I see that we are standing on technique, we are not standing on strength. We need to be strong on both fronts," he said.

Improvement is also needed on catching and running between the wickets, he said.

"Last series what I saw was there was a lapse in judgement in some cases, may be because they were playing after a long time. A lot depends on the frame of mind. We will work sincerely on that front."

"The running between wickets is a huge part of the game. If the team is having good coordination then you can convert those singles into twos and that is one area where we can add pressure on the opposition."

Fifa U-17 women's WC in India in October 2022

AFP ■ BOGOTA

New Delhi: The U-17 women's World Cup will be held in India from October 11 to 30 next year, Fifa Council said on Thursday.

India were earlier scheduled to host the 2020 U-17 World Cup but it was postponed to 2021 before being cancelled due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

The governing body then handed the hosting rights of the 2022 edition to India last November.

On the eve of the 71st FIFA Congress, the FIFA

Council approved key dates for the International match calendars, including the dates of the 2022 U-17 world Cup in India.

"The Council also approved dates for the FIFA U-17 Women's World Cup India 2022 (11-30 October 2022), FIFA U-20 Women's World Cup Costa Rica 2022 (10-28 August 2022), as well as a 14-team playoff for the FIFA Arab Cup 2021, taking place between 19 and 25 June this year," the governing body said. PNS

Colombia removed as Copa America co-host

Colombia will no longer co-host this year's Copa America after street protests and social unrest swept the country.

South American football's governing body CONMEBOL on Thursday rejected a plea by Colombia to postpone the June 13-July 10 tournament that it was to share with Argentina.

The Colombian Government had pleaded with CONMEBOL to postpone the tournament until November but the federation refused.

Argentinian President Alberto Fernandez said his



Colombia would be ready to host all of the matches.

CONMEBOL said it would now decide where the games which were due to be held in Colombia will be played, with barely three weeks to go until the

tournament is due to kick off.

Colombia is in the midst of a wave of protests and social unrest that has resulted in 42 deaths. Covid-19 cases have also shot up in the last few weeks.

Demonstrators initially took to the streets to protest a proposed tax reform. The plan was quickly shelved, but protests have since morphed into a broader manifestation of anti-Government sentiment.

Large and sometimes violent demonstrations have been taking place in Bogota, Medellin and Cali — cities where Copa America games were to be played.

Maguire likely to miss Europa League final

AFP ■ MANCHESTER

Manchester United captain Harry Maguire is unlikely to be fit for next week's Europa League final against Villarreal, Ole Gunnar Solskjaer said on Friday.

The 28-year-old central defender is making progress in recovering from an ankle injury he suffered against Aston Villa earlier this month and was pictured walking without crutches on Thursday.

However, Solskjaer was downbeat about his chances of being fit for the match against the Spanish side in the Polish city of Gdansk on Wednesday.

"He's walking but it's a long way from walking to running so, to be honest, I don't think we'll see him in Gdansk, no," the Norwegian said.

"But, as I've said so many times, I'm going to give him until Tuesday night, the last training session, and see if he can try to be out there."

"Steadily but surely he's improving but ligaments, they take time to heal." United's defence has looked shaky



in Maguire's absence — they have lost two and drawn one of their past three Premier League games.

Solskjaer will give Maguire up to the last minute to prove his fitness and expects the defender to play an important role off the field if, as expected, he does not make it.

GRAB CHANCE OF TOP FINISH

Jürgen Klopp says Liverpool have their destiny "in our hands" as they seek to end a disappointing season on a high by finishing in the top four of the Premier League.

The deposed champions are battling with Chelsea and Leicester for the two remaining slots in next season's Champions League.

Klopp's men are level on points with Leicester but their goal difference is superior, meaning all the Reds have to do at home to Crystal Palace is match the Foxes' result against Tottenham.

Third-placed Chelsea, one point clear of Liverpool and Leicester, travel to face mid-table Aston Villa.

"We just found stability, created confidence again or got it back, and scored goals in the right moments and conceded less, let me say it like this," Klopp said on Friday.

"It was a strange season, nothing will change that," he added. "It was an incredibly intense season, nothing will change that. But we have it now in our hands to make a top, top finish of the season."

Kane hints at Man City move

AFP ■ LONDON

Tottenham forward Harry Kane has hinted at a move to Manchester City as speculation mounts over his future, calling the champions' star midfielder Kevin De Bruyne a "striker's dream".

Kane has reportedly told Spurs he wants to leave at the end of the season and the England captain has been linked with City, Manchester United and Chelsea.

Kane has now raised the prospect of a move to Pep Guardiola's title winners, naming City's De Bruyne as a perfect team-mate.

City are reported to be interested in signing the 27-year-old, but Spurs will not let their talisman go without a fight, especially as he is under contract for the next three years.

Kane is determined to stay in the Premier League and when asked by former Manchester United defender Gary Neville which player would help him score more goals he said: "De Bruyne for sure."

"When I watch De Bruyne play he's a special, special player and some of the balls I see him put in for City are just a striker's dream if I'm honest."

Kane has scored 165 Premier League goals, 95 behind all-time top scorer Alan Shearer, and

he wants to topple the former Blackburn and Newcastle striker.

The forward, who has 22 top-flight goals this season, told Neville's YouTube channel *The Overlap* that injuries were the main threat to his ambition to break the record.

"Of course there's always the option of maybe moving abroad one day but I don't think that really interests me in the near future," he added. Kane has been involved in two Premier League title races with Spurs, has lost two League Cup finals, and was on the defeated side in the 2019 Champions League final.

The forward admits the club missed opportunities to win silverware under former boss Mauricio Pochettino, who is now in charge at Paris Saint-Germain, and challenged Spurs chairman Daniel Levy to deliver quality additions to help rebuild.



Nuno to leave Wolves

London: Wolves boss Nuno Espirito Santo will leave the club after Sunday's final game of the season, the Premier League team announced on Friday.

Nuno led Wolves to promotion from the Championship and established them in the top-flight during his four seasons at Molineux.

With Tottenham still looking for a new manager after Jose Mourinho's sacking in April, it has been reported that Nuno is among the contenders to take charge of the north London side. AFP