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NEW DELHI, FRIDAY MAY 28, 2021; PAGES 12 ₹3



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BRAD PITT WINS
JOINT CUSTODY
OF KIDS
10 VIVACITY

Centre-Twitter's row intensifies

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Hours after Twitter expressed concerns regarding the safety of its employees and "potential threat to freedom of expression" for its users, the Centre lashed out at US-based microblogging site asking it to stop beating around the bush and comply with the rules framed by the Ministry of Information and Technology.

In a strongly worded statement, the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) said the statement by the social media intermediary was an attempt to dictate its terms to the world's largest democracy, and accused Twitter of trying to undermine India's legal system with its "actions and deliberate defiance".

The Ministry said it "strongly controverts" the claims made by Twitter in its press release. The statement has been posted on Koo, the India-made social media platform, which gained traction earlier this year after the long-standing spat between the Centre on Twitter started around January-February. It termed Twitter's statement "unfortunate", totally baseless, false and an attempt to defame India to hide their own follies.

"Twitter needs to stop beating around the bush and comply with the laws of the

land. Lawmaking & policy formulation is the sole prerogative of the sovereign and Twitter is just a social media platform & it has no locus in dictating what should India's legal policy framework should be," the Ministry said.

Through its actions and deliberate defiance, Twitter seeks to undermine India's legal system, it added.

"The Government condemns the unfortunate statement issued by Twitter as totally baseless, false and an attempt to defame India to hide their own follies," the IT Ministry said.

"Twitter refuses to comply with those very regulations in the Intermediary Guidelines on the basis of which it is claiming a safe harbour protection from any criminal liability in India," the Ministry said.

The strongly-worded statement said the only instance of scuttling free speech on Twitter is Twitter itself and its opaque policies. "As a result of this, people's accounts are suspended and tweets deleted arbitrarily without recourse."

"India has a glorious tradition of free speech and democratic practices dating back centuries. Protecting free speech in India is not the prerogative of only a private, for-profit, foreign entity like Twitter," it added.

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- Twitter undermining India's legal system with its "actions and deliberate defiance"
- Attempt to defame India to hide their own follies
- People's accounts are suspended and tweets deleted arbitrarily without recourse
- Protecting free speech in India is not the prerogative of only a private, for-profit, foreign



- entity like Twitter
- Twitter will always remain safe in India and there is no threat to their personal safety and security
- Twitter also chose to show the geo-location of certain locations in Ladakh as part of China
- Twitter has led to "rampant proliferation of fake and harmful content against India and Indians"

Twitter sticks to its guns, cries threat to freedom of expression

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Against the backdrop of its ongoing face-off with the Centre and the Delhi Police, Twitter on Thursday expressed displeasure on the recent raid at its offices in Delhi and Gurugram.

"But just as we do around the world, we will continue to be strictly guided by principles of transparency, a commitment to empowering every voice on the service, and protecting freedom of expression and privacy under the rule of law. Right now, we are concerned by recent events regarding our employees in India and the potential threat to freedom of expression for the people we serve," said Twitter's Policy Division.

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You can't dictate terms on IT rules, fall into line, Govt orders Twitter

Crocodile tears, police rebuff fake concerns

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Police on Thursday said Twitter's latest statements on ongoing enquiry in toolkit are devised to seek dubious sympathy when they themselves not only refuse to comply with the law but also claim to be in possession of material evidence which they refuse to share with legal authority.

The strongly-worded statement by the Delhi Police came after Twitter on Thursday called the visit by the Delhi Police to its offices a form of intimidation and said it was concerned about its employees and the potential threat to freedom of expression.

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Govt mulls mix & match Covid jabs on trial basis

No worries if people getting doses of different vaccines: Dr Paul

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

Taking cue from the European countries, India too is considering mix-and-match doses of vaccines on a trial basis with the Government on Thursday saying that there is no concern if just in case people are getting different doses.

Its assertion came follow-

Covid-19 IN INDIA	
TOTAL CASES:	2,75,47,705 (+1,79,535)
DEATHS:	3,18,821 (+3,556)
RECOVERED:	2,48,90,326 (+2,64,182)
ACTIVE:	23,27,541
MAHA:	56,72,180 (+21,273)
K'TAKA:	25,23,998 (+24,214)
KERALA:	24,48,555 (+24,166)
UP:	16,83,880 (+3,196)
DELHI:	14,22,549 (+1,072)

Yogi calls on Guv, sparks speculation about Cabinet rejig, expansion

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

When Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath called on Governor Anandiben Patel on Thursday evening, it gave credence to the speculation about possibility of reshuffle or expansion of the Uttar Pradesh Ministry.

The Chief Minister was on an inspection tour of districts for last three days and returned to Lucknow on Thursday at 6 pm and an hour later he drove down to the Raj Bhawan to meet Governor Anandiben Patel, who is also in charge of Madhya Pradesh, and had suddenly returned to Lucknow on Thursday from Bhopal.

Anandiben Patel went to Bhopal on May 10 and was slated to stay there till Saturday next. The sudden arrival of the Governor in Lucknow and her meeting with Yogi Adityanath was seen as a step toward finalising details of reshuffle in the Ministry.

Raj Bhawan officials, however, said it was a routine meeting.

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ing a recent Spanish study that has found that vaccinating people with both the Oxford-AstraZeneca and Pfizer-BioNTech Covid-19 vaccines produces a potent immune response against the virus SARS-CoV-2.

"As per the protocol, stick to the same dose of vaccine as the first one. If people are getting different doses there is no cause for concern, it's safe. We are thinking to mix and match (vaccine doses) on a trial basis," said Dr VK Paul, member (Health) of Niti Aayog at a press conference here. The mix-and match option suits the Government too in view of supply-chain and shortage issues affecting its nationwide Covid-19 vaccination drive, especially for the second dose.

Dr Paul was replying to a query if there were health concerns in a case of 20 residents

of a village in Uttar Pradesh who were administered a different coronavirus vaccine as a second dose.

"There should be no cause of concern and added that any adverse event is unlikely," he said, adding that more scrutiny was required in the case.

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Continuation of Covid guidelines till June-end, says MHA

New Delhi: The Centre on Thursday directed States and Union Territories to continue the ongoing Covid-19 guidelines till June 30 and asked them to go for intensive and local containment measures in districts with a high number of cases to check the spread of the deadly disease.

CAPSULE

DEAD MAN RETURNS HOME AFTER HIS FUNERAL
Jaipur: A 40-year-old man presumed dead showed up much to the surprise of his family, a week after they had performed a funeral mistakenly identifying a decomposed corpse as his body. The goop-up took place after the State-rural RK Hospital declared the body of a man named Goverdhan Prajapat, who was under treatment at the hospital, as 'unidentified' and later Omkar Lal Gadulia's relatives wrongly took possession of that body at Rajsamand district in Rajasthan.

GOVT NOD FOR ₹5L TO KIN OF DEAD SCRIBES
New Delhi: The Centre approved financial assistance to families of 26 more journalists who succumbed to Covid-19. The Ministry of Information & Broadcasting said ₹5 lakh assistance each will be given to the families of these 67 journalists. Committee also considered applications of families of 11 journalists who had passed away due to reasons other than the infection, it said.

India explores Choksi's extradition as Antiguan PM favours deportation

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

With Antiguan Prime Minister Gaston Browne urging neighbouring Dominica to directly hand over fugitive businessman Mehul Choksi to India, agencies here are exploring options to get him extradited to face the law. Choksi is wanted in the ₹13,500 crore PNB credit fraud case.

Choksi was nabbed in Dominica late on Wednesday after fleeing from neighbouring Antigua and Barbuda.

Browne reportedly said Choksi will be deported to India and Indian authorities are in touch with their counterparts in Dominica.

Indian agencies were in touch with Antigua and Barbuda on the matter and



contact has also been established with the Government of Dominica for repatriation of Choksi to India, sources here confirmed.

They said the agencies are exploring possible legal recourse to seek his custody at the earliest.

After reports of Choksi's arrest in Dominica, Browne told the media there that he has given "clear instructions" to the Dominican authorities to repatriate Choksi to India.

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Revolt against BSY fizzles out

DEEPAK K UPRETI ■ NEW DELHI

The anti-BS Yediyurappa "rebellion" in Karnataka has fizzled out again as the BJP central leadership has not been able to find out a "Lingyat" leader of Yediyurappa's stature even though complaints that his son was remote-controlling the administration and running a "parallel power-centre" are on the rise in the State.

"Dissidents have not received support from central leaders as BSY, despite his age-related problems, is still the biggest vote catcher among the dominant Lingyat community that forms around 11 to 13 per cent vote bank," said a State leader who identified himself a "BJP loyalist" away from pro or anti-BSY camps.

He went on to admit that BSY's "family" (son) interference has adversely impacted governance and "image" of the



party in the State with the rival camp levelling charges of corruption.

The dissidents in Karnataka, including backward class leader and State Rural Development Minister BS Eshwarappa, have alleged that the Chief Minister's son BY Vijayendra was running the Government like a de-facto Chief Minister.

Eshwarappa, a bitter critic of the BSY, is also a claimant for the top post.

Continued on Page 2

IMA lodges complaint against Ramdev

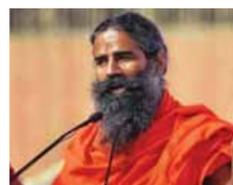
STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Indian Medical Association (IMA) on Thursday lodged a complaint at Delhi's IP Estate police station against yoga guru Ramdev over his comment on allopathy. Police said that they are conducting an enquiry into the matter.

According to the May 9 complaint of the IMA, Ramdev has "wilfully and deliberately spread false, baseless and malicious information" about treatment of Covid patients by established and approved methods and drugs.

"In a video which has surfaced and is being shared widely throughout the social media, Swami Ramdev is seen wilfully and deliberately spreading false, baseless and malicious information with regard to the treatment of various patients suffering from Covid-19 by established and approved treatment methods and drugs," it said.

The IMA has also served a defamation notice on Ramdev for his alleged disparaging remarks against allopathy.



Even their father can't arrest me: Ramdev in video

Dehradun: Amid the raging controversy over Ramdev's alleged disparaging remarks against allopathy, another controversial video surfaced on social media in which the yoga guru is seen reacting to the demand for his arrest, saying "even their father cannot arrest him".

"They are just making a noise. They keep creating trends like Thug Ramdev, Mahathug Ramdev, Girafar Ramdev and so on," he said responding to #Arrest Ramdev trends on social media.

From beef to goonda, what ails this exotic island UT

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The alluring coral archipelago of Lakshadweep is in turmoil. A series of decisions initiated by Lakshadweep Administrator Praful Khoda Patel, a former BJP leader, have triggered a huge controversy, inviting sharp criticism not only from the Opposition but also from within the BJP.

Patel's recall is demanded by the Opposition parties, including the Congress, the CPM and the Nationalist Congress party (NCP).

The steps taken by Patel include a ban on beef consumption in the Muslim-dominated Lakshadweep, introduction of a Goonda Act, a proposal to disqualify panchayat poll aspirants with more than two children, and estab-

Misleading propaganda by Opp, says Collector

The Lakshadweep administration has hit out at the protest campaign, calling it "misleading propaganda". Lakshadweep Collector S Asker Ali called it a "motivated misinformation campaign, which does not represent those living in Lakshadweep".

Establishment of a development authority with powers to acquire land.

The steps has led to a sharp division in the Lakshadweep BJP unit with president Abdul Khadee Haji backing Patel but general secretary Mohammad Kasim describing the administrator

- Ban on beef in Muslim-dominated island
- Introduction of Goonda Act in Lakshadweep with low-crime rate
- Proposal to disqualify panchayat poll aspirants with more than 2 children
- Establishment of a development authority with powers to acquire land
- Local BJP divided
- Praful Khoda Patel's recall is demanded by Opposition

Continued on Page 2

Lockdown spirits away tipplers

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

The liquor industry has reported a decline of 12 per cent in the sale of the Indian-made foreign liquor (IMFL) segment amid Covid pandemic and lockdown despite 6 per cent growth in the January-March quarter in 2020-21.

The total sale of IMFL was 305 million cases (9 litres each) products in 2020-21 — nearly 12 per cent below the previous year. Though the sales picked up in the second half of 2020-21 in most parts, the States which imposed high corona cess and other taxes after the first wave of Covid-19 showed poor recovery.

According to a data compiled by the Confederation of Indian Alcoholic Beverage Companies (CIABC), the liquor sales fell by a whopping 42 per cent in first quarter of the last fiscal, it declined by 9



per cent in the second quarter and 1 per cent in the third quarter, before showing a recovery of 6 per cent in the fourth quarter.

The top five States in terms of recovery in sales were Maharashtra, Goa, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand, while West Bengal, Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh were among the big States which witnessed

largest declines over the previous fiscal.

As per the data, Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh and Haryana reported over 40 per cent growth in IMFL sales during the fourth quarter of 2020-21, while Maharashtra and Goa reported 23 and 22 per cent growth, respectively. However, during the January-March quarter, sales of IMFL in States such as Chhattisgarh reported a 31 per cent decline, 28 per cent in West Bengal and a 20 per cent in Rajasthan. The highest decline of 52 per cent was in Meghalaya and 43 per cent in the Union Territory of Daman, Diu and Silvassa.

In Delhi, the sale of IMFL fell by 67 per cent in the first quarter, 8 per cent in the second quarter, 3 per cent in the 3rd quarter and in the fourth quarter, it showed recovery of 2 per cent. Andhra Pradesh's

sales fell by 70 per cent in the first quarter, 51 per cent in the second quarter, 19 per cent in the third quarter and two per cent in the fourth quarter. Chandigarh recorded 65 per cent decline in the sale of IMFL in the first quarter, 13 per cent in the second quarter, 21 per cent in the third quarter. In the fourth quarter the growth rate was only 4 per cent.

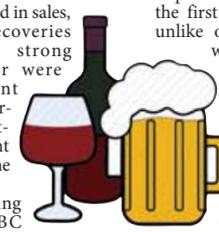
Some States including, Delhi, Assam, Odisha, Chandigarh, and Madhya Pradesh, have shown positive trend in sales, but the recoveries were not strong enough, or were inconsistent through quarters, reflecting inherent fragility in the market.

According to CIABC

Director General Vinod Giri: "Many states showed positive trend through the quarters, and even though most States were unable to fully recover volume lost in first and second quarters, strong performance in third and fourth quarters reflects fundamental strength in the market. It also confirms that there is no lasting shift against alcoholic beverages in consumption baskets."

"Incidentally, the majority of these States are ones that imposed high cess / tax during the first wave of Covid, and unlike other states did not withdraw or reduce it. West Bengal and Chhattisgarh also made changes in the route-to-market which may have suppressed the market's natural uplift", he said.

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Assam to export oil to B'desh, Myanmar in a few years: CM

Guwahati: The Numaligarh Refinery (NRL), which was commissioned as per the provisions of the 1985 Assam Accord, would increase its capacity from the existing 3 million metric tonnes (MMT) to 9 MMT, besides bringing 6 MMT crude oil to Assam from Odisha, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said on Thursday.

He said the crude oil from Paradeep would substantially raise the capacity of the three refineries in Assam - Bongaigaon, Guwahati and NRL. Earlier, Assam's crude oil used to be sent to Barauni, but now 6 MMT crude oil would come to the State. Accompanied by Assam Finance Minister Ajanta Neog, Industry and Commerce Minister Chandra Mohan Patowary and Minister for Implementation of Assam Accord Atul Bora, the Chief Minister said that the capacity of

Indian States. He said the crude oil from Paradeep would substantially raise the capacity of the three refineries in Assam - Bongaigaon, Guwahati and NRL. Earlier, Assam's crude oil used to be sent to Barauni, but now 6 MMT crude oil would come to the State. Accompanied by Assam Finance Minister Ajanta Neog, Industry and Commerce Minister Chandra Mohan Patowary and Minister for Implementation of Assam Accord Atul Bora, the Chief Minister said that the capacity of

Andhra converts RTC buses into Covid facilities for remote areas

Amaravati: The Andhra Pradesh Government has converted Road Transport Corporation (RTC) buses into treatment facilities for Covid patients who live in remote and inaccessible areas of the State. Transport Minister Perni Venkataramaiah on Thursday said that the RTC sleeper buses, equipped with oxygen cylinders, would be stationed in forest areas, which lack adequate medical and health infrastructure. So far, these modified buses are being stationed at Buttayagudem, KR Puram and other places under the forest agency areas of the State. **IANS**



A birds-eye view of newly constructed flyover on Sarkhej-Gandhinagar Highway ahead of its inauguration, in Ahmedabad, on Thursday

Over 10K villages in Chhattisgarh corona free

New Delhi: Amidst the growing concern of coronavirus infection reaching remote villages in the country, Chhattisgarh has good news to share. Over 10 thousand villages in the State are completely infection free as the virus has either not been able to reach here or those infected have already recovered. At present there is not a single Covid-19 case in these villages, this was possible due to the prompt measures initiated by the Chhattisgarh Government to prevent infection from reaching these villages.

From beef to...

From Page 1
The BJP leader accused Patel of running Lakshadweep like a king. Patel, Kasim said, has not taken anyone into confidence and the BJP cannot afford to continue him if the party wants to expand its political base in Lakshadweep. Abdul Khader, the BJP candidate in 2019 Lok Sabha poll, however, backed Patel's measures saying they would help develop the islands. Maintaining that the Modi Government's welfare measures and development initiatives have got the people's support in Lakshadweep, Khader said. "Patel has been sent by the Centre and he won't take any steps to harm the islands," he said. But Khader too disagrees on beef ban in Muslim majority Lakshadweep. Several Opposition parties have criticised the steps saying they would destroy unique culture of the island. On Wednesday, NCP

leader Sharad Pawar hit-out at the decisions saying that they would lead to the destruction of traditional means of livelihood and unique culture of the island. In a letter to the Prime Minister, Pawar sought his intervention, and said the decisions taken by the administrator were "unwarranted and irrational". Pawar demanded that the orders and decisions taken by the incumbent authority of Lakshadweep administration be re-examined and necessary directions be passed to the Lakshadweep administration to withdraw the unreasonable and unwarranted orders. The appointment of a new administrator, who works in close co-operation with people's representatives and takes a holistic approach to work with the native people, will be highly appreciated, he said in the letter. Earlier in the day, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi accused the "ignorant bigots in power" of destroying the islands.

Crocodile tears, police rebuff...

From Page 1
An official statement issued by Chinmoy Biswal, the Public Relation Officer (PRO) of Delhi Police stated that prima facie, these statements are not only mendacious but designed to impede a lawful inquiry by a private enterprise. "Twitter Inc. has taken upon itself, in the garb of terms of service, to adjudicate the truth or otherwise of documents in public space. Twitter Inc. is purported to be both an investigating authority as well as an adjudicating judicial authority. It has no legal sanction to be either. The only legal entity, so empowered by the duly laid down law, to investigate is the Police and to adjudicate is the Courts," it stated. "However, since Twitter Inc. claims to have material information basis which it not only 'investigated' but arrived at a 'conclusion', it must share that information with the police. There should not be any confusion about this logical course," it stated. "The entire conduct by Twitter Inc, including its Indian entity, in the last few days has been obfuscator, diversionary and tendentious. There is one simple thing to do which Twitter refuses to do. That is, cooperate with the law enforcement and reveal to the legal authority the information it has," it further stated.

Twitter sticks to its guns...

From Page 1
We, alongside many in civil society in India and around the world, have concerns with regards to the use of intimidation tactics by the police in response to enforcement of our global terms of service, as well as with core elements of the new IT rules, said Twitter's Policy Division. "We plan to advocate for changes to elements of these regulations that inhibit free, open public conversation. We will continue our constructive dialogue with the Indian Government and believe it is critical to adopt a collaborative approach. We believe that it is the collective responsibility of elected officials, industry, and civil society to safeguard the interests of the public," it added. Apart from its concerns over the police visit, Twitter also said the company was concerned that one person, the chief compliance officer, was being made criminally liable for all the content on the platform. "The requirement of proactive monitoring and a near blanket authority to the Government and its agencies to seek information about users represented a dangerous overreach, which was inconsistent with democratic principles followed in countries, the company said. In January and February, Twitter had initially refused to take down certain tweets about farmer protests flagged by the IT Ministry for allegedly "spreading misinformation" and having the potential to "lead to imminent violence affecting public order situation in the country".

Yogi calls on Guv...

From Page 1
Incidentally, the speculation about the expansion and reshuffle in Yogi Cabinet was in the air after the recent meeting of Sar Karyawah of RSS Dattarya Hosbole with Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union Home Minister Amit Shah, senior BJP leaders in Delhi and in-house meeting in Lucknow. The centre of the speculation is Arvind Kumar Sharma, a close aide of Modi, who was made MLC in January this year. There is speculation he might be included in the Yogi Government and given a prominent position. After the formation of Yogi Adityanath Government in the State on March 19, 2017, the Cabinet was extended on August 22, 2019. There were 56 members in his Cabinet. After three Ministers Vijay Kumar Kashyap, Chetan Chauhan and Kamala Rani Varun, died due to coronavirus infection, the strength of the Ministry came down to 53.

Revolt ...

From Page 1
However, he belongs to "Kurba" community who undisputed leader in the State is Siddaramaiah, the former Congress Chief Minister. Eshwarappa had in April complained to the State Governor about BSY's son meddling in his Ministry. "When BSY was once forced to move out of the BJP, he damaged the party. But after his return, he not only unseated Congress in the State but the party also won 25 LS seats in 2019," said Jagdish Shettigar, a former RSS and BJP leader hailing from Udupi, Karnataka. He pointed to the BJP's dilemma and its "hands-off" approach vis-a-vis BSY. In their latest attempt to dislodge BSY, the rebels led by State Tourism Minister Arvind Bellad had sought a meeting with BJP president JP Nadda and State-in-charge Arun Singh. This was their second attempt to reach-out to the Central leaders in a fortnight requesting a change of guard in the

State. The party leaders not only refused to give the rebels any audience but rubbished their appeal by conveying that "such demand is most unfortunate in the time of Covid19", sources quoted them as saying. Bellad, a Lingyat has been aspiring to move up the ladder. Besides, the name of Union Parliamentary Minister Pralhad Joshi, a Brahmin, has also been propped by dissidents for the CM's post. BL Santosh, BJP general secretary (organisation), again a Brahmin from Karnataka, who has been, for long, critical of BSY style of functioning also reportedly seen by some as a possible replacement for the BSY (in the fashion of Haryana CM Manohar Khattar.) Earlier this month, Karnataka Home Minister Basavaraj Bommai, a Lingyat, had denied speculation that he is being considered as a replacement for BSY as the next CM. All the while, BSY remained cool saying "the only thing before him is Covid19, controlling it.."

CENTRAL PROCUREMENT AGENCY
DIRECTORATE OF HEALTH SERVICES
Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi
Dispensary Building, School Block-S1
New Patparganj Road, Shakarpur
New Delhi-110092

F. No. 6(979)/CH/DFW/2021-22/Part File-IIA/ Date: 27.05.2021

GLOBAL EXPRESSION OF INTEREST (EOI)

Health and Family Welfare Department, Government of NCT of Delhi intends to procure SARS -CoV-2 (COVID-19 vaccine) on urgent basis to control and manage spread of Covid-19 pandemic. Global Expression of Interest (EOI) is hereby invited from the International Manufacturers of COVID-19 Vaccines or their Authorized Agents or from direct Importers with appropriate license, to import the COVID-19 vaccine in India. The offered Covid-19 vaccine must be duly approved by competent authority of Govt. of India.

Interested manufacturers/their authorised agents/importers may submit their offer/ expression of interest duly filled in prescribed format alongwith documents as per EOI to the Director General, Directorate of Health Services, Govt. of NCT of Delhi, India. Bidders, have to submit their offer/ expression of interest only through email at the email ID: corona.vaccine@delhi.gov.in latest by 17:00hrs 1ST, of 07.06.2021.

The details of EOI can be seen at website <https://govtprocurement.delhi.gov.in>, <http://health.delhigovt.in> of Health & Family Welfare Department, Govt. of NCT of Delhi and also at dshm.delhi.gov.in.

For any query, may contact at +911123813221.

Sd/-
DIRECTORATE GENERAL HEALTH SERVICE
HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE DEPARTMENT
GOVT. OF NCT OF DELHI, INDIA
DIP/Shabdarth/0080/21-22 +918745011282

Centre-Twitter's ...

From Page 1
The Ministry also said law making and policy formulation is the "sole prerogative of the sovereign" and a social media platform like Twitter has no locus in dictating what should India's legal policy framework should be. "The Government also wishes to emphatically assure that representatives of social media companies including Twitter are and will always remain safe in India and there is no threat to their personal safety and security," it said. It also accused Twitter of having a dual approach in responding to events concerning the US and those concerning India. "Twitter chose to take suo-moto action against those users who it considered as perpetrators of violence at the Capitol Hill in the USA. But, just a few days after the unlawful incidents on Red Fort in Delhi, Twitter refused to take prompt action on the lawful request made by the Government of India to block contents," the Government said. Citing another example, it said Twitter also chose to show the geo-location of certain locations in Ladakh as part of China at a time when India and China were engaged in peaceful resolution of border-related issues through bilateral dialogue. "Twitter took several days, that too only after repeated reminders, to rectify this blatant disrespect to India's sensitivity and territorial integrity." The Government accused Twitter of having "lack of responsibility" and said this has led to "rampant proliferation of fake and harmful content against India and Indians". "Promoting vaccine hesitancy has been rampantly done through the use of Twitter platform and yet Twitter has taken no action. Is this commitment to the people of India?" it asked. "Twitter Inc., a USA-based private company, in its communique says it seeks 'constructive dialogue', 'collaborative approach' from the Government of a sovereign democratic republic to 'safeguard interests of the public'. It is time that Twitter disabuses itself of this grandiosity and comply with the laws of India," the Government said.

Govt mulls mix ...

From Page 1
However, on May 22, Dr Paul called for treading cautiously. "It is plausible. But there needs to be more studies. It can't be said definitively that mixing of doses can be practised. There is no robust scientific evidence," he had said. The combination of doses of Covid-19 vaccines started gaining preliminary results from the trial of more than 600 people - announced in an online presentation on May 18 - are the first to show the benefits of combining different coronavirus vaccines, as published in a Spanish journal. A UK trial of a similar strategy was said to be reported on safety data last week, and is expected to deliver further findings on immune responses soon. According to reports, various European countries are already mulling such combinations so that some or all people who were given a first dose of the vaccine developed by the University of Oxford, UK, and

AstraZeneca in Cambridge, UK, can get another vaccine for their second dose. Researchers hope that such mix-and-match COVID-19 vaccination regimens will trigger stronger, more robust immune responses than will two doses of a single vaccine, while simplifying immunization efforts for countries facing fluctuating supplies of the various vaccines. In the UK, Public Health England too has taken a similar stance. After the Government delayed second vaccine doses for up to 12 weeks so that more people could get their first jab and at least some protection, health officials acknowledged that, in exceptional circumstances, mismatched doses may be given to those who come in for their second booster only to find that the vaccine they originally had is not available. However, the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention on April 22 warned against the mixing of vaccines unless there are "exceptional situations", such as a shortage of the first-dose vaccine because of production or distribution problems.

India explores Choksi's...

From Page 1
"We asked them not to repatriate him to Antigua. He needs to return to India where he can face the criminal charges leveled against him," Antigua News Room, a media outlet, quoted Browne's interaction with journalists in Antigua and Barbuda. Reports also ascribed Browne as saying that Antigua will not accept Choksi back into his country. Browne said he has requested Dominica PM Skerritt and law enforcement agencies to not return Choksi to Antigua where he has legal and constitutional protection as a citizen. Choksi is currently in the custody of the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) in Dominica after he was nabbed following a Yellow Notice of the Interpol issued at the behest of Antigua to trace him. Choksi has acquired Antigua citizenship through an investment programme there and has been staying in the island

country since his flight from India in January 2018 before he fled to Dominica on Sunday. "Dominica has agreed (for Choksi's repatriation). We will not accept him back." He made a monumental error by skipping the island. Dominican Government and law enforcement are cooperating and we have informed Indian government to have him repatriated to India," Browne was reported to have said. Choksi is facing extradition proceedings as also a case for revocation of his citizenship in Antigua. Choksi and his nephew Nirav Modi are wanted for allegedly siphoning off Rs 13,500 crore of public money from the state-run Punjab National Bank (PNB), using Letters of Undertaking and Letters of Credit. Choksi's nephew Modi is in a London prison after repeated denial of bail and is contesting extradition to India. Both are facing separate investigations by the CBI and Enforcement Directorate.

OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER, R.W.S.&S. DIVISION, NUAPADA
Govt. of Odisha "e" Procurement Notice
Bid Identification No. RWS&S_07/2021-22
O-267: The Executive Engineer, R.W.S & S Division, Nuapada on behalf of Governor of Odisha invites bids through e-procurement in double cover system in conformity with the terms & conditions of the detailed tender call notice (DTCN) from the Contractor registered with the Odisha State Govt. & Contractors of equivalent grade/class registered with Central Govt. / any other State Govt. / MES / Railway & Reputed Engineering firms having valid & up to date Contractors registration certificate, GST clearance Certificate & PAN Card and possessing compatible Digital Signature Certificate as given in the DTCN to be eventually drawn up in the standard Lump sum(G2) contract form.

Nature of Work	: Rural Piped Water Supply schemes in different villages under Nuapada district.
No. of Tender	: 07 (Seven) nos.
Approx. Estimated Cost	: Rs.148.15 Lakhs to Rs.441.71 Lakhs
Period of completion	: 11 (Eleven) months
Tender Cost	: Rs.10000/-
Class of Contractor	: B, A & Special
Date and Time of availability of bid document in the portal	: 01.06.2021 at 10.00 A.M.
Last date /Time for receipt of bids in the portal	: 14.06.2021 up to 5.00 P.M.
Date of Opening of bid	: 16.06.2021 at 11.00 A.M.

The bidders have to participate in online bidding only. Further details can be seen from the website <http://tendersorissa.gov.in> **Sd/-25.05.21 (Er. G. C. Nayak)**
Executive Engineer RWSS Division, Nuapada
OIPR : 25043/11/0009/2122

Lockdown...

From Page 1
According to CIABC, for instance, in Chhattisgarh introduction of super distributor has led to suppression of sales, and in West Bengal mid-year changes in excise policy have led to further decline in sales. "We are also concerned regarding Meghalaya, where proposed introduction of super distributor where there is no need for it, may lead to collapse of sales," Giri noted. The Uttar Pradesh administration has allowed opening of liquor shops from 7 am to 1 pm in the State while Haryana has also allowed opening of liquor shops with some restriction. But, Delhi has not allowed opening of liquor shops due to higher cases of COVID-19.

Ganga Ram Hosp reports rare white fungus case

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

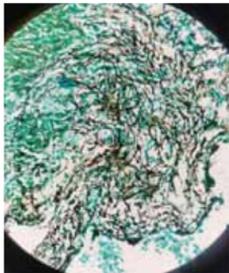
In what is thought to be a first-of-its-kind case, the city's Sir Ganga Ram Hospital (SGRH) reported a white fungus infection which caused severe ulceration and gangrene of the intestine with multifocal perforations in the food pipe, the small and large bowel in a Covid-19 patient.

A 49-year-old woman was admitted to the SGRH on May 13 with complaints of severe abdominal pain, vomiting and constipation. A CT scan of the abdomen revealed free air and moderate amount of free fluid in the theabdominal cavity suggestive of an intestinal perforation.

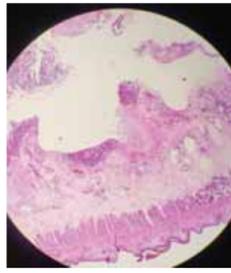
Doctors placed a tube inside the abdomen and drained about one litre of bile stained pus. An emergency surgery was conducted the next day by a team of surgeons led by Dr Samiran Nundy of the Department of Surgical Gastroenterology and Liver Transplantation.

Dr Nundy said that the perforation in the lower end of the food pipe was revealed after the surgery.

"A part of the small intestine had developed gangrene and sloughed off and she had multiple thinned-out patches in the wall of the colon with one small leak. The perforations were closed and the gangrenous segment was resected in a difficult surgery lasting for four hours after which a piece of the intestine was sent for biopsy," he said.



Candidial hyphae and yeast forms (White Fungus)



Multiple small to large areas of mucosal ulceration and sloughing along with submucosal infarction

"The biopsy of the intestinal segment showed the presence of severe ulceration of the intestinal wall with resultant perforation and necrosis caused by invasive Candida pseudohyphae - the white fungus.

She was immediately started on anti-fungals and showed remarkable improvement," said Dr (Prof) Anil Arora, Chairman, Institute of Liver, Gastroenterology and Pancreaticobiliary Sciences.

However, five days later, she had to undergo a second surgery for a small leak from the anastomotic site. She is currently recovering from it, said Dr Aurobindo of the Department of Liver Transplantation and GI Surgery.

Dr Arora added: "The Covid-19 virus has been known to affect the lungs and upper respiratory tract. Infection of the intestine by the black fungus (Mucormycosis) secondary to steroid use has

been recently reported but white fungus (Candida) causing severe ulceration and gangrene of the intestine presenting with multifocal perforations in the esophagus, small bowel and large bowel in the setting of Covid-19 infection has not been reported in literature to the best of our knowledge."

As the exact mechanism is unknown, the probable explanation involves an unholy combination of three states causing immune suppression: A malignancy (carcinoma breast), recent chemotherapy and a superimposed Covid-19 infection, he said.

"All three factors conspired together in her case bringing down the immune system to dismally low levels resulting in the turning of a normal inhabitant of the intestine called Candida into a monstrous invasive form resulting in multifocal intestinal perforations with resultant shock and septicemia," he added.

Must get Pfizer jab soon for our kids: Kejriwal

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Soon after the US pharma company sought fast-track approval for its jab in India, Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Thursday sought procurement of the Pfizer Covid-19 vaccine as soon as possible to inoculate children in the national Capital.

"We should procure this vaccine as soon as possible for our children," Kejriwal tweeted, citing a news story on the fast-track approval sought by the company.

The Delhi Chief Minister has been requesting the Central Government to explore suitable vaccine options, citing the opinion of experts that a possible third wave of the corona pandemic in the coming months may affect children.

The Delhi Government has also suggested that the Centre should vaccinate students and teachers if it decides to conduct Class 12 Board exams that have



been delayed due to the second wave of the virus.

The US major has told Indian authorities that its vaccine is suitable for everyone aged 12 years or above and can be stored for a month at two-eight degrees Celsius, sources had said.

Pfizer, which has offered five crore doses to India between July and October, recently held a series of interactions with the Indian Government authorities.

It has shared with authorities the most recent data points regarding efficacy trials and approvals for its vaccine in various countries and by the World Health Organisation.

Delhi records 1,072 new Covid-19 cases

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

At least 1,072 cases of Covid-19 were reported in the national Capital on Thursday while the positivity rate stood at 1.52 per cent.

According to the daily health bulletin, issued by the Delhi Health department, this is the fifth day in a row when the daily cases in Delhi have remained below 2,000 and the second consecutive day when the cases are below 1,500. The national Capital recorded 117 more Covid-19 fatalities, the lowest since April 15.

The number of deaths reported on Thursday (117) is the lowest since April 15 when the national Capital had reported 112 fatalities. The city had recorded 1,491 cases and 130 fatalities on Wednesday with a positivity rate of 1.93 per cent.

Delhi recorded 1,568 cases and 156 fatalities on Tuesday, while the positivity rate was 2.14 per cent.

On Monday, the national Capital had recorded 1,550 fresh cases of Covid-19 and 207 fatalities while the positivity rate was 2.52 per cent.

On Sunday, 1,649 cases and 189 deaths were recorded, while the positivity rate was 2.42 per cent.

Since April 19, both daily cases and single-day death count had been spiralling up with over 28,000 cases and 277 deaths recorded on April 20; rising to 306 fatalities on April 22. On May 2, the city had registered a record 407 deaths, according to the official data.

A total of 70,068 tests were conducted a day ago, according to the health bulletin on Thursday.

Vaccine shortage: No jobs for youth

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Highlighting the acute shortage of vaccines in the national Capital, Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) MLA Atishi said on Thursday that around 34,000 people were vaccinated in Delhi on May 26 and the majority of jobs were provided by private hospitals.

The AAP leader also said 42 per cent of the people (24.32 lakh) in the 45 plus category have received at least one dose of vaccine. "This is the fourth day; no vaccination for youth between 18 and 44 in any of the Government schools of Delhi is done.

Both Covaxin and Covishield's stock has ended for the youth. This is a cause of concern as youth was the only group which does not have any vaccine hesitancy and coming in large numbers to register themselves on CoWIN and getting vaccinated," she said.

She added that there are many vaccines approved by WHO are available in the international market which have not been approved by the centre yet. "Vaccines like Pfizer, Moderna, and Johnson & Johnson.



All black fungus cases to be reported: LG to health dept

SAPNA SINGH ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Government on Thursday issued regulations under the Epidemic Diseases Act (EDA) on black fungus. Lieutenant-Governor, Anil Bajjal subjected the regulations citing the threat of a Mucormycosis outbreak in the national Capital.

According to the notification, all Government and private healthcare facilities and medical institutions are required to follow the guidelines for screening, diagnosis and management of the diseases issued by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MOHFW), the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) as amended from time to time. The gazette notification says: "These regulations may be called 'The Delhi Epidemic Diseases (Mucormycosis) Regulations, 2021' and shall come into force at once. They will remain valid for one year from the date of publication in the official gazette."

Further, all medical institutions will report each and every suspected or confirmed case of Mucormycosis to the Health Department through the concerned Medical Superintendent/Medical Director/Hospital



Incharge/Chief District Medical Officer (CDMO) of the concerned district. "No person/institution or organisation will spread any information or material for management of Mucormycosis without prior permission from Department of Health and Family Welfare, the Government of NCT of Delhi," it read further.

The guidelines make it mandatory for all such facilities to report suspected and confirmed cases to the health department through district-level officers and the Integrated Disease Surveillance Program (IDSP).

Further, any person or institution disobeying these regulations or order issued under these regulations shall be deemed to have committed an offence punishable under Section 188 of the Indian Penal Code - 45 of 1,860.

Delhi YouTuber arrested for animal abuse

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Police has arrested a 32-year-old YouTuber on charges of cruelty against an animal for allegedly shooting a video wherein he tied his pet dog with helium gas balloons and risked its life by setting it afloat in South Delhi.

The accused identified as Gaurav Sharma is a resident of Panchsheel Vihar in south Delhi's Malviya Nagar and he has 4.15 million subscribers for his YouTube channel.

According to Atul Kumar Thakur, the DCP, South district, the matter came to notice after a complaint was received at the Malviya Nagar police station by Gaurav Gupta, a member of 'People for Animals Society'. He alleged that Sharma had made a video where they were seen to have tied their pet dog with helium balloons and later they let loose the balloons thereby making the dog fly in the air and hence, risking its life. The video was shot on May 21 and the purported video has been removed from his YouTube channel," said the DCP. Based on the complaint, a case was registered under Section 188 (Disobedience to order duly promulgated by public servant) of Indian Penal Code, Disaster Management Act and other relevant sections of Prevention to Cruelty to Animal Act at Malviya Nagar police station," said the DCP.

HC to hear plea to restrain media from hyping Sushil case

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

A plea to restrain the media from 'sensationalising' the trial of wrestler and Olympic medalist Sushil Kumar in connection with the death of a 23-year old man, and seeking rules for reporting criminal cases, was mentioned on Thursday before the Delhi High Court which agreed to hear it on May 28.

The petition was mentioned before a Bench of Chief Justice DN Pateland Justice Jyoti Singh which allowed it to be listed for hearing on Friday.

The plea has been moved by a law student alleging that Kumar's career and reputation has been damaged by the media's reporting of the case against him in connection with the Chhatrasal Stadium brawl that led to the death of the 23-year-old wrestler.

On May 23, a Delhi court sent Kumar to six-day police custody for interrogation in connection with the killing of a fellow wrestler, saying the allegations against him are serious in nature and that no one is above the law.

Kumar and his associates allegedly assaulted wrestler Sagar Dhankar (23) and two of his friends, Sonu and Amit Kumar, at the Chhatrasal stadium here on the intervening night of May 4 and 5. Sagar succumbed to the injuries later.

Gurugram becomes first in Haryana to give over 6 lakh jabs

STAFF REPORTER ■ GURUGRAM

With over 6.49 lakh people in Gurugram being vaccinated, the district became the first in Haryana to inoculate so many people.

According to the health officials, so far over 5,07,000 people in the district have been administered the first dose of the vaccine while over 1,42,000 people have received the second dose.

"Under the vaccination campaign 59,191 healthcare workers have so far received the first dose of the Covid vaccine and 37,161 workers have received the second dose," Dr Yash Garg, Deputy Commissioner, Gurugram said.

Similarly, around 51,213 frontline workers have received the first dose of the Covid vaccine and 36,001 people have been administered with the second dose, Dr Garg said.

Also, around 88,080 people in the 18 plus age group have also received the Covid jab. Health officials said testing is being done to curtail the Covid infections in Gurugram. In the last 24 hours the health department has conducted 5,493 Covid tests.

According to the figures from the health department, the number of total active case in Gurugram district is 2,554 out of which 2,145 patients are in home isolation.

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COVID-19 VACCINE PROCUREMENT

Centre rejects States' jab charges

Says it was States which wanted flexibility

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Centre on Thursday came out with a detailed counter to States' allegations of closure of supply of vaccines to them saying it was the States which wanted "flexibility" and "a say" in procurement of vaccines and it was in view of their demand that a new "decentralised" system was brought in.

As per the system, the Government said, the Centre was to procure 50 per cent of vaccines produced domestically for States for free for 45+ group and a special channel was to be created for the remaining 50 per cent which the State Governments and private hospitals could purchase.

In a statement titled 'Myths & Facts on India's Vaccination Process', Dr VK Paul, Member-Health, Niti Aayog, listed out seven 'myths' ranging from the Centre abdicating its responsibility to the states, not doing enough to buy vaccines from abroad, not giving enough vaccines to the States and not approving vaccines available globally among others. He asserted that these are arising due to 'distorted statements, half truths and blatant lies'.

He said the Centre ran the entire vaccine programme from January to April and it



was quite well-administrated compared to the situation in May. "But States, who had not even achieved good coverage of healthcare workers and front-line workers in 3 months, wanted to open up the process of vaccination and wanted more decentralisation," he stressed.

"Health is a State subject and the liberalised vaccine policy was a result of the incessant requests being made by the states to give them more power. The fact that global tenders have not given any results only reaffirm what we have been

telling the States from day one: that vaccines are in short supply in the world and it is not easy to procure them at short notice," he maintained against the backdrop of Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal complaining about foreign vaccine makers not being ready to deal with States and the global tenders floated by States not evoking a warm response from these manufacturers.

Incidentally, a number of Opposition Chief Ministers and leaders had sought for more power to the States in the vaccine procurement process.

Facing accusations of delay in placing orders for vaccines, the government said it has been pursuing Pfizer, J&J and Moderna since mid-2020 for the earliest possible imports, and has even waived local trials for well-established foreign vaccine makers. "Buying vaccines internationally is not similar to buying 'off-the-shelf' items," Paul maintained.

On allegations by some states that the Centre is not giving enough vaccines to the states, it pointed out that the Centre is allotting enough vaccines to the states in a transparent manner as per agreed guidelines.

"The behaviour of some of our leaders, who in spite of full knowledge of the facts on vaccine supply, appear on TV daily and create panic among the people is very unfortunate. This is not the time to play politics. We need everyone to unite in this fight," the statement said.

The Government also dismissed a report published by *The New York Times* on India's Covid death toll and called it "completely baseless and false". In its report, the NYT estimated that India's "real" Covid death toll could be way higher than what has officially been reported.

Govt: 24 States see dip in active Covid cases since last week

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India is witnessing a downswing in the second wave of Covid-19 and hopefully it will be sustained even when restrictions are gently, systematically and cautiously relaxed, the Government said on Thursday as it pointed out a steady decline in new infections recorded in the country for the last 20 days, with 24 States witnessing a dip in active cases since the last week.

The country continues to note stabilisation of second wave in most parts, both by the number of cases and positivity rate, and despite a sustained and high overall testing coverage which is "reassuring", NITI Aayog member (Health) V K Paul said at a Press conference here.

"We are achieving this in face of very significant restrictions in most states in addition to other tools and operations, including testing and Covid appropriate behaviour and vaccination efforts. Nonetheless, it is reassuring that we are on the downswing of the second wave and we do hope and believe that it will be sustained even when restrictions are gently, systematically and cautiously opened up," he said.

Health ministry Joint Secretary Lav Agarwal said while Covid-19 testing has



increased manifold, a steady decline in weekly COVID-19 positivity rate has been seen since the last three weeks.

Paul said the vaccination pace should pick up in July. "We have a total of 51.6 crore doses, a large proportion of it is available and has to be used in an efficient manner. Bharat Biotech which started with 90 lakh capacity is ramping up and it is well within our expectation that it can reach ten times the production level to 10 crore per month in the next few months," he said.

Paul said similarly the Serum Institute of India is also ramping up vaccine production from 6.5 crore per month to 11 crore or even more in months to come. Other vaccines in the pipeline are also moving close to increasing supplies such as Sputnik, Zydus and Genova vaccines so steady progress is being made.

Foreign vaccine makers' demand for legal shield in India leaves Govt in fix

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Government is in a fix over the insistence of foreign vaccine manufacturers, US-based Pfizer and Moderna and J&J, on providing indemnification or protection from compensation claims in case of adverse events before they roll out the jabs in India, given that the Indian companies, Bharat Biotech and Serum Institute of India (SII), do not enjoy any such legal shield.

In other words, any company providing vaccines here will have to follow the rules of the land. The SII's indemnification request was turned down by the Government last year itself.

The foreign vaccine makers want that "if a person experiences severe side-effects after being administered the Covid-19 jab, he/she cannot sue Pfizer or Moderna in the US as they have been granted immunity from liability. The person cannot slap a legal case against the US government for damages either," experts explained, adding that the protection is for the next three years. To date, India has not provided any manufacturer of a Covid-19 vaccine indemnity against the costs of compensation for any severe side effects.

The experts, however, said that the Government needs to

make up its mind quickly as dilly dallying in the matter would only further delay in achieving the vaccination targets. Amid acute shortage of vaccine availability, the Government on Thursday claimed that it is moving towards ensuring at least one crore vaccinations per day soon.

"We made providing 43 lakh doses in a day possible. We should bring it up to 73 lakh in the next 3 weeks. We should make a system to achieve it," said Dr VK Paul, Member-Health, Niti Aayog. The Government is under intense pressure to provide the vaccine to the people and has been maintaining that as soon as Pfizer indicated vaccine availability, one can hope for its earliest possible import.

Foreign Minister S Jaishankar too is in the US especially for the purpose of ensuring vaccine imports.

According to sources, Pfizer has told the Government that its jab has shown "high effectiveness" against the SARS-CoV-2 variant prevalent in India and on people of Indian ethnicity or nationality, while it is suitable for everyone aged 12 years or above and can be stored for a month at 2-8 degrees.

Online medical consultation for Armed forces' personnel, veterans launched



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Thursday launched an online medical consultation platform to ensure hassle-free health services for Armed forces' personnel and veterans.

Speaking after the virtual launch, he said the online outpatient platform will ensure widespread access to quality health services in remote areas besides reducing the load on the hospitals.

"This is a very important step taken at a very critical time for the health of service personnel," the Defence Minister said even as he outlined that the Central Government was constantly monitoring the Covid-19 situation and taking appropriate steps to fight it.

He said the second wave of the disease is more dangerous and unpredictable than the first one and lauded the role of

the armed forces in contributing to the national effort to meet this challenge.

He pointed out that the Central Government has taken steps to improve the supply of medicines, medical oxygen and other equipment through high-level committees and a group of ministers.

Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) General Bipin Rawat, Army Chief General M M Naravane and Navy Chief Admiral Karambir Singh were among those who attended the event.

Rajnath also talked about the anti-Covid oral drug 2-deoxy-D-glucose (2-DG) developed by the Institute of Nuclear Medicine and Allied Sciences (INMAS), a leading laboratory of the DRDO, in collaboration with Dr Reddy's Laboratories (DRL), Hyderabad.

He said the drug has yielded good results.

Chiefs of IB, RAW get 1 yr extension of service

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Centre on Thursday granted a one-year extension of service to incumbent chiefs of Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) and Intelligence Bureau (IB), Samant Kumar Goel and Arvind Kumar respectively, who were due to retire on June 30.

Goel, a 1984-batch IPS officer from Punjab cadre, would continue to be the Secretary of Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) for a

one-year period beyond the presence tenure, according to an official order.

Likewise, Kumar, an IPS officer of Assam and Meghalaya cadre, will continue as Director of Intelligence Bureau for a period of one year after June 30.

The extensions were cleared by the Appointments Committee of Cabinet, read the separate orders, signed by secretary of the ACC and Establishment Officer Srinivas R Katikithala.



The Minister of State for Culture and Tourism (Independent Charge), Prahlad Singh Patel, attends a discussion on Dubai Expo, through video conferencing, in New Delhi on Thursday. President, ICCR, Dr Vinay Sahasrabudde and the DG, ICCR, Dinesh K Patnaik also seen

Call for rolling out of unified health interface given

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday chaired a high-level meeting to review the National Digital Health Mission (NDHM) that suggested that a Unified Health Interface (UHI) should "soon be rolled out."

Chairing the meet, the Prime Minister said that the mission will bring ease of living for citizens as they can avail a large number of health services via it. The meeting expected that the UHI would be soon rolled out.

"It will allow users to search, book and avail necessary healthcare services such as



tele-consultations or laboratory tests. The system will ensure that only verified healthcare providers join the

ecosystem", a statement from the Prime Minister's Office said.

This interface is likely to

It will allow users to search, book and avail necessary healthcare services such as tele-consultations or laboratory tests

"unleash a digital health tech revolution with innovations and various services for citizens. In such a manner, healthcare infrastructure and human resources can also be utilised in a more efficient manner across the nation", the statement said.

On August 15, 2020, during his Independence Day address, Prime Minister had announced the launch of NDHM. Since then, the digital

modules and registries have been developed and the mission has been rolled out in six Union Territories.

So far, nearly 11.9 lakh Health IDs have been generated and 3106 doctors and 1490 facilities have registered on the platform.

The meeting also discussed the concept of UPI e-Voucher developed by National Payment Corporation of India (NPCI).

This digital payment option will enable financial transactions linked to specific purposes which can be used only by the intended user. It can be useful for targeted and efficient delivery of various gov-

ernment schemes and an immediate use of UPI e-Voucher could be healthcare services.

Modi directed that steps be expedited to expand operations under the NDHM. He observed that though the technical platform and building up of registries are inevitable essential elements, the utility of the platform to the citizens will be visible only by way of enabling citizens across the country to avail of services like tele consultation with a Doctor, availing services of a lab, transferring test reports or health records digitally to the Doctor and paying digitally for any of the above services.

IN INDIA Cyclones killed 40K in 50 yrs: Study

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In the last 50 years (1970-2019), as many as 117 cyclones hit India and claimed over 40,000 lives, according to a study on extreme weather events. However, the study stated that the mortality rate due to tropical cyclones has come down significantly over the past 10 years.

A total of 7,063 extreme weather events killed 1,41,308 people during the 50-year period in the country, which included 40,358 (or 28 per cent) due to cyclones and 65,130 (a little over 46 per cent) due to floods, the study said.

The research paper published earlier this year has been authored by M Rajeevan, Secretary of Ministry of Earth Sciences, along with scientists Kamaljit Ray, S S Ray, R K Giri and A P Dimri. Kamaljit Ray is the lead author of the paper.

The study assumes significance against the backdrop of the back-to-back severe cyclones, Tauktae and Yaas, hitting India's western and



eastern coasts respectively, leaving a trail of destruction.

The study stated that the number of deaths due to cyclones has come down significantly in the last two decades, whose latter years have witnessed much improvement in the IMD's weather forecast abilities.

In 1971, the study said, four tropical cyclones developed in the Bay of Bengal within a period of about six weeks. Of these, the most destructive one struck the Odisha coast. About 10,000 people were reported to have lost their lives, and more than one million rendered home-

less, it said.

In 1977, two tropical cyclones developed over the Bay of Bengal during November 9-20, out of which the second one (Chirala cyclone) which was a very severe tropical cyclone with a wind speed of the order of 200 kilometres per hour along

with tidal waves 5 metres high, hit coastal Andhra Pradesh, the study said.

The estimated mortalities were around 10,000 and total damage to infrastructure and crops was more than USD 25 million. The decade from 1970-1980 alone recorded over 20,000 mortalities due to cyclones.

"Overall, the analysis showed that the mortality rate associated with tropical cyclones decreased by almost 88 per cent in the last decade (2010-2019) in comparison to the earlier decade (2000-2009) despite the significant increasing trend of severe tropical cyclones during the post-monsoon season over Bay of Bengal," the paper stated.

India Meteorological Department Director General Mrutunjay Mohapatra said the reason for declining fatalities during cyclones over the years was due to improvement in IMD's forecast abilities. Earlier, storm surge was the major reason behind fatalities, but now deaths are caused mostly by the collapse of a tree or a house now, he said.

Monsoon to hit Kerala on May 31, says IMD

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) on Thursday said that conditions are favourable for the onset of monsoon over Kerala around May 31, a day ahead of its usual date.

"Monsoon has advanced into some more parts of Maldives-Comorin area, Southwest and east-central Bay of Bengal, most parts of Southeast Bay of Bengal and some parts of west-central Bay of Bengal on Thursday," the IMD said. The normal onset date of seasonal rains over the Indian mainland is June 1.

The IMD has warned that strong winds attaining speeds of 40 to 50 kmph are likely over the Kerala coast till May 29. According to Skymet, a private weather forecaster, cyclone Yaas expedited the advance of monsoon over these parts and the next stop is mainland India anytime soon. Monsoon countdown starts amidst a change of guard over the Pacific Ocean. A La Nina advisory is no longer in effect



and ENSO neutral conditions are present.

Due to Yaas, Nawana received 28 mm rainfall, Joda-27 mm, Joshipur-25 mm, Lathikata-21 mm, Jhumpura-21 mm, Champua-20 mm, Keonjhar-20 mm, Panposh-20 mm, Basudevpur-19 mm, Chandikhol-17 mm, Karanjia-17 mm, Rajgangpur-14 mm, Mandira Dam-14 mm, Swam-Patna-13 mm, Deogarh-13 mm, Tiring-12 mm, Udala-11 mm, Gurundia-11 mm, Barkote-11 mm, Hatadihi-11 mm, Tihidi-11 mm, Pallahara-11 mm in Odisha.

Monsoon is likely to arrive over Kerala on May 31 a day ahead of its normal arrival date of June 1, with a possible

error margin of plus/minus four days, IMD had said on May 14.

The monsoon season, which begins on June 1, is crucial for summer crops and brings about 70% of India's annual rainfall. It is critical to the country's agriculture, which is one of the mainstays of its economy. Monsoon spurs farm produce and improves rural spending. It is the lifeline for about 60% of the country's net cultivated area, which has no irrigation. The monsoon impacts inflation, jobs, and industrial demand. Good farm output keeps a lid on food inflation. Ample harvests raise rural incomes and help inject demand into the economy.

Didi to discuss cyclone damage with PM today

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

As it takes a natural calamity to bring Narendra Modi and Mamata Banerjee to return to the dialogue table the Prime Minister and Bengal Chief Minister will hold a brief discussion on the extent of damage left by super cyclone Yaas that on Wednesday hit coastal Bengal and Odisha.

The duo will speak to each other for the first time since the Trinamool Congress roared back to power on May 2 defeating BJP in the State Assembly elections which saw unprecedented washing of dirty linen in public.

The Prime Minister would meet her on Friday at Kalaikunda airport from where he would fly off to Delhi after making an aerial survey of Odisha and parts of East Midnapore, Banerjee on Thursday said.

Bengal might have suffered a loss in the vicinity of ₹15,000 crore in the super cyclone that conspired with a full moon high tide to burst 134 dams and inundate large tracts of land with saline water leaving lakhs of fishes dead, rendering thousands of village ponds useless and reducing thousands of hectares of land unworthy of cultivation in four

districts of East Midnapore, two 24 Parganas and Howrah the Chief Minister informed.

"The Prime Minister is coming to Bengal tomorrow. He will first go to Balasore, Jaleswar and Bhadrak in Odisha and after that, he will land at Kalaikunda in West Midnapore via Digha in East Midnapore to assess the extent of damage, due to cyclone Yaas. He will meet me at Kalaikunda" enroute to Delhi, Banerjee said adding after her meeting with the Prime Minister she would herself go to Digha from where she would make an aerial survey of East Midnapore the next day.



People collect wood from a fallen tree at a cyclone Yaas affected coastal area of Digha in East Midnapore district on Thursday PTI

Before meeting Modi the Chief Minister Banerjee would make an aerial survey of the villages of North and South 24

Parganas. Then, I will visit Sagar Island at South 24 Parganas to review the damage and devastation due to post Yaas," Banerjee said adding though it would not be immediately possible to calculate the extent of damage "a preliminary ground report received by me puts it at about ₹15,000 crore considering the loss of both moveable and immovable properties."

The Chief Minister who on Thursday sanctioned an initial government grant of ₹1,000 crore said her Government would start "Duarey Traan" (relief at doorsteps) programme "where a task force of

government officials will first visit the localities to assess the damage and accept application forms from the people seeking help and then "after making an assessment the Government will directly send the relief amount to the accounts of the people affected."

Interestingly in an apparent bid to avoid controversy the local TMC leadership and panchayats are being kept out of the monetary part of the relief programme one was told. The whole process of assessment of loss and granting of relief would take a month's time, the Chief Minister said adding sectors like agriculture, elec-

tricity, fishery, animal husbandry, horticulture were the worst affected due to the cyclone.

To avoid allegations, "regarding hoarding of relief materials that embarrassed the state administration," post cyclone Amphan last "this time the Chief Minister will personally instruct officials and supervise the relief operations and ensure that they reach the affected," a senior official at the CMO said adding while more than a one crore of people were affected by the cyclone "a total 15 lakh people have been evacuated and are presently kept at various shelter homes."

Covid claims 181 more lives in Kerala

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

Pinarayi Vijayan, Chief Minister, said that Covid-19 claimed 181 lives in Kerala in the 24 hours ended on Thursday 6 pm, while 24,166 new persons were diagnosed with the pandemic. Though there has been a fall in the number of new cases, the death toll continues to be high, said Vijayan.

Total number of Covid-19 patients across the State as on Thursday stood at 2,41,966 while 1,35,232 samples were tested. Across the State 89 health workers were afflicted with the pandemic. The Chief Minister said that the Test Positivity Rate as on Thursday was 17.87, which he said was a sign that situation was improving in the State.



Beneficiaries flout social distancing norms as they wait to receive the Covid-19 vaccine dose at a vaccination centre, in Guwahati on Thursday PTI

J&K logs 2,769 new cases

PNS ■ JAMMU

The Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir on Thursday recorded a positivity rate of 6.25 as it reported 4,352 recoveries and 2,769 fresh cases of coronavirus. For the second consecutive day less than 40 deaths were reported across J&K and the active case load stood at 42,272.

In Jammu division, eight out of 10 districts reported less than 100 cases of

coronavirus while Jammu district recorded 384 fresh cases and Reasi 102 cases.

A total number of 10 patients succumbed to the virus in Jammu district taking the tally of deaths to 1013 in Jammu district alone.

Compared to Srinagar district, the total number of active positive cases were still more in Jammu. According to the media bulletin, 6,631 patients were active positive while Srinagar district had 5,450 active positive cases..

Bengal extends Covid curbs till June 15

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Bengal will extend its lockdown-Bike restrictions for another fortnight beginning May 31, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee said on Thursday adding the Board exams for Classes CII and X would be held between last week of July and the last week of August.

"Though I do not consider it a lockdown and will rather like to call it restrictions as most of the establishments are open within limited hours the Government will extend such restrictions beyond May 31 till June 15 after which a review will be done," Banerjee said. Accordingly the markets will remain open from 7 till 10 am everyday whereas saree and jewellery shops will open between 12 and 3 pm.

Banerjee said. Allowing the jute mills will to function with additional 10 percent attendance Banerjee said "there is huge pressure for products from Punjab and so we are increasing the atten-

dance in jute industries by 10 percent and hence forward they will be allowed to work with 40 percent attendance."

Banerjee also said that the Government would allow construction sites to function provided they got their workers vaccinated in private hospitals and made their in-house living arrangements for them.

The transports including local trains and metro, schools, colleges and government and private offices would remain closed at least till June 15, the Chief Minister said even as the daily infections in Bengal reported a marked reduction from more than 19,000 per day to 16,800 cases on Thursday. There were 153 deaths in the past 24 hours.

BOARD EXAMS

Speaking about Board exams the Chief Minister said "Class XII exams will be held only for the compulsory subjects (numbering 15) in the last week of July." The

exams will be completed by the first week of August where after the Class X exams would start with reduced syllabus and for reduced hours and for compulsory subjects (numbering seven) only.

With this, West Bengal has become one of the first states in the country to announce dates for board exams. "We understand the importance of these two examinations and so we are the first state to announce the schedule. Higher Secondary examination (Class XII) will be held ahead of Madhyamik (Class X) because after Class XII the students have to go for higher studies and have to take all-India level entrance tests which is closed by that time," Banerjee said.

While 8.5 lakh students would appear for the HS exams 12 lakh will take the Madhyamik exams, Banerjee said adding both the tests would be of 1.5 hours instead of 3 hours with reduce d syllabus and question, the Chief Minister said. The Class X exam would be held in home centres.

J&K: Jail inmates to be vaccinated

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

The Jammu & Kashmir Prisons department is gearing up to launch an intensive vaccination drive for the jail inmates above 45 years of age across both the central jails in Jammu and Srinagar besides one dozen district and sub jails in the region.

According to official sources, "over 150 jail inmates have been tested positive for coronavirus in the recent weeks across different jails".

The highest number of 72 inmates tested positive while they were lodged in Udhampur district jail and 53 Rohingyas shifted to a holding centre set up inside sub-jail Hiranagar also tested positive recently. Chief Medical Officer, Kathua Dr Ashok Choudhary said, "all 53 Rohingyas have been kept under observation inside the holding centre and have been provided with Corona kits". No one needed hospitalisation as they were asymptomatic, he added.

According to DIG Prisons Dr Mohd Sultan Lone, "out of over 4500 jail inmates 316 prisoners were vaccinated across different jails till May 26". He said a vaccination camp was organised in Anantnag district jail on Thursday. He said it's a continuous process and we are on the job to vaccinate prisoners belonging to different age groups". So far, 38 prisoners have been vaccinated in Central jail Srinagar, 81 in Udhampur, 42 in Bhandarwah, 53 in Rajouri, 10 in Baramulla, 28 in Pulwama, 58 in Kathua and 6 in Reasi jail premises.

Earlier, a high powered committee headed by Justice Ali Mohd Magrey of Jammu & Kashmir High Court had suggested the UT administration to decongest the prisons in the wake of prevailing circumstances.

The Committee was constituted by the Jammu & Kashmir Government following an order by the Supreme Court on March 23, 2020 and May 7, 2021, directing the States and the UTs to decongest jails to ensure social distancing among the prisoners.

'Only Centre can help Tiruppur to become global capital of casual wear'

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ CHENNAI

The knitwear units in Tamil Nadu's Tiruppur (known as the Knitwear Capital of India) have the potential to emerge as the global capital of casual dress manufacturing if Government of India comes forward to help the entrepreneurs facing liquidity problems caused by the pandemic, according to a leading industrialist.

"As on today, the knitwear industry in Tiruppur directly employs six lakh workers. The pandemic and its impact have opened new vistas to the industry with which we can additionally employ three lakh workers in the next three years if the Government of India listens to our pleas and help us by offering a few crores as loans," Raja M Shanmugham, an industrialist and president of Tiruppur Exporters' Association, told The Pioneer. He said the TEA has written to Finance Minister Nirmala Sitaraman highlighting the challenges and pleading for the extension of Emergency Credit Line Guarantee



Scheme (ECLGS) 3.0 to the sector.

S Sakthivel, executive secretary, TEA, said that there was huge demand for Tiruppur products from USA and Europe. "But the work force is moving out following the lockdown and the possibilities of it getting extended further," said Sakthivel. World all over the demand for casual wears is on the rise and this is the moment Tiruppur was waiting for, he said.

"The Centre has helped us by sanctioning as financial packages to tide over the crisis caused by the lock down of 2020. But now the Tamil Nadu Government has declared total lock down taking into



account the increasing number of persons afflicted with Covid-19. On Wednesday, Coimbatore had 4,268 new patients while Tiruppur had 1,880 new cases. The Chief Minister has said that he was not satisfied with the way things were moving and chances of the extension of lockdown cannot be ruled out," said Shanmugham.

He said that the Union Government should come forward to extend the ECLGS announced along with the Atmanirbhar Bharat Scheme to the knitwear industry also. "The scheme was meant to help specified sectors like tourism and hospitality to tide over the liquidity crisis. The Centre should take into

account the labour intensive Ready Made Garment Sector and extend the additional liquidity support of 20 per cent so as to quickly revive the MSMEs in RMG sector to save the industry and simultaneously protect the labour sector," pleaded Shanmugham.

He pointed out that though the pandemic has caused havoc across the world, it has also opened a window of opportunities for the casual wear manufacturing segment (mostly carried out in Tiruppur like cluster) of Ready Made Garment Sector. "The work from home culture has become a new trend and this is sure to energize the garment business. Due to this there is a lot of demand for casual-wear products like T shirts, trousers and track suits. Moreover we wish to emphasize that the Ready Made Garment Sector creates more jobs equivalent to or better than agriculture in our country. Considering this crucial importance, the Ready Made Garment Sector should be protected effectively to revive the country's economy," he said.

Centenarian gets Covid jab in Reasi

PNS

Jammu: A centenarian in Reasi district of the Jammu division on Thursday set an example for others to follow when he got his first dose of the Covid-19 vaccine during an inoculation drive organised by the district administration.

118-year-old Sher Mohammad of Mahore Tehsil in Reasi got the first jab of anti-corona vaccine. After taking the vaccine he feels others should follow the same to tackle the deadly disease.

"Today after getting the Covid-19 jab, I feel more confident and protected as the vaccine is the biggest shield against the deadly disease," he said.

Sher Mohammad appealed to the people of the district to come forward and get vaccinated against the infection. He said the vaccine has been advised by top doctors and experts and no one should pay heed to any rumour. "If I at this age can receive the dose, I feel others shouldn't shy away from getting vaccinated and pay no attention to hearsay," he said.

He also prayed for the good health and safety of the whole mankind.

He said till the pandemic is over people should continue to wear masks, maintain social distancing norms besides, follow other SOPs being issued by the Government.

Maha lifts ban on sale, consumption of liquor in Chandrapur

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

In what it called an effort to check the consumption of illicit liquor, plug the huge revenue loss of revenue to the state exchequer and curb the growing crimes, the Maharashtra Government on Thursday lifted the six-year-old ban on the sale and consumption of liquor in the naxalite-infested Chandrapur district in eastern Maharashtra.

Acting on a report submitted in March this year by a committee headed by retired Principal Secretary Ramnath Jha, the State Cabinet - at its weekly meeting presided over by Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray - decided to do

away with the ban on the sale and consumption of liquor in Chandrapur district where the liquor ban had come into effect from April 1, 2015.

"Keeping in view the increased consumption of illicit liquor and consequent increase in the crimes, the Maharashtra Government has lifted the ban on sale and consumption of liquor in Chandrapur district," the state government said in a news release after the State Cabinet meeting.

In its report submitted to the State Government on March 9, 2021, the Ramnath Jha committee stated that the administration had miserably failed in implementing the ban

on sale and consumption of liquor in Chandrapur district.

"Illicit liquor was easily available in the district in the black market. This liquor was dangerous to health. The sale of illicit liquor increased in black market. As a consequence, the state began to suffer huge losses in excise revenue. The criminals began to exploit the situation. In a disturbing development, women and children began to take part in the illicit liquor business in a big way," the Committee stated in its report.

Another reason based on which the Ramnath Jha-headed committee recommended the resumption of sale of liquor in Chandrapur district was

that the various NGO and citizens - who participated in a poll on the issue - favoured the lifting of the ban on the sale and consumption of liquor in the district. Quoting the crime statistics prior to and after the prohibition imposed in April 2015, the committee noted that in all 16,132 crimes were registered between 2010 and 2014. However the number of crimes shot up to 40,381 between 2016 and 2019.

While there were only 1,729 cases against women before the liquor ban, the number rose to 4,042 after the prohibition was implemented. In addition, it also came to light a large number of children were being used for the illicit liquor trade.

Maha logs 21,273 new corona cases

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

The daily Covid-19 infections in Maharashtra dropped to 21,273 on Thursday, even as the pandemic deaths came down to 884 in the State.

A day after the State recorded 1,137 fatalities - comprising 601 fresh deaths and 531 previous unaccounted deaths and 24,316 infections, the situation improved in the state as the infections dropped by 3043, the daily deaths rose by 884 - comprising 425 current deaths and 459 previous unaccounted deaths.

With 884 deaths reported on Tuesday, the total number of deaths in the state climbed from 91,341 to 92,225. Similarly, with 21,273 new infections, the total number of cases climbed from 56,50,907 to 56,72,180.

As 34,370 patients were discharged from the hospitals across the state after full recovery, the total number of people discharged from the hospitals since the second week of March last year increased from 52,41,833 to 52,76,203 on Thursday. The recovery rate in the State rose from 92.76 per cent to 93.02 per cent.

Lakshadweep Collector says 90% people support Admin's initiatives

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

Controversy over developmental activities in Lakshadweep islands took a new turn with S Asker Ali, collector cum district magistrate and leaders of Opposition political parties contradicting each other. Collector Ali who flew down to Kochi on Thursday to brief the media was shown black flags by the CPI(M) activists demanding immediate stoppage of all developmental activities in the archipelago.

A disclosure by a top marine scientist in Kerala that sea cucumber was being smuggled out of the islands has added to the chaos. Resentment by non-BJP political parties is

increasing day by day and chances of a flare up cannot be ruled out, said intelligence officials. Collector Ali said that 90 per cent of the population was with the Administrator's initiatives to develop the islands. "It is true that the administration has ordered beef and chicken off the menu from the meals served the island's school. This has been done to encourage the children to switch over to fish and eggs which are more protein-rich than beef and chicken," he told reporters.

He said the administration's decision to demolish the sheds and buildings along the coastline was in line with the policies enacted with the sole intention of developing and

beautifying the islands and atolls. "The crime rate in the islands have gone up and that was why the Goondas Act was enforced. The administration is working on setting up three hospitals in the islands and works are progressing fast," said Collector Ali.

Dr S Mohammed Raffi, associate professor department of aquatic biology and fisheries, University of Kerala, said there was large scale smuggling of sea cucumber (a kind of marine animal) from Lakshadweep islands.

"These species, widely seen in atolls and coral reefs of Lakshadweep and Gulf of Mannar find use in preparing aphrodisiac drugs in China and

Japan," said Prof Raffi. Another marine scientist in Kochi said that the smuggling of sea cucumber from the islands was on the hike because of the premium commanded by the species in international market.

But leaders of opposition parties ranging from Congress, Muslim League and CPI(M) took to the streets on Thursday challenging the move of the administration under the pretext of development. "The demolition of buildings and sheds owned by fishermen was done without any notice. We do not want any kind of development proposed by administrator Praful Patel in these islands," said Komala Kasim, CPI(M) leader.

UP Govt extends ESMA provisions for 6 months

Lucknow: The Uttar Pradesh Government extended the provisions of Essential Services Maintenance Act (ESMA) banning all types of strikes and protests in Government-run offices and organisations across the State with immediate effect for the next six months.

According to a Government notification issued on Tuesday and made public on Thursday, all strikes in government offices and organisations have been banned for the next six months. "As the provision of ESMA expired on May 24, it was mandatory to extend it," a government official said. The ban will be enforced in all government departments, including all public services, authorities, corporations under the UP Government.

The Essential Services Maintenance Act, 1996 (ESMA) can be invoked by any government in their respective jurisdiction to prohibit striking employees from refusing to work on certain essential services which were necessary and important for maintaining normal life in the region.



Farmers harvest Okra in a field in Surat on Thursday PTI



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Ctrl+Delete?

The social media regulation rules have created a chasm between the believers and the naysayers

The Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021, are like a cat set among the pigeons. The Government says the rules have been enacted for effective oversight over social media platforms and to bring the digital media and streaming platforms under a strict regulatory net. The most important social media regulation rule in the last two decades has fuelled angry reactions not only from social media giants like WhatsApp, Facebook and Twitter, but also from the public. Those supporting the platforms say it is an attempt to force the companies to break their end-to-end encryption protocols for both receivers and originators. Some alarmists go to the extent of saying it heralds a surveillance State. Both are crying hoarse about the violation of the citizen's freedom of expression and right to privacy. The protests are focused on one particular ingredient in the new rules, that is, the Government asking the intermediary platforms to make provisions for "identification of the first originator of the information". The identification "is required only for the purposes of prevention, detection, investigation, prosecution or punishment of an offence related to sovereignty and integrity of India, the security of the State, friendly relations with foreign States, or public order or of incitement to an offence relating to the above or in relation with rape, sexually explicit material or child sexual abuse material punishable with imprisonment of not less than five years," a Government release says.



The Government defends the rules saying these are not enacted in isolation but have precedence in countries like the United Kingdom, US, Canada, New Zealand and Australia. The critical question is whether the rules violate the right to privacy. On August 24, 2017, the Supreme Court declared the right to privacy as a fundamental right protected under the Constitution and stemming from the fundamental right to life and liberty. The right, like all rights, comes with reasonable restrictions. Who will decide if the new tech rules are reasonable restrictions? There is a joint parliamentary committee which is to submit its report on the Personal Data Protection (PDP) Bill, 2019. It has been granted several extensions. The PDP Bill becomes relevant to the current debate because it has the potential to explain what precisely are the reasonable restrictions on the right to privacy. The right itself needs to be settled conclusively by courts and is not automatic. In the absence of a PDP law, the citizens will be in the dark as to what their specific privacy rights and obligations are with relation to sensitive personal data like consent, processing, sharing with prior consent, having a grievance resolution system and so on. The right to privacy by itself is nothing without the right, and the law, to enforce that right. For this, the PDP Bill has to see the light of the day and result in amendments to the Information Technology Act, 2000, as well as the latest set of rules in order to make them transparent.

PICTALK



Farmers harvest bhindi (Okra) in a field in Surat

PTI

In disarray

The vaccination 'cocktail' in UP is another reminder of all that is ailing our vaccination drive

The claims of the Union and the State Governments about the efficient and expedient handling of the vaccination campaign notwithstanding, the hydra of confusion and problems obdurately refuses to be slain. After a roller-coaster of accusations and counter-accusations, revolving mainly around vaccines, or rather the lack of those, now fresh colours of fungus in human body are being discovered almost every other day. Even if we were to leave the state of vaccine preparedness to the experts, the element of human error or oversight occasionally creeps in and adds to the already existent apprehensions of "vaccine hesitancy". In the latest such case, nearly 20 villagers in Uttar Pradesh's Siddharthnagar district were recently given a vaccine "cocktail" — the first shot they received was of Covishield and the second dose happened to be Covaxin. Of course, a probe into the incident has been ordered but instances like this go a long way in germinating the seeds of doubt into the minds of the common populace that is already scared and confused, what with the various variants of the virus and multi-coloured fungus being discovered inside human bodies.



To precipitate matters, the left hand of the Government is bereft of the knowledge what the right hand is up to. We have seen it with regard to the announcement of opening up of the inoculation drive for all individuals in the 18-44 age bracket. Almost immediately, however, several States announced that they were not yet ready for this kind of vaccination experience, largely on account of the shortage of vaccines. For its part, the Centre steadfastly maintained that there was no dearth of jabs while, at the same time, several States were crying hoarse that they had been in the lurch since the foreign manufacturers were taking the plea that they were authorised to do business only with the Centre and not with individual States. Then, as mentioned in these columns recently, there's the debate whether it's finally time to hold class XII Board examinations. Compounding the matter is the fact that all stakeholders, mainly the students, teachers, the support staff at examination centres and even the parents, need to be vaccinated. Even if arrangements are made to provide all such candidates their first shot over the next fortnight, they would still have to wait three months for the second dose. The Governments must be on guard against any information misfiring or negligence.

When institutions are out on a limb

The systemic institutional breakdown since Modi took office as the PM and its adverse impact on pandemic response are costing the nation



DEEPAK SINHA

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's appearance and theatrics on television of late hardly inspire confidence, appearing to suggest instead that enormous and prolonged stress he faces is, expectedly, taking its toll. Banal platitudes can never cover up for the lack of foresight, incompetence and callousness displayed till now. Cynics suggest that much of this is an act aimed at garnering sympathy and attempting to portray purposeful and strong leadership. Indeed, in hindsight, one can surmise that his single-minded focus on self-preservation necessitated his winning the Bengal election at all costs. In the process, he acceded sovereign territory to the Chinese and ignored all warnings on the likely impact of COVID's second wave, with disastrous results. Ironically, he still lost Bengal and, in the process, destroyed his carefully cultivated image of being a strong and decisive leader.

The likelihood of being confronted by a pandemic had been visualised two decades earlier, and appropriate processes and structures positioned for its control and mitigation. A cursory examination of the functioning of these institutions, this past year, will give us clarity on what went wrong and those responsible for the lapses.

The National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) is the apex body responsible for "framing policies, laying down guidelines and best practices for coordinating a holistic and distributed approach to disaster management". Its responsibility extends to preparedness and capacity building, including requisite measures to prevent and mitigate disasters. Its importance can be gauged from the fact that its chairman is the Prime Minister, supported by a vice-chairman, of Cabinet rank, and nine other members.

The National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) is the second pillar of this triad and is the lead agency for formulating responses to control and mitigate pandemics. It is tasked to "undertake investigations of disease outbreaks... employing epidemiological and diagnostic tools". In addition, it provides informa-



tion, diagnostic and emergency preparedness training to officials and is responsible for applied research, quality testing of vaccines and other biologicals and providing laboratory support to the investigation and control of outbreaks.

Its third pillar is the Indian Council for Medical Research (ICMR), which is a research-oriented institution responsible for "the formulation, coordination and promotion of biomedical research". This amounts to "undertaking, coordinating and implementing medical research and translating medical innovations in to products/processes and introducing them in to the public health system".

In theory, the NDMA ensures that the country is prepared to deal with any disaster that may occur, and provides the necessary coordination, expertise and inputs to the Governments when needed. In the event of a pandemic, the NCDC sends out teams, conducts epidemiological research and suggests the best course of action. The ICMR, on receipt of epidemiological data, undertakes research into vaccines and processes to counter the virus and also assists in their marketing, after necessary approvals have been obtained. In practice,

however, politics and turf wars have ensured a disparate response, leaving citizens to fend for themselves.

Clearly, Modi had little time for the NDMA because, since the commencement of his first term, he emasculated it completely. He downgraded the vice-chairman's post to the level of Cabinet Secretary and politicised its functioning by forcing the incumbent vice-chairman and members to resign on the specious grounds of having been appointed by the previous Government, thereby ensuring that the available experience, continuity and expertise were lost. He compounded this by failing to appoint a vice-chairman, which remains vacant to this date, and appointing only five of the authorised nine members. The final nail in the coffin was to replace it, with the NITI Aayog being made the lead for providing forecasting, coordination and guidance of our response, something it was ill-equipped to do, with neither the experience nor the expertise required.

As for the scientific thrust of our response to this pandemic, it appears that the NCDC was divested of its lead role by the ICMR which, as we have seen, has a completely dif-

ferent role. As a result, it has been overwhelmed and has been unable to do justice in fulfilling its own mandate. The reasons for this lopsided approach appear to be rooted in bureaucratic wrangling. Probably the fact that the Director General (ICMR) is also a Secretary in the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, under which the NCDC also functions, and would obviously have more influence within the Government may have something to do with it.

In the final analysis, this once proud nation has been brought to its knees, thanks to one man's culpability and inability to see beyond his own selfish needs. His failure to comprehend the importance of institutions and their role in ensuring effective and efficient governance has resulted in avoidable fatalities. His enablers too must share much of the blame and be held accountable, be they Cabinet colleagues, bureaucrats or uniformed senior officers.

(The writer is a military veteran, who is a Visiting Fellow with the Observer Research Foundation and Senior Visiting Fellow with The Peninsula Foundation, Chennai. The views expressed are personal.)



THE FINAL NAIL IN THE COFFIN WAS TO REPLACE THE NDMA, WITH THE NITI AAYOG BEING MADE THE LEAD FOR PROVIDING FORECASTING, COORDINATION AND GUIDANCE OF OUR RESPONSE, SOMETHING IT WAS ILL-EQUIPPED TO DO, WITH NEITHER THE EXPERIENCE NOR THE EXPERTISE REQUIRED

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

RAMDEV SHOULD BE TAUGHT A LESSON

Sir — Yoga guru Ramdev claiming that the ayurveda stream of medicine is not only superior to allopathy in every respect but going on to undermine the widely-accepted allopathic system as defunct is ridiculous. His brazen remarks questioning the allopathic system and poking fun at the treatment of COVID cases, when the whole world is convinced that allopathy offers the cure, is atrocious and unpardonable.

In fact, Ramdev rubbishing the allopathic medical system to highlight the superiority of the ayurvedic system is wrong because allopathy has made giant strides with great innovations and inventions, besides unprecedented technological advancements, for curing dreaded diseases and ailments. Even today, most people turn to allopathy for cure through drugs, radiation and surgery despite adopting alternative medical systems in their everyday life.

Though Ramdev's incongruous remarks against allopathy have been severely criticised by the Ministry of Health and he has since apologised, he cannot be allowed to go scot-free. Suitable action as per due process of the law is imperative to not only prevent him from making uncharitable remarks but also to make him understand that all medicinal systems work by treating patients within their own spheres but none is inferior or superior to the other.

KR Srinivasan | Secunderabad

DOUBLE TRAGEDY IN COASTAL AREAS

Sir — In the midst of the second wave of COVID-19, Cyclone Yaas is battering Bengal and the Odisha coast and high alert has been sounded in Jharkhand. Nearly two crore people in these States have been affected.

In West Bengal alone, more than three lakh houses have been damaged. Generally speaking, cyclones and other such natural calamities are increasing around India's coastlines. Many countries have strengthened their coastal lines by building dams. Why don't we start working to tackle each and every problem that faces us today or is likely to vex us in the near future? Though the Government has arranged

Need to save Lakshadweep



The policy decisions being taken by the Union Government through the instrumentality of Administrator Praful Patel, a hard-core BJP member, to bring about sweeping and far-reaching changes in Lakshadweep do not augur well for the future of the archipelago in the Arabian Sea. They have met with stiff opposition since they spell disaster for Lakshadweep's residents and its ecology.

The local residents are particularly worried over the prospect of their eviction from their homes. The Lakshadweep Development Authority (LDA) is vested with the power to acquire land without the consent of land own-

ers on the pretext of "development". There is no guarantee that the administration won't dispossess families of their shelter to be able to pander to the real estate lobby. The promotion of tourism is being cited to justify infrastructural development on a big scale. But then it should not be at the cost of what makes Lakshadweep an attractive tourist destination — its scenic beauty. Lakshadweep is ecologically fragile to endure big projects, big roads or big buildings. As a region susceptible to climate change, Lakshadweep must be protected and not imperiled.

The inhabitants of Lakshadweep predominantly profess Islam and speak Malayalam. They have their own distinct culture, customs and identity. Evidently, the beef ban, removal of non-vegetarian food from the free mid-day meal scheme and the nod to liquor sale are aimed at causing disruption to their way of life. The communities there mainly depend on fishing for their livelihood but the administration cites violation of the coastal zone regulations to justify the demolition of fishing gear sheds. It is in this context that the 'Save Lakshadweep' campaign resonates with people and wins their support.

G David Milton | Tamil Nadu

POLITICOS TO BLAME FOR COVID CASES

Sir — This has reference to the article "Do the States have any responsibility?" (May 26). The Centre was blamed for everything that went wrong during the first wave, with many States pointing the finger towards it for the

spread of the virus and subsequent deaths. Even during the second wave, it is being blamed for the shortage of oxygen, hospital beds, jabs and lockdowns. Earlier, many States were against lockdowns. But now that the ball is in their court, they have ordered stricter lockdowns. There is also substantial delay in procuring jabs by the States. Do they have no responsibility towards citizens? Unfortunately, the virus' spread and the related fatalities are merely being politicised, with the Opposition parties seeking to pin down the Centre on various issues. However, many States have either wasted the vaccines or hoarded these to make a fast buck.

Sravana Ramachandran | Chennai

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

SOUND BITE

Trials on children are going to begin soon. However, vaccinating children should not be decided on the basis of panic in WhatsApp groups.



NITI Aayog member

— Vinod K Paul

An international peace track should be launched in the Middle East aimed at ending the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories.

Palestine President

— Mahmoud Abbas

Here's some cake for each and every one of you, for not just taking the time out to wish me, but for also sharing all the lovely clips, artwork and photos.

Actor

— Dilip Joshi

If they (England batsmen) are in doubt whether it's spinning or not, they just play sweeps and reverse sweeps. They don't read the ball from my hand.

India spinner

— Axar Patel

Though the infection rate has reduced, the State Government has decided to continue with the restrictions for another 15 days.

West Bengal Chief Minister

— Mamata Banerjee



FIRST COLUMN

IT'S TIME TO MOVE WHEELS OF JUSTICE

Mobile courts are a viable solution to address the rising pendency of cases



RUPESH DUTTA

As the dust settles on the COVID-induced havoc, every sector will take its own sweet time to regain normalcy. The Indian judicial system that is overburdened with a heap of pending cases will be added with an additional lakh number of petitions from the time courts have stopped in-person hearings since the breakout of the pandemic.

While several courts, including the Supreme Court and High Courts in most states, have switched to online hearing, a major chunk of lawyers in district and subordinate courts still struggle to adjust in the system and continue to await the conventional hearing system to be reinstated.

This is a great opportunity where the concept of Mobile



courts can be instilled to cope up with the pending petitions especially in the district and subordinate courts. The concept of Mobile Court was launched in Haryana's Mewat district in 2007 by former Chief Justice K G Balakrishnan and the model was replicated in a few other states later on.

However, the initiative was not followed up subsequently. There was lots of trial and testing and it was said the exercise was expensive and cost resources. However, in the pandemic and post-pandemic stages, the concept needs to be revived. According to a media report, there has been a spike of 19 per cent in pendency of cases across India. The total cases pending as on March 25, 2020 was 3.68 crore which has increased to 4.4 crore as on April 15, 2021. That is an addition of over 70 lakh cases.

The government has to understand that mobile courts that were a boon during the pandemic and successfully implemented in countries like Somalia, Sierra Leone, Democratic Republic of Congo and Bangladesh (according to United Nation Development Programme), can also help reduce the burden of courts and expenses in normal times too.

Mobile Courts can be seen in alignment with Lok Adalats (People's Courts) as an alternate judicial system where the Alternate Dispute Redressal (ADR) mechanism has been successfully executed in various countries. In India roughly 91 per cent of the cases instituted in the Courts go to trial and only 9 percent of cases are settled without judicial agitation, whereas in the USA, more than 90 per cent of cases involving legal disputes are settled before they go for trial.

There stands a very simple question that if the institution of Lok Adalat has been acknowledged as an effective ADR agency and gained wide acceptability, then why cannot the mobile courts achieve the same. Such forums help settle disputes through negotiation, counseling, conciliation, settlement and compromise without going for court verdicts.

Online hearings are dependent on broadband facilities, like in rural areas, and the uneven digital awareness in the lower courts. So, this system will take time percolating down to the subordinate courts. Mobile Courts can fill the gap and take judiciary closer to the people. But the government also needs to back this system of judicial redressal, invest time and resources and allow it to flourish.

The system will prove to be a boon in the long run by aiding the judiciary in clearing cases faster and also help people settle disputes faster through the judicial system.

(The author is a law student at the University of Delhi. The views expressed are personal.)

Taking a central view of the famed Vista project

The gargantuan redevelopment plan, being touted as the 'face of the 21st century India', suffers from lack of transparency for which the Govt must own responsibility



PRIYADRSHI DUTTA

The Central Vista redevelopment- inclusive of constructing the New Parliament building- is a prestige project for the Modi government. New Delhi's Whitehall-equivalent promises to become the face of 21st century India. The Rs.20,000-crore project has come under fire from several quarters for being pursued vigorously even during the Pandemic. Work is in progress to meet the deadline despite the lockdown in Delhi. Photography of the site has officially been banned by CPWD, the executive agency of the project. This is simply an example of how non-transparency is the biggest bane of the project.

People's access to authorized information on the subject is critically limited. There is no dedicated web-portal for the project, or reference to the same on the websites of the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development or Central Public Works Department. Time and again questions pertaining to the project in Parliament have elicited vague and perfunctory replies.

On March 17, 2021 replying to a Starred Question (No.234) in Rajya Sabha, Minister of Housing and Urban Affairs Hardeep Singh Puri informed that the number of existing buildings to be remodelled and demolished under Central Vista Project had not been finalized. While the works for construction of the new Parliament Building and Central Vista Avenue had commenced, the Minister added, other components of the project were still in the planning stages.

A month earlier on February 4, 2021 the Minister had informed Lok Sabha (Unstarred Question No.548) that while North and South Blocks would be retained and would be retrofitted for being used as National Museum, no decision on the fate of any other building like Krishi Bhawan, Nirman Bhawan, Jawaharlal Nehru Bhawan etc was taken.

Even though the government is forthcoming on the idea of the project, it was reluctant to share the details. The Extraordinary Gazette notifications dated March 20, 2020 and October 20, 2020 pertaining to change of land use pattern of eight plots measuring more than 100 acres appear to be the only official statements holding some clues into the final picture. The new PM House would come up on 15-acres of plot near South Block. The public and semi-public facilities at Indira Gandhi National Centre for Arts measuring 54 acres would make way for government offices and recreational facilities (district park). Similarly, 15 acres of plot located on Church Road near DTC Central Secretariat terminal has been mutated to residential use apparently for MP accommodations.

The "public hearing" organized by the Delhi Development Authority (February 6-7, 2020) was concerned only with objections, if any, for change of land use. There was no comprehensive public discourse on the Central Vista redevelopment. Justice Sanjeev Khanna, in his dissenting Supreme Court verdict, on Central Vista in January, 2021 lamented the insufficient public consultation and public participation in the matter.

Whatever details of the project are in the public domain are due to media activism. Those, however, antedate the minister's statement in Rajya Sabha that except for the new Parliament building and the Central Vista Avenue rest of the components were in planning stage. According to the PIB Release



IN ANY PROJECT, THE PLANNING SHOULD PRECEDE EXECUTION. IT WAS EXPECTED THAT THE GOVERNMENT WOULD PLACE AN OFFICIAL LAYOUT PLAN OR 3D MODEL OF THE PROPOSED CENTRAL VISTA REDUCED TO THE SCALE OF 1:100. AT LEAST THE EXTERNAL DESIGN OF THE BUILDINGS AND THEIR PROPORTIONS SHOULD BE KNOWN TO THE PUBLIC IN AN AUTHENTIC MANNER

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



dated October 25, 2019 while the time line given to CPWD to complete the Central Vista Project was November, 2021 that of the new Parliament was March, 2022 and the common Central Secretariat by March, 2024. The pandemic might not be the only thing that would keep the project from being completed on time. One could foresee a host of logistic problems to which there are no easy answers. This appears to be the principal reason why the final decision of the project is being delayed.

Say, an edifice like Shastri Bhawan houses nine ministries. A demolition of the building would entail shifting of those offices to a temporary facility - or the permanent location needs to be completed before the existing building is demolished. How the government plans to relocate the offices in the existing buildings in the compass of the Central Vista is not known.

Also, one of the professed objectives of the Central Vista redevelopment is to concentrate various ministries and departments now spread across various locations in New Delhi in a Common Secretariat. It is a matter of opinion whether such concentration of ministries at one place and closer integration of Executive and Legislature (New Parliament) is symbolically and strategically desirable. No ministry is at present more than 10 km away from the Prime Minister's Office or Parliament. The CGO Complex, Lodhi Road is a major hub of central government offices. It is located

at a distance of mere 7 km from Parliament House, and linked by both Delhi Metro as well as road from the Central Vista. Even the West Block and East Block of R.K. Puram can be reached within half an hour. Do we need to relocate those offices to Central Vista as well? Clustering of more offices in the Central Vista will strain its four metro stations viz. Udyog Bhawan, Central Secretariat, Patel Chowk and Janpath during the peak hours.

In any project, planning should precede execution. It was expected that the government would place an official layout plan or 3D model of the proposed Central Vista reduced to the scale of 1:100. At least the external design of the buildings and their proportions should be known to the public in an authentic manner. The government must also reveal the stages in which it wants to redevelop the whole of Central Vista, and relocate the offices in them.

The Rs.971-cr New Parliament building lies at the heart of the Central Vista redevelopment. According to the government, the existing Parliament House, built in 1927, was never meant to serve as bicameral legislature. It is overstressed due to large scale retrofitting, lacks in office space and chambers for individual MPs. Though the current Parliament House will be retained as a heritage building, the new Parliament building is being constructed keeping in mind the future expansion of membership (in sync with India's population) under Article 82 of the Constitution.

There is a freeze on expansion/readjustment of seats for various states/UTs in Lok Sabha under Constitution (Forty Second) Amendment Act, 1976 that was extended by the Constitution (Eighty Fourth) Amendment Act, 2001. In the First Lok Sabha there were 489 elected members representing 401 constituencies (as there were some two-member and three-member seats) which shot up to 542 elected members representing as many constituencies in 1976. The next expansion is due not before 2034 elections. The expansion based on realistic population figures might push the membership of Lok Sabha in the neighbourhood of 1,000 with concomitant increase in membership of all state legislative assemblies, and therefore of Rajya Sabha. Thus, state legislative assemblies might also require new buildings to absorb increased capacity.

Even if one can manage the logistics, and bear the increased burden of salary, allowances etc of 1,000 MPs, would one be able to allow them the time to participate in the proceedings? At present, with a total of 545 members, the three annual sessions of Lok Sabha consume three months. If 1,000 members were to participate in the proceedings, then the sessions might extend close to six months. This will proportionately reduce the presence of the MPs in their own constituencies. A permanent freeze on the number of MPs will be more prudent, as they must serve their constituency irrespective of population size.

POINT COUNTERPOINT

THE LATEST REGULATIONS PENALISE DISSENT AND UNDERMINE GRASSROOTS DEMOCRACY. LAKSHADWEEP DESERVES A VISION THAT RESPECTS ITS PEOPLE'S WAY OF LIFE AND REFLECTS THEIR ASPIRATIONS.

— CONGRESS LEADER RAHUL GANDHI



THE IDEA IS TO PROPEL TOURISM IN LAKSHADWEEP ISLANDS, HELPING THE LOCAL ECONOMY AND PROVIDING BETTER JOBS FOR THE PEOPLE. THE PROTESTS DO NOT REFLECT THE SENTIMENT OF THE RESIDENTS OF THE ISLANDS.

— LAKSHADWEEP COLLECTOR S ASKER ALI

If citizens don't toe the line, let the authorities make them

There's a pressing need to ensure phased opening of lockdown and COVID-appropriate behaviour till the end of this year

There were four events which caught my attention in the past few days. First, a horse funeral where an entire village turned up, second, a midair marriage with guests jostling over each other for a photo opportunity, third and fourth being thousands of farmers protesting outside Delhi borders over central farm laws. At a time when the country is staring at over three lakh Covid-related deaths (reported), and epidemiologists warning of the ability of the virus to travel nearly 10 meters as suspended particles in air, it is really criminal to host any such activity when thousands across the country have lost their loved ones and bread-earners in the family.

This comes at a time when key trade and market chugging metros and cities around the country are planning a phased opening of the lockdown. The



KUMARDEEP BANERJEE

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

operative word for any administration in any part of the country is to prevent any such congregations and ensure strict penal action for any "non-Covid behavior". The only way many Asian countries were able to contain the pandemic to a certain extent was by strict enforcement of rules. To quote an example if one were to enter a mall in one of these countries, they would have to wear a wrist band at the entrance. This wrist band has time sensor and beyond a certain number of hours if the person is located in the same premises, the band sends and alarm and then the authorities take over. It may not be the best way to ensure safe shopping experiences for Indian shoppers but definitely serves as good template. If metros like Delhi or Mumbai need to have a semblance of normalcy in place, citizen behavior has to



change, if not voluntarily, then by regulation. The cities will have to keep some restrictions in place and properly executed at least till end of 2021. Any crowding in public spaces has to be discouraged, restrictions on number of travelers in public transport needs to continue. All of this sounds easy, but requires a slow and steady move towards re-designing urban spaces. If people have recreation centers, parks, work-spaces, schools and healthcare

available in, say, a five-kilometer area, they won't need to travel long distances. The effortshave to be honest and not populist moves of putting some glossy pictures of swanky recreational centers which lie under lock and key for most part of the year. State and local administrations with help from the central government have to build local healthcare infrastructure and sustainable self-sufficient neighborhoods. The concept of 'Work from

Anywhere' is here to stay, and with the second wave it is nearly going to be permanent for many in the working phase of their lives. Urban planners along with perhaps epidemiologists and climate experts need to sit down and assist government in reimagining and quickly rebuilding these new metros for tomorrow.

The other aspect is about vaccination. I happened to visit a couple of vaccination centers around Delhi in the

past few days and what I saw was best described as 'chefs trying to fly an aircraft'. The entire affair is ill-managed with support and security staff crowding and violating all social distancing norms. The other issue was no availability of vaccines at these centers. What is important is for politicians to understand that vaccines won't buy them votes in the long run. People rush to get free vaccines, but there is a considerable size of

the population that is willing to, and can afford to, buy a jab for about Rs 1500. The entire argument here is for Central and State governments to swallow their egos and work like a team. A transparent vaccination policy with availability and projections (accurate to the last few thousand doses), tracking mechanism for all centers in real time (if possible, on a dashboard) has to be created and shared. In the absence of a clear strategy and shifting goal posts on vaccinations, a slow hesitancy is creeping up. The evolving theory around the virus also suggests that people may have to take yearly shots (like they do for a flu) for a couple of more years over and above the two doses. The government has to prioritize vaccine and do so with a sense of one-country-all-jabbed.

Blinken claims progress in effort to boost Gaza truce

AP ■ CAIRO
US Secretary of State Antony Blinken wrapped up a two-day Mideast mission on Wednesday, winning valuable diplomatic support and hundreds of millions of dollars of pledges from Arab allies as he moved to shore up the ceasefire that ended an 11-day war between Israel and the Gaza Strip's militant Hamas rulers.
But the mission made little headway in resolving the deeper issues at the heart of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, including the tensions in the contested holy city of Jerusalem that played a key role in the latest war. After two days of talks with Israeli, Palestinian and Arab allies, Blinken acknowledged that any resumption of peace talks remained far off. In the meantime, he said he had made progress toward the more modest goals of cementing the ceasefire and rebuilding hard-hit Gaza.
"We see the ceasefire, not as an end, but as a beginning,

something to build on," Blinken told reporters in the Jordanian capital of Amman, where he met King Abdullah II.
He said the first priority was to meet the immediate needs of Gaza's 2 million people and then aim to "create better conditions in which we can try to move forward."
Earlier, he was in Egypt for talks with President Abdel Fattah el-Sissi. The visits came a day after intensive talks with Israeli and Palestinian leaders.
Blinken has vowed to "rally international support" to rebuild hard-hit Gaza while promising to make sure that none of the aid reaches Hamas. He also is trying to bolster Hamas' rival, the internationally recognized Palestinian Authority. In a boost to those efforts, the energy-rich Gulf country of Qatar pledged \$500 million to postwar reconstruction in Gaza. Qatar often serves as a mediator between Israel and Hamas and it has contributed hundreds of mil-

lions of dollars in aid to support past cease-fires.
In Cairo, Blinken met with el-Sissi for nearly two hours. Meeting with American diplomatic staff afterwards, he described Egypt as a "real and effective partner" that helped end the Gaza war.
El-Sissi spoke to President Joe Biden last week before and after the ceasefire was announced, and his government has also pledged \$500 million in assistance to Gaza.
"I think we both believe strongly that Palestinians and Israelis deserve equally to, to live in safety and security to enjoy equal measures of freedom, opportunity and dignity. And we're working on that together," Blinken said.
El-Sissi said the latest round of violence showed the urgency of resuming direct negotiations. In a statement, he called for "active American engagement" to bring Israel and the Palestinians back to the negotiating table.

UN rights chief: Israeli strikes in Gaza may be war crimes

AP ■ GENEVA
The UN rights chief said Thursday that Israeli forces may have committed war crimes in the 11-day war with the militant group Hamas that rules the Gaza Strip. Michelle Bachelet also called on Israel to allow an independent probe of military actions in the latest spasm of deadly violence.
The remarks came as the UN's top human rights body opened a one-day special session to discuss the "grave human rights situation" in Gaza, the West Bank and east Jerusalem. Bachelet said Hamas' indiscriminate rocket fire during the conflict was also a clear violation of the rules of war.
The UN high commissioner for human rights detailed to the Human Rights Council the "most significant escalation of hostilities since 2014" that left devastation and death in the Gaza Strip before a cease-fire last week.
The 11-day war killed at least 248 in Gaza, including 66



Heavy construction equipment is used to sift through rubble to uncover valuables before it is transported away from the scene of a building destroyed in an airstrike prior to a cease-fire that halted an 11-day war between Gaza's Hamas rulers and Israel on Thursday

children and 39 women. In Israel, 12 people also died, including two children.
"Air strikes in such densely populated areas resulted in a high level of civilian fatalities and injuries, as well as the widespread destruction of civilian infrastructure," Bachelet said.
"Such attacks may consti-

tute war crimes," she added, if deemed to be indiscriminate and disproportionate in their impact on civilians. Bachelet urged Israel to ensure accountability, as required under international law in such cases, including through "impartial, independent investigations" of actions in the escalation.
She also derided tactics of Hamas that included locating

The 11-day war killed at least 248 in Gaza, including 66 children and 39 women

AP ■ DUBAI
military assets in densely populated civilian areas, and firing rockets from them.
"These rockets are indiscriminate and fail to distinguish between military and civilian objects, and their use, thereby, constitutes a clear violation of international humanitarian law," Bachelet said.
"However, the actions of one party do not absolve the other from its obligations under international law."
She cautioned that unless the "root causes" of the violence are addressed, "it will certainly be a matter of time until the next round of violence commences with further pain and suffering for civilians on all sides."
The day-long debate involved personal accounts from Palestinians — such as that of a young woman journalist from the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood in east Jerusalem, an early flashpoint that triggered the violence — as well as statements from the council's 47 member states and also observer states.

UAE and Israel press ahead with ties after Gaza cease-fire

AP ■ DUBAI
Israel's top diplomat to the United Arab Emirates attended a ceremony in Dubai on the grounds of the Arabian Peninsula's first permanent exhibition to commemorate the Holocaust. Hours earlier, he'd attended an event establishing a joint venture between an Israeli and Emirati company.
The receptions on Monday were the clearest indication since a cease-fire in the Gaza Strip came into effect last week that the devastating 11-day war between Hamas and Israel and the violence that gripped Jerusalem and Al-Aqsa Mosque in the days preceding it have had no visible impact on the UAE's commitment to establishing deep ties with the state of Israel.
"What we see here is the exact opposite of what we see in Gaza... What we see here in the whole normalization process is a departure from the past," Israeli Ambassador Eitan Na'eh said.

GLOBE TROTTER

PAK TO HOST 'WORLD ENV DAY' ON JUNE 5
Islamabad: Pakistan for the first time will host the "World Environment Day" on June 5 and showcase the steps it has taken to deal with the issue of climate change. Prime Minister Imran Khan announced on Thursday.

Hong Kong changes electoral law, reduces direct public vote

AP ■ HONG KONG
Hong Kong's legislature on Thursday passed a Bill amending electoral laws that drastically reduces the public's ability to vote and increases the number of pro-Beijing lawmakers making decisions for the city.
The new law empowers the city's national security department to check the backgrounds of potential candidates for public office and sets up a new committee to ensure candidates are "patriotic."
The number of seats in Hong Kong's legislature will be expanded to 90, with 40 of them elected by a largely pro-Beijing election committee.
The number of legislators elected directly by Hong Kong voters will be cut to 20, from the previous 35.
The bill, passed by a 40-2 vote, was met with little opposition, as most of the legislators are largely pro-Beijing.

Nepal SC sends all petitions against House dissolution to Constitutional Bench

PTI ■ KATHMANDU
Nepal's Supreme Court on Thursday sent all the 19 petitions challenging the dissolution of the House of Representatives to the Constitutional Bench.
As many as 30 petitions, including one by the Opposition alliance, have been filed at the Supreme Court, challenging Friday's House dissolution by President Bidya Devi Bhandari and rejection of Opposition leader Sher Bahadur Deuba's claim by the President for the post of prime minister.
After a preliminary hearing on the 19 petitions, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court Chandra Shumsher Rana decided to send them all to the Constitutional Bench, the Kathmandu Post reported.
"A single bench of Chief Justice Rana has decided to send all the petitions related to the House dissolution to the Constitutional Bench," Kishor

China says politics behind US call for virus origin probe

AP ■ BEIJING
China on Thursday accused the Biden administration of playing politics and shirking its responsibility in calling for a renewed investigation into the origins of the coronavirus pandemic that was first detected in China in late 2019.
Foreign Ministry spokesperson Zhao Lijian said at a daily briefing that President Joe Biden's order showed the US "does not care about facts and truth, nor is it interested in serious scientific origin tracing."
Biden told US intelligence officials to redouble their efforts to investigate the origins of the pandemic, including any possibility the trail might lead to a Chinese laboratory.
After months of minimising that possibility as a fringe theory, the Biden administration is joining worldwide pressure on China to be more open about the outbreak, aiming to head off Republican complaints the president has not been tough enough to press China on alleged obstruction.
Republicans, including former President Donald Trump, have promoted the theory that the virus emerged from a laboratory rather than naturally through human contact with an infected animal in Wuhan, China. Zhao also said the US must open itself up to investigations into its biological laboratories, including at the military's Fort Detrick base.

Biden directs agencies to redouble efforts to trace origins of Covid-19

PTI ■ WASHINGTON
President Joe Biden has ordered the US intelligence agencies to redouble their efforts in investigating the emergence of the deadly Covid-19 pandemic and report back to him in 90 days, amid growing controversy about the virus's origins from a bio laboratory in China.
Covid-19 was first detected in the central Chinese city of Wuhan in late 2019. More than 168 million confirmed cases have since been confirmed worldwide and at least 3.5 million deaths reported.
The announcement comes after a US intelligence report found several researchers at China's Wuhan Institute of Virology fell ill in November 2019 and had to be hospitalised — a new detail that fuelled fresh public pressure on Biden to order a detailed investigation into the origin of the deadly virus.
"I have now asked the Intelligence Community to redouble their efforts to collect



and analyse information that could bring us closer to a definitive conclusion, and to report back to me in 90 days," Biden said in a statement on Wednesday.
As part of that report, the president said he has asked for areas of further inquiry that may be required, including specific questions for China.
"I have also asked that this effort include work by our National Labs and other agencies of our government to augment the Intelligence Community's efforts. And I have asked the Intelligence Community to keep Congress fully apprised of its work," he said.
Biden said the United States will also keep working

around like-minded partners with the world to press China to participate in a full, transparent, evidence-based international investigation and provide access to all relevant data and evidence.
Back in early 2020, when COVID-19 emerged, Biden had called for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to get access to China to learn about the virus so that the US could fight it more effectively.
"The failure to get our inspectors on the ground in those early months will always hamper any investigation into the origin of COVID-19," he said.
"Nevertheless, shortly after I became President, in March, I had my National Security Advisor task the Intelligence Community to prepare a report on their most up-to-date analysis of the origins of Covid-19, including whether it emerged from human contact with an infected animal or from a laboratory accident," the president said.

NORTHERN RAILWAY E-TENDER NOTICE
Sr. Divisional Electrical Engineer/Traction Distribution, DRM's Office, State Entry Road, New Delhi for & on behalf of President of India, invites open e-tender under single packet system for the under noted work.

Name of Work with its location	Balance work of Design, Supply, Erection, Testing and Commissioning of 25KV AC OHE Inconnection with Electrification of stabling line no. 8 & 9 at NDLS and Washing line at DLI.
Approximate Cost of work	₹ 78,95,480.05/- Earnest Money Deposit ₹ 0.00/-
E-Tender Bid online Submission period	08.06.2021 (00:00 Hrs.) to 22.06.2021 (15:00 Hrs.)
E-Tender Bid Submission Date & E-Tender Open Date & Time	22.06.2021 (15:00 Hrs.)
Website Particulars where complete details of tender documents can be seen	www.ireps.gov.in
E-Tender No.:	03A-TRD-NDLS-2021-22 Dated : 27.05.2021 1143/21

SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

IT DEVELOPMENT AGENCY (ITDA) Department of Information Technology
IT Bhawan, Plot No. IT-07, IT Park, Sahasradhara Road, Dehradun

Tender No. 01/ e-ITDA-PRJSDTP/2020-PROJECT-Ojo Director ITDA Dated: 27/05/2021
RFP (Request for Proposal) is being issued by ITDA, Department of IT, Uttarakhand to the reputed IT companies meeting the qualification criteria for Selection of Managed Service Provider for Third Party Audit of Uttarakhand State Data Centre. The RFP document can be downloaded from www.uktenders.gov.in from 28/05/2021. The Tender documents fee of Rs.5000/- (Rs. Five Thousand only) through Demand Draft/Banker's Cheque (non-refundable) favouring 'Director, ITDA' payable at Dehradun should be submitted along with the Bid. The parties willing to participate in the bidding will have to apply through the Electronic Tendering Procedure (e-Tendering) as per the guidelines issued by Government of Uttarakhand available on the above mentioned website under the link 'Bidders Manual Kit'. The amendments in RFP in future, if any, would be published in the website www.uktenders.gov.in only. No other notification would be published separately. Director, ITDA reserves the right to cancel the tender at any point of time, without assigning any reason thereof. **DIRECTOR**

KOVALAM INVESTMENT AND TRADING CO. LIMITED
Regd. Office : Premises Oswal Woollen Mills Limited, G.T. Road, Sheerpur, Ludhiana-141003 PB
CIN : L65910PB1981PLC023058, Ph. : +91-161-5066605
Website : www.ownmahar.com, www.kovalam.com, Email : kovalam@ownmahar.com

EXTRACT OF THE AUDITED FINANCIAL RESULTS FOR THE QUARTER AND FINANCIAL YEAR ENDED 31.03.2021

Sl. No.	PARTICULARS	Quarter Ended		Year Ended	
		31.03.2021 Audited	31.03.2020 Audited	31.03.2021 Audited	31.03.2020 Audited
1.	Total Income from Operations	85.52	71.08	445.22	54.89
2.	Net Profit/(Loss) from Ordinary Activities for the Period (before Tax, Exceptional and/or Extraordinary Items)	80.24	(187.56)	424.24	(231.12)
3.	Net Profit/(Loss) from Ordinary Activities for the Period before Tax (after Exceptional and/or Extraordinary Items)	80.24	(187.56)	424.24	(231.12)
4.	Net Profit/(Loss) from Ordinary Activities for the Period after Tax (after Exceptional and/or Extraordinary Items)	79.86	(141.09)	348.87	(179.03)
5.	Total Comprehensive Income for the period (Comprising Profit/(Loss) for the period (after tax) and Other Comprehensive Income (after tax))	(105.13)	(222.69)	1,657.56	(1,369.64)
6.	Equity Share Capital (Face Value of Rs. 10/-)	222.39	222.39	222.39	222.39
7.	Reserves (excluding Revaluation Reserves as shown in the Balance sheet of previous year)			3,554.56	1897
8.	Earning Per Share (EPS) Face value of Rs. 10/- each. (for Continuing and discontinuing operations) Basic & Diluted :-	3.59	(6.34)	15.69	(8.05)

Notes : 1. The above is the extract of the detailed format of Audited Financial Results for the quarter and financial year ended March 31, 2021 filed with the Stock Exchange under regulation 33 of the SEBI (Listing Obligations and Disclosures Requirements) Regulations, 2015. The full format of Audited Financial Results for the quarter and financial year ended March 31, 2021 are available on the Stock Exchange website i.e. www.bseindia.com and Company's website <http://www.ownmahar.com> and Investor.php 2. The Audited financial results of the Company for the Quarter and Financial Year ended 31st March, 2021 have been reviewed by the Audit Committee and subsequently approved by the Board of Directors in their meetings held on May 27, 2021. 3. The financial results are prepared in accordance with Indian Accounting Standards (IndAS) as prescribed under Section 133 of the Companies Act, 2013 and other recognised accounting practices and policies to the extent possible.

Place : Ludhiana
Date : 27.05.2021

For Kovalam Investment and Trading Co. Ltd.
Sd/- (Mohinder Kumar Jain)
Manager

France's Macron admits some guilt for Rwanda's genocide

AP ■ KIGALI
In a key speech on his visit to Rwanda, French President Emmanuel Macron said he recognises that France bears a heavy responsibility for the 1994 genocide in the central African country.
Macron solemnly detailed how France had failed the 800,000 victims of the genocide but he stopped short of an apology. France "was not an accomplice" in the genocide but ended up siding with Rwanda's "genocidal regime" and bore an "overwhelming responsibility" in the slide toward the massacres, the French leader said, speaking Thursday at the genocide memorial in the capital, Kigali.
"France has a role, a history and a political responsibility in Rwanda. It has a duty: That of looking history in the face and recognizing the suffering that it inflicted on the Rwandan people by favouring silence over the examination of truth for too long," Macron said.

Mali's military releases transitional Prez and PM

Bamako: Mali's military has released the transitional president and prime minister from detention, a top officer said Thursday. The release of President Bah N'Daw and Prime Minister Moctar Ouane came after they resigned Wednesday in the presence of international arbitrators who were in the West African nation to mediate the political crisis, according to Maj. Baba Cisse.
"Indeed, the former president and former prime minister were released," Cisse said.
The UN Security Council indicated the resignations were forced and demanded an immediate resumption of the civilian-led transitional government, saying after a closed meeting Wednesday that military personnel should return to their barracks. **AP**

BANARAS LOCOMOTIVE WORKS, VARANASI-221004
Bid No. - E-04/2021-2022 E-Tender Dated: 07.05.2021

E-Tenders are invited for & on behalf of the president of India for the supply of following items. Only E-offer will be accepted for which vendors must have class III Digital Signature and registration on IREPS. The details of tenders are in the following sequence S.No., Tender No.(Due Date), Description and Quantity. (1) 10211191, (08/06/2021), PIN (Clutch Drive Assy) to PL No. 16210580, 4289 Nos. (2) 10211197, (08/06/2021), Bearing Con Rod Upper to PL No. 16150193, 244 Nos. (3) 10211210, (08/06/2021), Roller to PL No.16210074, 9484 Nos. (4) 07211045, 02/06/2021, PL No. 77070100, Epoxy Polyurethane Surfacer, 3970 Litre. (5) 07211046, 31/05/2021, PL No. 77070057, PU Finish Thinner, 1520 Litre. (6) 07201722, 11/06/2021, PL No. 81031245, GLYCERINE, 280 Litre. (7) 06211057, (02/06/2021), CREW VOICE & VIDEO RECORDING SYSTEM FOR ELECTRIC LOCOMOTIVES sparcn: RSD2015/RESD2015/REV-1) TO PL.No. 29500163, 380 SET. (8) 08211128, Advertise Tender (07.06.2021), BOLT KIT FOR CORBODY ROD (CONSISTING OF 02 ITEMS) [EACH KIT CONTAIN LOCK BOLT 1-3/8" PT NO. 19331095-4 NOS. AND COLLER PT NO.17084301-4 NOS] AS PER DRG. NO.17660427ALTB. SPECN AS PER DRAWING. QTY.-19 Sets. (P.L.No. 17660427) (9) 05211028, (02.06.2021), Dry charge lead acid battery, PL.No. 67040056, 10 Nos. (10) 05201770, (04.06.2021), Premium/Welding rubber hose, PL No. 75036459, 870 Mtr. (11) 05211020, (04.06.2021), Brush paint 100 MM IS: 384, PL No. 71010397, 500 Nos. (12) 05211021, (04.06.2021), Brush paint 63 MM IS: 384, PL No. 71010361, 501 Nos. (13) 05211025, (04.06.2021), Solid wheel tyre 26"x7" X12", PL.No. 67010090, 37 Nos. (14) 05211026, (04.06.2021), Solid wheel tyre 23"x6.1/2"x10", PL.No. 67010088, 37 Nos. (15) 05211027, (04.06.2021), Dry charge lead acid battery, PL.No. 67040019, 6 Nos. (16) 05205197C, (07.06.2021), Transformer oil filtration cum centrifuging unite MOD-71909, 1 Nos. Note: For complete details of EMD and downloading of tender documents and hindl version also available at website www.blw.indianrailways.gov.in and www.ireps.gov.in. **PROB/BLWS-05** **PCMM**

www.ireps.gov.in Website:- www.blw.indianrailways.gov.in

PROCLAMATION REQUIRING THE APPEARANCE OF ACCUSED PERSON
See Section 82 Cr.P.C.
Whereas complaint has been made before me that accused person Vipin Kumar S/o Sh. Satendra Singh R/o 945, Sanjay Camp, Chanakya Puri, New Delhi has committed (or is suspected to have committed) the offence in case FIR No. 1163/2014, U/s 411 IPC has been registered at P.S. Vasant Vihar, New Delhi and it has been returned to a warrant of arrest thereupon issued that the said Vipin Kumar cannot be found and whereas it has been shown to my satisfaction that the said Vipin Kumar has absconded (or is concealing himself to avoid the service of the said warrant).
Proclamation is hereby made that the said Vipin Kumar accused of FIR No. 1163/2014, U/s 411 IPC, Vasant Vihar, New Delhi is required to appear before this court to answer said complaint on or before 16.08.2021.
By Order
Sh. Umesh Kumar,
Metropolitan Magistrate MM-07, Room No. 6,
DP/657/SW/2021-(Court Matter) Patiala House Court, New Delhi

UJVN Limited
H.O. : "UJJWAL", Maharani Bagh, GMS Road, Dehradun-248006
Telephone: 0135-2763808, Fax No. : 0135-2763508
CIN No. U40101UR2001SGC025866, Website: www.ujvnf.com

R.O. No. 388 e-Tender Notice Dt: 27-05-2021
Office of the Executive Engineer (M) Tiloth Power House, Uttarkashi invites online bid from interested parties. Brief summary of tender is given below:
Tender No. - 06/EE(M)/2021-22
Name of work- Hiring of 02 nos. non AC diesel vehicles for a period of one year.
Estimated cost - ₹ 7.11,803.00 (excluding taxes)
Date of availability of bid document on website- 31.05.2021 at 16:00 hrs.
Last date of submission of bid on website- 21.06.2021 at 16:00 hrs.
For fuller & further details, kindly visit e-procurement portal <http://uk.tenders.gov.in>. **Executive Engineer (M)**
"Avoid Wasteful use of Electricity"

SEARCH FOR MISSING

General Public is hereby informed that a girl namely **Sonia D/o Surrender Kumar**, R/o RZ 158 Gali No.0, Main Sagarpur, New Delhi has been missing since 01.05.2021. In this regard a FIR No. 223/21 U/s 363 IPC Dated 05.05.2021 has been lodged at PS, Sagarpur, New Delhi.
The description of missing girl is as under :-
Name : Sonia, Father's Name : Surrender Kumar, Age : 17.5 years, Height : 5'3", Built : Thin, Face : Oval, Complexion : Shallow, Wearing : Black Suit & Blue Salwar & Hawai Chappal in feet.
If anyone having any clue/information, kindly inform the undersigned at following phone numbers. **SHO**
Website : <http://cbi.nic.in>
e-mail : cic@cbi.gov.in
Fax : 011-24368639
Ph. : 011-24368638, 24368641
DP/653/SW/2021

P.S., Sagarpur, New Delhi
Ph. : 011-28522655
7065036228

PUBLIC NOTICE
Be it known to all concerned that My clients Sh. Hari Mohan Gupta S/o Late Sh. Ram Lal Gupta and Smt. Urmia Devi W/o Sh. Hari Mohan Gupta both R/O 374, Kanchan Purva, Banda, Uttar Pradesh-210001, has disowned/declared their son namely Mr. Sarvesh Gupta from their all movable and immovable properties/assets w.e.f. 24.05.2021 as the son, of my clients are not in the control of my clients. The public at large is hereby informed that my clients has severed all relations with their son named above and shall not be responsible for any act of omission or commission of above said person, henceforth, as he have not been under the control of my clients for the past long time. Anybody dealing with or having any relationship with him shall be doing so at his/her own risk and responsibility.
Kunal Punj, Advocate
Patiala High Court, New Delhi

PUBLIC NOTICE
This is to notify the public at large that our client, Dr. Yashoda Rani, W/o Sh. Chiranjit Lal R/o H.No. 190/G, Pooch-4, Phase-1, Garud Apartment, Mayur Vihar, Delhi-110091, through this public notice disown and renounce all her relations with her son namely Lakshay Kumar Singh. It is further notified that he shall have no legal right, title, interest, right of inheritance etc. on any of the movable and immovable properties of our client. Our client also reserves all social ties with him. She shall not be responsible for any act and/or omission of any nature, whatsoever, committed by him and further she shall have no personal, social or moral relation with him in coming future. Any person dealing with him shall be doing so at his/her own risks, to which, our client shall not be responsible in any manner. Any other person related to him also, shall stand to be disowned by our client from her all movable and immovable assets.
Rishi Kant Mishra (Advocate)
Ch. No. 7, Civil Side, Tis Hazari Court, Delhi-54

GST Council to discuss tax rebate on Covid essentials



ries, is meeting for the first time in nearly eight months.

Besides discussion on tax rates, the Council may also deliberate on the estimated ₹2.69 lakh crore that states need to be provided as per the promise in 2017 to make good any loss in revenue they suffer because of giving up their right to levy VAT and other taxes.

Sources said the Fitment Committee on GST rates, comprising tax officers of Centre and states, has also given its report to the Council listing out the pros and cons of waiver and zero-rating of Covid vaccines, drugs and other equipment.

Exempting final products from GST would deny manufacturers the option to claim the benefit of the input tax credit on raw materials and hence not much benefit accrues to consumers.

In 2018, the Council, following demands from various women's organisations, had exempted GST on sanitary napkins from an earlier rate of 12 per cent.

However, not much of the rate cut benefits accrued to consumers as manufacturers could not claim the benefit of taxes paid along the supply chain.

CAIT seeks extension of GST return filings deadline

New Delhi: Traders' body CAIT on Thursday sought extension of the deadline for filing various GST returns till August as well as cut in tax rates for medical and surgical equipment required for treating coronavirus and black fungus infections.

Ahead of the meeting of the GST Council on Friday, the Confederation of All India Traders (CAIT) has written to Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman urging her to extend the date of filing of various GST returns till August under the GST Act and Rules, without late fee and interest.

M-cap of BSE-listed firms hits record high of ₹220.74 lakh cr

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The market capitalisation of the BSE-listed companies reached an all-time high of ₹220.74 lakh crore on Thursday, helped by a bullish sentiment in the equity market.

At the close of trade, their market capitalisation stood at ₹2,20,74,421.11 crore.

The 30-share BSE benchmark closed 97.70 points, or 0.19 per cent, higher at 51,115.22 on Thursday. In the previous trade, it had closed 379.99 points or 0.75 per cent higher at 51,017.52.

In two days of market rally, investors' wealth has risen by ₹1,67,959.92 crore to ₹2,20,74,421.11 crore.

Reliance Securities Head (Strategy) Binod Modi said,

"Domestic equities remained resilient and traded in range, amid expiry-led volatility. Buying momentum remained visible in mid-cap and small-cap stocks and they have outperformed benchmark indices."

SBI was the leading performer in the 30-share BSE pack, jumping 2.84 per cent, followed by Kotak Bank, Axis Bank and Bajaj Auto.

In contrast, HDFC, Bajaj Finance, ONGC and Bharti Airtel were among the laggards.

In the broader market, the BSE Midcap and Smallcap indices gained up to 0.54 per cent.

The BSE bankex, consumer durables, power, utilities and IT rose up to 1.19 per cent, while realty and telecom, among others, closed



₹ scales over 2-month peak at 72.60 against US \$

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The Indian rupee advanced by 17 paise to climb to over two-month high of 72.60 against the US dollar on Thursday, tracking upbeat Asian peers and positive domestic equities.

At the interbank forex market, the local unit opened at 72.75 against the greenback and witnessed an intra-day high of 72.53 and a low of 72.76.

It finally ended at 72.60 against the American currency, registering a rise of 17 paise over its previous close.

On Tuesday, the rupee had settled at 72.77.

Forex market was closed on Wednesday on account of Buddha Purnima.

"The Indian rupee appreciated for the second straight session against the dollar, tracking gains in the Chinese Yuan. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) also remained away from the spot market from accumulating dollars and this also aided the rupee's gain," said Sriram Iyer, Senior Research Analyst at Reliance Securities.

Covid: RAI urges Govt to provide relief to retail sector

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Retailers Association of India (RAI) on Thursday urged the Centre to pay the provident fund contribution of both employers and employees in retail sector till September 2021 for all those earning less than ₹15,000 per month as part of a slew of demands to help the industry cope with the Covid-19 crisis.

Stating that retail businesses are under tremendous financial strain due to the extended closures, RAI said, "Easing the burden will require the support of various bodies driven by the governments."

Putting out a list of demands, RAI sought exten-

sion by a year for the renewals of existing permits and licences required for running of malls, shopping centres, retail stores, restaurants and pubs.

While seeking relaxation in compliance requirements of retailers to pay MSME suppliers in 45 days till March 2022, RAI asked the "Govt of India to pay PF contribution of both employer and employee (12 per cent each) till September 2021 for all employees earning less than ₹15,000 pm (per month)." It also sought 100 per cent relief to landlords and malls in payment of property tax for the year 2021-22, besides a moratorium on repayment of principal and interest on loans for six months.



BRIEFS

TOURISM STAKEHOLDERS OF JAMMU DIVISION WELCOME RELIEF PACKAGE

The Tourism Stakeholders extend gratitude to Lieutenant Governor J&K for extending an additional package of Rs 2,63,64,000 as a relief measure in the wake of Covid-19 Pandemic in favour of various Tourism Stake Holders Viz. Ponywalas, Palkivalas, Shikarwalas, Boatwalas, Camelwalas etc. in Jammu region. As a matter of fact, initially an amount of Rs. 1.68 lacs was announced as a financial assistance for Tourism Sector Stakeholders.

RUSSIAN FOREIGN MINISTER SERGEY LAVROV TO TAKE PART IN THE VIRTUAL BRICS MEETING

On June 1, Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov will take part in a Stand-alone Meeting of BRICS Ministers of Foreign Affairs/International Relations via video conference. The Sides will exchange views on topical issues of international agenda, including regional conflicts, strengthening of international institutions, countering new challenges and threats, including COVID-19, as well as cooperation between the BRICS countries in the multilateral fora.

RELAXATION IN 46 CASES OF COMPASSIONATE APPOINTMENT

Jaipur: Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot has given laxity in 46 cases of application for compassionate appointment by the dependents after the death of government personnel. Due to this sensitive decision of the Chief Minister, these families dependent on the dead will be able to get support at a difficult time. It is noteworthy that under compassionate rules, the dependent has to apply for compassionate appointment in 90 days after the death of government personnel. Also, in case of a dependent becoming a minor, there is a provision to apply within 3 years of attaining majority.

NTPC SUPPORTS ANTI-CORONAVIRUS INITIATIVES

New Delhi: NTPC, the largest energy conglomerate of the country has not only ensured uninterrupted power supply to the country during the second wave of COVID-19 but also has reached out to the society and has made significant effort to combat the spread of COVID-19 by enhancing medical infrastructure in different parts of the country.



RBI to ensure 'comfortable level' of liquidity in system this fiscal

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The Reserve Bank on Thursday said it will ensure comfortable level of liquidity in the system during the current financial year and assured that monetary transmission will continue "unimpeded".

To counter the impact of Covid-19 first wave, the RBI had undertaken several conventional and unconventional measures to ensure ample liq-

uidity in the financial system during the financial year ended March 31, 2021.

"The Reserve Bank will ensure that system level liquidity remains comfortable during 2021-22 in alignment with the stance of monetary policy, and monetary transmission continues unimpeded while maintaining financial stability," according to the annual report 2020-21.

Real Boom: 85% in NCR bought 1st home, 65% in MMR upgraded post Covid



IANS ■ NEW DELHI

The pandemic has brought forth many contrasting trends in the country's two major real estate hotspots -- National Capital Region (NCR) and the Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR).

An Anarock report showed that out of the total housing sales in NCR (nearly 21,750 units) and MMR (around 47,140 units) took place in the nine months between July 2020 and March 2021.

While 85 per cent of buyers in NCR purchased their very first homes; in MMR, a massive 65 per cent of buyers upgraded to bigger properties. Just 15 per cent of end-

Size of RBI's balance sheet up 6.99% for nine months to March 2021

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The size of the Reserve Bank's balance sheet, which is reflective of activities carried out by it in pursuance of currency issue function as well as monetary policy and reserve management, has increased by 6.99 per cent during the nine-month period ended March 31, 2021.

While income for the year decreased by 10.96 per cent, the expenditure decreased by 63.10 per cent, as per the RBI's Annual Report for 2020-21.

The year ended with an overall surplus of ₹99,122 crore as against ₹57,127.53 crore in the previous year, representing an increase of 73.51 per cent, it added.

Sebi orders attachment of bank, demat accounts of 2 individuals to recover penalty amount

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Markets regulator Sebi on Thursday ordered attachment of bank accounts as well as shares and mutual fund holdings of two individuals to recover dues totaling around ₹1.3 crore. The recovery proceedings have been initiated against Gurmeet Singh and IS Sukhija after they failed to pay fines imposed on them by the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) in June 2020. Sebi had levied a fine of Rs 1 crore on Singh and ₹20 lakh on Sukhija in a case pertaining to manipulation in the issuance of glob-

al depository receipts (GDRs) by Beckons Industries. In two separate attachment notices on Thursday, Sebi has ordered the attachment of bank as well as demat accounts of the two individuals to recover the pending dues.

The pending dues of ₹1.3 crore comprise initial penalty amount, interest, and recovery cost, it added. Sebi asked banks and depositories not to allow any debit from their accounts. However, credits have been permitted. Further, the capital markets watchdog has directed the banks to attach all accounts, including lockers, held by them.

Health crisis can be more pervasive, debilitating for economy: RBI

IANS ■ NEW DELHI

Compared to financial crises, a health crisis can be more pervasive, persistent and debilitating in its impact on the real economy, as per the RBI annual report for 2020-21.

"Letting down the guard is perilous; it is best to prepare for future waves," the report said.

It added that private investment is the missing piece in the story of the Indian

economy in 2020-21; reviving it awaits an environment in which "animal spirits" are rekindled and entrepreneurial energies are released so that backward and forward linkages and multipliers prepare the ground for a durable investment-driven recovery.

The report said 2020-21 will go down in history as the year of the Covid-19 pandemic break in the life and ethos of humanity

ity, finance and, more generally, life and livelihoods in a drastic and deep way that may take several years to heal.

The pandemic also exposed the fragility of health care infrastructure and the inadequacy of health spending over the years.

The year 2020 will also be notable for unprecedented policy responses which, although not coordinated, turned out to be synchronised globally," the report said.

CSB Bank
Formerly The Catholic Syrian Bank Ltd.

(Ashok Vihar Branch located at A-17, Phase-1 Ashok Vihar, New Delhi-110052)

GOLD AUCTION NOTICE

CSB Bank Limited, Ashok Vihar branch has granted gold loan against pledge of gold ornaments to the below mentioned borrowers. Notice has been issued to him/them demanding repayment of the amount with interest and charges thereon. Since they have failed to repay the balance outstanding in the respective accounts, we are constrained to recover the amount by sale of gold ornaments in public auction and if the auction does not fetch required amount, bank will proceed with the sale by private treaties/contract. Bank reserves its right to change/extend the date and venue of auction without assigning any reason.

SI No	Name of borrower	Gross Weight of Pledge Items (in grams)	Overdue Gold Loan Account no.	Amount (in Rs.)	Balance as on 27.05.2021 (in Rs)
1	Aman	48.52	0283-04172447-000001	165000	164322/-
2	Anil Chauhan	43.7	0283-04220413-000001	105000	110732/-
3	Bal Mukund	741.07	0283-07305368-000001	2980000	2636094.05
4	Jai Kishor	9.48	0283-04161640-000002	30000	33446/-
5	Jai Kishor	6.87	0283-04161640-000001	24000	26195/-
6	Neeraj Gahlot	2.6	0283-04146309-000001	7000	8075/-
7	Nina	66.68	0283-07253460-000003	225000	248023/-
8	Nisha	53.75	0283-04172507-000001	178000	197513/-
9	Pankaj Rana	30.2	0283-04170378-000001	111800	124246/-
10	Parmod Passi	249.67	0283-00596164-000015	937500	1043962/-
11	Parmod Passi	40.1	0283-04056164-000014	150000	167916/-
12	Poonam	17.67	0283-03043898-000002	60500	67591/-
13	Pram Lata	164.02	0283-04041759-000007	563000	628571/-
14	Rajender	84.36	0283-02989505-000025	287000	291455/-
15	Rajinder	45.15	0283-02989505-000024	157000	159642/-
16	Ramavali Devi	44.36	0283-00596321-000001	135000	151751/-
17	Surinder Kaur	86.6	0283-03899257-000023	286000	298117/-
18	Surinder Kaur	45.38	0283-03899257-000019	157000	173542/-
19	Surinder Kaur	12.86	0283-03899257-000018	42000	46532/-
20	Vinod Kumar	53.8	0283-04208007-000001	199000	210319.78

The auction will be conducted at the premises of CSB Bank Limited, Ashok Vihar branch premises situated at A-17, Phase-1, Ashok Vihar, New Delhi-110052 on **04th June 2021 at 11:00 AM**. Interested parties may contact the Branch Manager in the above address. Participants should attend the auction along with copy of Pan Card, passport size photo, valid identity proof and address proof on the date of auction.

Place: New Delhi
Date: 27.May.2021

Branch Manager

IMPORTANT NOTICE

It is notified for the information of passengers that the cancellation period of following earlier announced cancelled trains has been extended as per the details given below:-

EXTENSION OF CANCELLATION OF SPECIAL TRAINS		
Train No. & Name	Earlier Cancelled	Extended Upto
02033/02034 Kanpur Central-New Delhi-Kanpur Central Shatabdi Express Special	07.05.2021 to 31.05.2021	01.06.2021 to 30.06.2021
02179/02180 Lucknow Jn.-Agrafort-Lucknow Jn. Intercity Express Special	15.05.2021 to 31.05.2021	01.06.2021 to 30.06.2021

Note: For any kind of information passengers are requested to contact RailMadad Helpline No. 139 or visit Indian Railways website: www.enquiry.indianrail.gov.in

Visit RailMadad website:-
www.railmadad.indianrailways.gov.in

Download RailMadad app.

RailMadad Helpline No.: 139

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

"SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE"

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

: ऑन लाईन निविदा आमंत्रण सूचना :

जिला जल एवं स्वच्छता बिलासपुर की ओर कार्यपालन अभियंता एवं सदस्य सचिव, जिला जल एवं स्वच्छता मिशन द्वारा एकीकृत पंजीयन व्यवस्था के अंतर्गत उपयुक्त श्रेणी में पंजीकृत ठेकेदारों से निम्नांकित कार्य हेतु प्रपत्र 'अ' (प्रतिशत दर) ऑनलाईन निविदा आमंत्रित की जाती है।

कार्य का नाम:- बिलासपुर जिले के अंतर्गत जल जीवन मिशन में स्वीकृत रेट्रोफिटिंग जल जीवन मिशन अंतर्गत रेट्रोफिटिंग ग्राम नल जल प्रदाय योजना अन्य सम्पूर्ण कार्य (संलग्न शोड्यूल अनुसार)

सिस्टम क्रमांक	निविदा क्र. निका	कार्य का नाम	अनुमानित लागत (रु. लाख में)	घरोहर राशि (रु. लाख में)
77196	43/21.05.21	बिलासपुर जिले के विकासखण्ड मस्तूरी के ग्राम मनेसर एवं ईटावा में	183.49	138000.00
77203	44/21.05.21	बिलासपुर जिले के विकासखण्ड मस्तूरी के ग्राम विस्दा एवं हरदी में	128.16	97000.00
77208	45/21.05.21	बिलासपुर जिले के विकासखण्ड तखतपुर के ग्राम चोरमदरीकला में	64.35	49000.00
77209	46/21.05.21	बिलासपुर जिले के विकासखण्ड तखतपुर के ग्राम चोरमदरीकला में	114.43	109000.00
77210	47/21.05.21	बिलासपुर जिले के विकासखण्ड मस्तूरी के ग्राम कंबटाडीह टा. कंबतरा में	137.52	104000.00
77249	48/21.05.21	बिलासपुर जिले के विकासखण्ड तखतपुर के ग्राम खरकेना में	82.80	63000.00
77251	49/21.05.21	बिलासपुर जिले के विकासखण्ड तखतपुर के ग्राम लाखासार हांफा में	142.50	107000.00
77252	50/21.05.21	बिलासपुर जिले के विकासखण्ड तखतपुर के ग्राम लमेर में	103.24	78000.00
77254	51/21.05.21	बिलासपुर जिले के विकासखण्ड तखतपुर के ग्राम सागर में	86.12	65000.00
77255	52/21.05.21	बिलासपुर जिले के विकासखण्ड मस्तूरी के ग्राम घुसाकरी एवं डगनिगा में	183.30	138000.00

अन्य विवरण एवं विस्तृत निविदा छ.ग. शासन के ई-प्रोक्वोरमेंट की वेबसाइट <https://leproc.cgstate.gov.in> पर दिनांक 28.05.2021 सुबह 10.30 बजे से उपलब्ध है। तथा दिनांक 25.08.2021 समय 17.30 तक बीड डाले जा सकते हैं एवं समय विवरण कार्यालयीन समय पर लोक स्वास्थ्य यांत्रिकी खंड बिलासपुर (छ.ग.) में देख सकते हैं।

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

R.O.NO:- 60788/11
R.O.Date:- 27/05/2021



SHADES OF HOME

Moving to Mumbai changed my life: Huma



Actor Huma Qureshi says playing the protagonist Rani Bharti in the forthcoming web series *Maharani* was exciting because it involved 'forgetting' a lot of what she knows, in order to become the character. She says moving from Delhi to Mumbai to be an actor was an experience that in some way helped her understand Rani.

Rani is an illiterate village woman, oblivious to most things in the world outside, and yet she finds herself in the centre of Bihar politics after a twist of fate, and ends up being chief minister of the state. Like Rani's ignorance about the world of politics, Huma says she had no idea what it meant to be a part of Bollywood when she was growing up.

"Rani Bharti has never stepped outside her village. To play her was a big challenge. She's absolutely opposite to how I am. That was the exciting part. If you know something, do you forget about it? How do I show in Rani's eyes if she doesn't know something despite me knowing it? That was fun and challenging. The look and costume really helped," she said.

"Moving from Delhi to Mumbai has been a turning point. It changed my life completely. I was living a different life in Delhi. I never thought that this was the world I belonged to. I grew up in Delhi, and my friends are also from there. I dared to be somebody I was told I can't be. For me and my family, me moving to a different city was a big change," she said.

Huma is happy to be able to entertain people during this tough time. "The world is shut down. I was talking to my cousins and two years of the

kids' lives are gone. They can't go out to play, meet school friends. Their childhood has gone. Theatres have shut down, the industry has shut down. Of course, it's sad but we have to make the best of the situation. I am happy that I am blessed that I can put out some work where people can forget all this for a while and watch something. So, maybe I can help in this way," she said.

In fact, she adds that social media has been a big help right now. "This pandemic has shown us the worst that is there. It is heartbreaking and shocking. This pandemic has also shown us humanity. So many people have used social media to help people, get someone a bed, get plasma. I have done that for people on my social media. I have seen the goodness of human beings. That has been my one take-away from this time," she said. —IANS

Whether it is your bedroom or a favourite nook in the house, the colours in your rooms can reveal a lot about you, shares PARUL MITTAL



Colours are more than a visual experience and a way of communication. These hold the power to radically impact our mood and emotions. How one perceives a colour, tone or hue is completely subjective. While some love experimenting with colours, others prefer choosing a select few shades repeatedly. So, whether it is your bedroom or a favourite nook in the house, the colours in your rooms can reveal a lot about your personality.

As we dive deep into the relation between colours and our personalities, here are a few home decor looks to suit your vision.

PASSIONATE RED

Red is a colour of passion, love and strength. Whether it is used in clothes, makeup, or home decor, it has the power to hold one's attention. This colour is best suited for personalities who resonate with traits such as dynamism, impossible to ignore, impulsive, and extroverted.

While using this shade in your interiors, opt for decorative laminates to make a statement and subtly weave in distinctive shades. Pair light brown textures of wood alternatively with red laminate decor as this combination gives a refreshing and eye-catching look to your cabinet. Complete it with a timeless matte-finished vase or a decorative showpiece that will instantly accentuate the space.

AS SERENE AS BLUE

Shades of blue are always asso-

ciated with the sky and water. If you prefer a calm and airy bedroom space, then start with layering your bed with a plain bedsheet, thick fabric quilt and velvet-adorned cushions. Remember to keep the linen in shades of muted gray and light blue for comfortable sleep amid a warming ambience.

Keep your space uncluttered and bring the goodness of nature indoors with an indoor plant. You can use dim lighting to zone areas. This soothing indulgence is perfect for those looking to transform their bedroom into a peaceful space. For walls, opt for scratch-resistant wooden laminates in grey with a slight texture to blend in with the decor theme.

THE VIBRANCY OF YELLOW

The colours we choose for our walls have a high influence on our mood and energy. Therefore, we often feel like choosing happy, positive, and encouraging colours, especially in areas dedicated to studying or reading. Go for hues of yellow as this colour instills eclecticism with its vibe and radiates good energy. It is preferred by people who love innovation and originality.

To infuse vibrancy, begin with bringing the sunrays to your walls in the form of yellow laminate decor. The laminate's resistance to cracks, steam, scratch, and surface wear and tear makes it suitable for daily usage, especially considering the increased



adoption of work from home. Place white framed artwork on your walls as statement pieces to compliment the yellow. Last, keep your furniture wooden and minimal to help you relax and enjoy your me-time.

GLAMOROUS LILAC

Shades of purple are usually preferred by those who have a highly creative streak, and lilac lovers aspire for uniqueness but lean on the sentimental, softer side of purple. The best way to glam up your room is by getting mellow-dramatic with your interiors. Choose lilac laminate decor for walls and pair with engineered wooden floors in light brown to achieve an effortless balance.

To further make your interiors interesting, play around with floral patterned cushions on a muted gray sofa set. Complete this look with a mix of open and closed cabinets in wooden laminates to inject an eclectic effervescence. This look will create a calm yet spectacular effect.

REJUVENATE WITH GREEN

Green is nature's most ubiquitous and versatile shade. While it is the perfect equaliser between warm and cool tones, shades of green are loved by those looking to find the balance. It's the colour of renewal, prosperity, and harmony. Therefore, this colour is capable of broadcasting natural sparkle and stability.

To bring home a rejuvenating retreat, you can add nature's colour to your otherwise plain decor. For instance, go for light green laminate decor for cabinetry which will blend with your soft colour palette. Also, since decorative laminates come with dimensional stability, you can use them in any climatic condition without worrying about replacing them seasonally. Last, enhance this with the timeless charm of ceramicware and curtains to maintain the theme.

(The author is director of a company providing high-quality surface solutions for residential and commercial spaces.)



Dispel the stigma

Poor hygiene can lead to many issues such as fungal or bacterial infections. This Menstrual Hygiene Day, it is more important than ever to invest in health and well-being of young girls

Restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic have adversely impacted menstrual health in India by cutting off access to free sanitary napkins and critical information to help adolescent girls cope with and better manage their period. This Menstrual Hygiene Day, observed globally on May 28, it is more important than ever to highlight the importance of investing in adolescent health and well-being and break taboos around menstruation.

Last year, the *10to19 Dasra Adolescents Collaborative* studied how the lockdown and pandemic affected various essential and developmental aspects of the lives and well-being of young people. The study surveyed 110+ non-profit organisations serving vulnerable adolescents across the country. According to this report 74 per cent of organisations before and/or after lockdown reported difficulty in obtaining sanitary napkins and about 43 per cent reported difficulty during the lockdown. These findings validate that the pandemic has severely affected adolescents and their access to

menstrual health and hygiene products. The second wave has only exacerbated these issues and gap; pushing this already vulnerable demographic even further into the trenches.

Highlighting the urgent need for intervention, Divya Santhanam, Senior State Programme Manager for Population Foundation of India in Rajasthan, said, "The Rajasthan government's allocation of about ₹200 crore to the *Free Medicine Scheme*, with a firm emphasis on the dispensation of free sanitary napkins, expansion of distribution through health and medical facilities as well as sensitisation drives, will help create much-needed awareness around menstrual hygiene."

Menstrual health has a major impact on young girls' lives. Ensuring they receive reliable information from parents or teachers about menstruation before their first period encourages healthy habits and dispels stigma and fears. However, the lack of access to online classes due to the digital divide in rural India has led to a disruption in girls' education and, specif-

ically, key information about menstrual health. *The National Family Health Survey-4* (NFHS-4) reported in 2015-16 that women with 12 or more years of schooling were over four times more likely to use hygienic methods than women with no schooling (81 per cent versus 20 per cent). A 2016 landscape analysis titled *Menstrual Health in India* also observed that of nearly 355 million girls in India who have come of age, 71 per cent had no idea about menstruation before their first period. Poor menstrual hygiene can lead to many issues such as fungal, bacterial infections or problems related to fertility, physical and mental health.

Dr Amita Kashyap, MD-PSM (Senior Professor, SMS Medical College) said, "We need positive interventions at every level as NFHS-4 (2015-16) noted that of the rural women still do not use hygienic methods, and girls are often inadequately educated on puberty and menstrual health. Many drop out of school when they begin menstruating. The normalisation of conversations around menstruation is as critical as the dispensation of hygiene products because numerous taboos, misinformation, superstition, and ignorance still surround the subject. Hopefully, the awareness programmes being anchored by the state government as well as civil society organisations will lead to social and behavioural change and more communities will understand the consequences of unhygienic menstrual management."

Divya applauded the fact that approximately 1.2 crore women in the age group of 15 to 45 years would benefit from the *Menstrual Hygiene Scheme* (MHS) in the state. "Such initiatives depict that the state government is sensitive towards recognising the issues and needs related to menstrual health. These steps will go a long way in protecting women and girls from developing menstrual hygiene-related diseases like fungal, urinary tract, and reproductive tract infections. All young girls deserve correct information and resources to manage their menstrual health," she added.

TREND TOOL

Here are five precautions to keep in mind for air travel in the times of COVID-19

Have a safe flight

Almost a year ago, one of the busiest airports in the world — Indira Gandhi International Airport in Delhi — had a deserted look brought about by the Coronavirus. A year later, the airport has terminated operations on terminal 2 as a result of the reduced number of flights due to the second wave, which is turning out to be more deadly than the previous one. The air travel industry has witnessed significant changes since the pandemic, even as two things remain constant — the threat from the virus and the effort to ensure a safer surrounding. While leisure travel has taken a halt, air travel still remains unavoidable for some — many people are returning home amid the second wave to be with their families during these times or for other personal or family health emergencies.

Cases reported on air travel spread have been minimal due to which flights are being considered as a safer travelling option, however, it is always good for travellers to be extra cautious and look out for their own safety and practice precautions while boarding a flight. While it is imperative to mask up, regularly sanitise and avoid unnecessary contact with people and surfaces, there are other things as well to keep in mind while taking a flight.

With the current safety concerns set to stay for the foreseeable future, EaseMyTrip.com shares a list of precautions that a passenger



should keep in mind while travelling by air.

DOUBLE MASK UP FOR MAXIMUM PROTECTION

With the second wave of Coronavirus spreading ferociously, people have realised the importance of doubling up the protection. Is a double mask safer than a single mask? Indeed, studies done by Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) state that double masking can reduce one's exposure to the virus by up to 95 per cent. The CDC recommends layering a cloth mask over a surgical mask. Avoid combinations such as two surgical masks, or a K95/N95 and any other mask.

MINIMAL CONTACT CLOTHING

Such testing times require cautious approach even while choosing your outfit for air travel. It is advisable to cover your body as much as possible, so tracksuits are a good option. Travellers should also avoid wearing open toed shoes to ensure minimal contact. Wearing

avoiding unnecessary contact. A person sitting in the window seat will essentially reduce the number of people within your six-foot exposure radius by half. An aisle seat should be avoided as travellers tend to visit washrooms, touch surfaces and walk by, increasing one's exposure to the virus. So make sure that you book your ticket and seat way in advance from a travel portal.

MAINTAINING DISTANCE AND HYGIENE OVER THE COURSE OF THE JOURNEY

It is difficult to give up on a sip or two of water throughout the course of the journey. With Covid around, it is advisable to carry your own bottle to minimise contact with people, which is a possibility at the point of sale. While there is very little you can do on the plane to maintain distance, ensure that you keep your distance from people in the terminal. Walk around the terminal while you're waiting for your flight as the seating area could be a point of infection. It is also advisable to clean and use disinfectant wipes for surfaces such as the tray table or in-flight entertainment systems that you will be using in the flight. Similarly, precautions should be taken while accessing washrooms at airports and on flights, including using elbows to open the doors. It is advisable to stay away from washrooms that are crowded.

While it may not be possible to avoid all points of contact, the current global crisis merits a heightened sense of caution, and it is important for travellers to be aware of their surroundings and take all possible necessary precautions from their end to ensure a safe journey. It is also advisable to look up state wise air travel guidelines and notifications to ensure that one is up to date with all necessary travel and airline information. —IANS

TREND BLAZER



'SAPF HAS SCOPE FOR A DARK SEQUEL'

Actor **ARJUN KAPOOR** feels the climax of Dibakar Bannerjee's *Sandeep Aur Pinky Faraar* sets up the prospect of a sequel that can be dark and gritty. "If you see the climax of the film, you will realise that there is scope for a sequel that can be dark, gritty, raw and thrilling," Arjun said.

He added, "Now, it is up to him to tell us whether or not he sees this happening. I can assure that whenever he gives the green signal, Pari (Parineeti Chopra) and I will be on to shoot."

fairtalk

SHWETA SINGH KIRTI



'I am going on a solitary retreat for the whole month of June in the mountains. I won't have access to internet or cell services there. *Bhai's* (Sushant Singh Rajput) one year of passing on will be spent in cherishing his sweet memories in silence. Though his physical body has left us almost a year back, the values he stood for still live on...'

dailytalk

MASABA GUPTA



'When I was born, my mom (Neena Gupta) had ₹2,000 in her bank account. As I read mom's biography I learn so many things and the hardships she has had to endure. I work very hard every single day of my life and never ever let anyone not give me what I deserve only to make sure I can pay her back for bringing me into this world.'

BRAD WINS JOINT CUSTODY OF KIDS

Hollywood star **BRAD PITT** has been granted joint custody of his children with his former wife, actress **ANGELINA JOLIE**, following a long court battle.

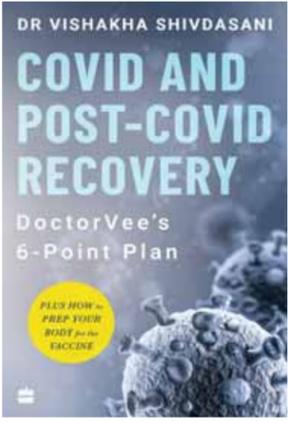
The ruling was a 'tentative decision' and Jolie is continuing her legal fight. Jolie had not objected to joint custody but there were 'other issues of concern', it reported.

Earlier, Pitt was investigated for possible child abuse after losing his temper in front of some of the children, but was later cleared of the allegations.



YOU ARE WHAT YOU EAT

After a conversation with Dr VISHAKHA SHIVDASANI, CHRISTY VARGHESE understands the importance of sticking to an anti-inflammatory diet amid the pandemic



At a time when COVID-19 has gripped our world, forcing us to frantically search for the best ways to survive and thrive, Dr Vishakha Shivdasani has written a book highlighting a six-point plan to help us accomplish just that. *COVID and Post-COVID Recovery: Dr Vee's 6-Point Plan* touches on diet, gut health, sleep, exercise, stress management and supplements while looking closely at the connection between inflammation and immunity.

Using the same principles of healing that have helped thousands of her patients reverse chronic lifestyle diseases such as obesity, type-2 diabetes and PCOS, Dr Shivdasani has developed some easy-to-implement, practical strategies on how to expedite recovery from COVID-19 while reducing the chances of post-COVID complications.

"I will never tire of telling people that 70 per cent of their immune system is housed in their gut. We all need to take care of our gut health by watching what we eat and drink. Now, if you think having a turmeric and black pepper latte before you sleep will result in you waking up with the

immunity of a superhero, I am afraid it is not as simple as that. You cannot boost your immunity overnight and anybody who tells you otherwise is pulling the wool over your eyes. Like most good things, immunity is something that one can only build over time," she expressed. While Dr Shivdasani's book highlights six multipurpose facets that can turn our health around, she feels that in these fast-paced, uncertain times one cannot lay enough emphasis on what we eat.

"Little known fact, but do you know that bacteria housed in your gut produce over 90 per cent of your body's supply of serotonin, the feel-good hormone? No, right? No one talks about the little things which are happening in the background. Everyone wants a quick fix. But alas, there is no alternative to this apart from taking care of your gut health. So many people out there are upset and frustrated as they are isolated at home in the backdrop of lockdowns that don't seem to end. While there are a lot many factors involved in why someone is upset or depressed these times, what you eat can help in feel-

EXCERPT

AN ANTI-INFLAMMATORY DIET PLAN
 This is a broad guideline. A diet plan for individuals may vary substantially based on a patient's medical history and clinical examination. A good anti-inflammatory way to start the day is to begin it with turmeric (*haldi*) and black pepper. (Piperine, present in black pepper, enhances curcumin absorption in turmeric by up to 2,000 per cent. Combining these spices, therefore, magnifies their anti-inflammatory effects.) Can either mix both and drink; you can also add other anti-inflammatories like basil (*tulsi*) and ginger to a glass of water, boil, and drink.

MEAL PLAN: NON-VEGETARIAN
Breakfast
 Two full eggs — protein and good fat — are a great way to begin the day. Don't worry about cholesterol; you need good fats to balance the sugars and insulin. Protein will increase antibodies.
 Note: Do not begin your day with carbohydrates. Have it during the second meal of the day if you must. No rice, poha, oats, fruits, or juices for breakfast.
Lunch
 Any carbohydrate with a non-vegetarian dish and portion of leafy vegetables (in the ratio of 1:2 carbohydrate: protein). You can add a bowl of yogurt, which is rich in probiotics, for gut health.
Evening snack
 A low glycaemic index fruit (apples, oranges, berries) and a handful of nuts or avocado or cheese and olives or hummus. Have it with a cup of green/white/matcha tea for its antioxidants and polyphenols. Avoid coffee if you have a racing heart rate or are anxious.

Dinner
 Avoid carbohydrates; only protein and vegetables.
 Note: Include at least one portion of a green leafy vegetable a day as it is a good source of magnesium which will not only help with insomnia but also with anxiety, stress, and

cardiac problems. It is also a rich source of iron. Make sure you squeeze some lemon on it to help the absorption of iron; it will also help with fatigue and hair loss.

MEAL PLAN: VEGETARIAN
Breakfast
 Sprouts/a sprouted lentil pancake/almond milk smoothie (no sugar/honey/agave, but you can use berries).
Lunch
 Rice and a lentil (this combination completes the amino acid profile and makes it a good quality protein) or any carbohydrate with leafy vegetables and protein. Some yogurt too.
Evening snack
 A low glycaemic index fruit (apples, oranges, berries) and a handful of nuts or avocado or cheese and olives or hummus. Have it with a cup of green/white/matcha tea for its antioxidants and polyphenols. Avoid coffee if you have a racing heart rate or are anxious.
Dinner
 One or more protein sources like cottage cheese/sprouts/mushrooms/tofu with one non-cereal carbohydrate i.e., vegetables in any form (soup/salad/stir-fry/ cooked veggies). Again, avoid cereals. Either cottage cheese/tofu with veggies/salad with cheese or soup and stir-fry/sprouts. Sprouts contain zinc, which is important for gut health and for COVID-19 patients experiencing loss of smell.

GUT HEALTH
 Feed the good bacteria, starve the bad ones.
 Consider this: 70 per cent of our immune system is in our gut. That's why taking care of our gut health is essential. Both good and bad bacteria live inside the gut, and what we eat predominately determines which of the two will flourish. My diet protocol promotes the feeding of good bacteria and starving of bad bacteria which, ultimately, promotes immunity.
 Good bacteria strengthen immu-

ing better," she added.
 Dr Shivdasani shared an excerpt from her book which outlines a meal plan that one could follow throughout the day, with enough room for alternatives. She pointed out that an anti-inflammatory diet plan does not only help expedite recovery from the novel Coronavirus but will also help with comorbidities, like obesity or diabetes. Long-term adherence to this has resulted in the reversal of

many chronic lifestyle diseases. Again, not something that happened overnight but with a sustained disciplined approach.
 "To build your immunity, the most realistic approach would be to reduce inflammation and slowly, over a period of time, you build your immunity. But you need to reduce inflammation at the earliest and that is where the diet plan from my book comes in. We must understand that anything which

reduces inflammation will enhance immunity. Once again, there is no quick fix that can help you with the cause of boosting immunity, it has to be a way of life, a lifestyle. However, if you follow this diet plan to the letter, you will start feeling the effects of this anti-inflammatory diet within a week, not months or years. If you wish to reclaim your health I would recommend you implement the six-point plan highlighted in my book," she concluded.

ity as they aid in fighting pathogens (like COVID-19). They also release toxins to counter the effects of the pathogens and send signals to the rest of the immune system, allowing it to mobilise an appropriate response.
 Need another reason to keep the gut healthy? Depression, a recurrent symptom in COVID-19 patients, can be alleviated with a good healthy gut — where 90 per cent of serotonin, the 'feel-good' neurotransmitter, is produced. So, how do you promote a healthy gut?
Eat prebiotics: Feed the good bacteria already in your gut prebiotics, a type of fibre that helps them thrive. Garlic, berries, onions, and apples are great examples of prebiotics.
And probiotics: You can consume good bacteria, known as probiotics (either fermented or cultured). Probiotics are present in fermented foods like yogurt, kefir, pickles, sauerkraut, and kimchi.
Include good fats: Increase the consumption of good fats such as Omega-3, an anti-inflammatory found in cold water fatty fish like salmon, sardines, and mackerel. When eating meats, choose grass-fed over grain-fed as the former is higher in Omega-3. For vegetarians, nuts and seeds are a great source of Omega-3; flax and chia seeds, and walnuts contain high amounts.
Eat the rainbow: Another beneficial change that can help strengthen the gut is to include a variety of fruits and vegetables in the diet.
Say goodbye to sugar: Sugar feeds bad bacteria which, in turn, depresses our immune system and weakens our ability to fight COVID-19, and other diseases. It promotes inflammation, which is the root cause of most comorbidities that are associated with worse outcomes of COVID-19, irrespective of age. So, stop eating sugar and foods that our bodies rapidly change into sugar.
 (Dr Vishakha Shivdasani is a practising physician based in Mumbai with a fellowship in nutrition. The book, *COVID and Post-COVID Recovery: Dr Vee's 6-Point Plan*, has been published by HarperCollins India.)



Pitfalls of indulging in excess

The adage that too much of anything is bad for you has been emphasised in Ayurveda

Ayurveda teaches that salt is essential for growth, maintaining water-electrolyte balance, and proper digestion, absorption and elimination of wastes. It creates flexibility in the joints, stimulates the appetite and helps digest natural toxins, clearing the subtle channels of the body. It has a calming effect on the nerves and emotions, replenishing and energising the entire body. However, when used excessively it can cause premature wrinkles, thirst, skin problems and weakness.

Throughout time, salt (sodium chloride) has played a vital role in human societies. However, excessive salt consumption could result in serious health problems as it directly impacts the energy levels in one body. Salt is typically made up of fire and water elements and a small amount regulates moisture level in the body which promotes better absorption of nutrients from food, regulates blood pressure and are vital to the functioning of the brain and nervous system.

Eating too much salt can have a range of effects. In the short term, it may cause bloating, severe thirst, and a temporary rise in blood pressure. In severe cases, it may also lead to hypernatremia, which, if left untreated, can be fatal. In Ayurveda, it is established that over-indulgence or at of any ingredient can cause various imbalances in the human body. From a holistic perspective anything overused, misused or used in a high amount leads to an imbalance and causes destruction.

Similarly, Ayurveda teaches that the sweet taste nourishes and invigorates the mind, relieves hunger and thirst, increases tissues and improves the immune system. Importantly, it is associated with the positive emotions of happiness, contentment, calmness, cheerfulness, love and satisfaction when eaten in appropriate amounts. But again, in moderation.

From an Ayurvedic perspective, we need to consider long-term moderation combined with well-timed and precise restraint. Brown sugar, jaggery and natural fruits are alternatives to refined sugar. Natural sources of sugar are digested slower and help you feel full for longer. It also helps keep your metabolism stable.

Ati sevanam, as per Ayurveda, of salt might lead to high blood pressure or hypertension. While a high amount of fat intake can cause cholesterol to build up in your arteries (blood vessels), too many spices may give acute gastritis. If consumed in moderation, spices help us in combating heart diseases, fight inflammation and keeping the body warm especially in winters. Hence the key is to keep consuming everything in moderation and to avoid atikriya (overdoing) of anything. Whether it be food or any activity.

As recommended by professionals at Vana Retreat, Dehradun, an individual should also practice some tenets of the disciplined lifestyle for content and mindful living. Some of them are: Daily exercising for at least half an hour, avoid excessive exercises, avoid suppression of natural urges like that of urine, avoid daytime sleeping, avoid excessive stress and anger, avoid staying awake during night and others.

—IANS

R E C I P E S



COCONUT MACAROONS
WHAT YOU NEED
 ● Sweetened flaked coconut: 1
 ● Sweetened condensed milk: 7/8 cup
 ● Vanilla extract: 1 tsp
 ● Egg whites: 2
 ● Salt: 1/4 tsp
 ● Semi-sweet chocolate (chopped): 4 ounces (optional)
METHOD
 ● Preheat the oven to 325°F. Set two oven racks near the center of the oven. Line two baking sheets with parchment paper.
 ● In a medium bowl, mix together the coconut, sweetened condensed milk and vanilla extract. Set it aside.
 ● In the bowl of an electric mixer, beat the egg whites and salt until stiff peaks form. Use a large rubber spatula to fold the egg whites into the coconut mixture.
 ● Using a mini ice cream scoop or two spoons, form heaping tablespoons of the mixture into mounds on the prepared baking sheets, spacing about one inch apart. Bake for 23 to 25 minutes, rotating the pans from top to bottom and front to back, until the tops and edges are golden.
 ● Let cool on the pans for a few minutes, then transfer to a wire rack to cool completely.
 ● Dip the bottoms of the macaroons in the chocolate, letting any excess drip back into the bowl, and return to the lined baking sheets.
 ● Place the macaroons in the refrigerator for about 10 minutes to allow the chocolate to set. The cookies keep well in an airtight container at room temperature for about a week.
 Courtesy: Executive chef Ravish Mishra at The Westin Goa.

COUSCOUS SALAD
WHAT YOU NEED
 ● Couscous: 1 cup
 ● Corn kernel: 15 gm
 ● Red bell pepper (diced): 15 gm
 ● Beans (diced): 10 gm
 ● Garlic powder: 1 tsp
 ● Black pepper (crushed): 1 tsp
 ● Dry oregano herb: 1 tsp
 ● Basil leaves (torn): 10
 ● Olive oil: 10 ml
 ● Lemon (juice): 1
 ● Water: 1 cup
 ● Salt to taste
METHOD
 ● Take a microwave oven bowl. Add one cup of couscous into the bowl. Pour a cup of water and stir.
 ● Add one teaspoon garlic powder and all the chopped vegetables along with the corn kernels.



● Add the spices such as oregano, black pepper and salt.
 ● Cover the bowl with cling film.
 ● Microwave for five minutes at maximum temperature.
 ● Add olive oil, lemon juice and the torn basil leaves before mixing it well.
 ● Garnish with full basil leaves.
 Enjoy the dish, hot or cold.
 Courtesy: Whirlpool India.



TOMATO AND BASIL SOUP
WHAT YOU NEED
 ● Tomato wedges: 4
 ● Garlic (chopped): 25 gm
 ● Tomato puree: 25 gm
 ● Basil (torn): 10 gm
 ● Water: 150 ml
 ● Black pepper: 1/2 tsp
 ● Sugar: 1 tsp
 ● Butter: 1 tsp
 ● Bay leaf: 1
 ● Salt to taste
METHOD
 ● Take a microwave oven bowl.
 ● Add one tablespoon of butter, chopped garlic and one bay leaf.
 ● Microwave for one minute at maximum temperature.
 ● Take out the bowl and add

four tomato wedges, tomato puree and 150 ml water.
 ● Stir and add basil leaves, black pepper, sugar along with salt to taste.
 ● Microwave for five minutes at maximum temperature. Take out the bowl and blend the soup before straining it.
 ● Pour into a soup bowl and garnish with basil leaves.
 Courtesy: Whirlpool India.

RAGI PANCAKES
WHAT YOU NEED
 ● Ragi flour: 125 gm
 ● Blended oats: 90 gm
 ● Egg: 1 (medium)
 ● Baking powder: 1/2 tsp
 ● Honey: 1 tsp
 ● Ripe banana: 1
 ● Mango (diced): 1
 ● Skimmed milk: 1
 ● Yoghurt (for garnish): 1 tbsp
 ● Oil: 1 tsp
METHOD
 ● In a bowl, mash the ripe banana completely till soft. Add ragi flour, oat flour, egg, honey and baking powder.
 ● Add milk as per required consistency of the batter (it should coat the back of a spoon).
 ● Now lightly fold in the diced mango (half quantity and reserve half).
 ● Pour oil in a non-stick pan on medium heat.
 ● Pour a ladle of the batter and cook on one side till bubbles start appearing and sides are cooked.
 ● Flip the pancake and cook the other side in the same way.



● The pancake should have a nice golden-brown colour on both sides.
 ● Garnish with a dollop of yoghurt, mango and a sprig of mint.
 Courtesy: Chef Shantanu Gupta.

'NO-ONE IS INVINCIBLE'

Nadal says the best he can do is fight as the Spaniard chases record 21st Slam

AFP ■ PARIS

Rafael Nadal said "no-one is invincible" in an interview on Thursday as he targets a 14th French Open title and record-setting 21st Grand Slam crown.

"No-one is invincible, anywhere," said Nadal whose career record at Roland Garros stands at 100 victories against just two losses since his title-winning Paris debut in 2005.

"This year I lost (early) in Monte Carlo and Madrid. I hope not to lose here (Paris) at Roland Garros. What I can do is fight."

Victory in the final in Paris on June 13 will take Nadal past the record of 20 majors he currently shares with Roger Federer.

Despite his remarkable history in Paris, Nadal, who turns 35 on June 3, admits he remains stunned at his longevity in a sport where he has been an ever-present in the world top 10 since 2005.

When asked if he could have imagined still playing in his mid-30s, Nadal said: "Ten years ago, no. But if you had asked me the question two years ago, maybe I would have answered yes."

"Ten years ago, I had so many physical problems that it was difficult for me to imagine that my career would last so long," added the Spaniard, whose career has been plagued by a series of knee injuries.

Nadal will start this year's French Open as the overwhelming favourite once again, boosted by his recent win over world



Rafael Nadal, left, with his coach Carlos Moya during a training session at Roland Garros stadium ahead of the French Open tournament in Paris on Thursday. AFP

number one Novak Djokovic in the Rome Masters final.

62 CLAY COURT TITLES

Of Nadal's 88 career titles, 62 have come on clay.

He has won at least 10 times each at Roland Garros,

Monte Carlo, Rome and Barcelona.

Between 2005 and 2007, he went on an 81-win streak on clay.

In his great rivalry with Djokovic, which stands at 29-28 in the Serb's favour, Nadal holds

the upper hand on clay.

He has a 19-7 record on the surface against the world number one and is 9-4 in finals.

Three of those championship match wins came at Roland Garros in 2012, 2014 and then last year where Nadal swept to victory 6-0, 6-2, 7-5.

However, he will still be wary of Djokovic, the 2016 champion in Paris.

The Serb handed Nadal one of his two losses at the French Open, in 2015, six years after Robin Soderling had been the first man to achieve the feat.

Apart from Djokovic and Soderling, only injury has defeated Nadal in Paris when a wrist problem forced him to withdraw after the second round in 2016.

'CATHEDRAL OF CLAY'

That helped pave the way

for Djokovic's lone title at the tournament.

"Roland Garros is a very special place for me," said Nadal.

"But favourite or not, that is not the question. What matters is to play well, and the one who plays the best will be whoever has the most chances of winning the tournament.

"My goal is to be the one who plays the best."

Nadal describes Roland Garros as "the cathedral of clay" and said it is impossible to pick out which of his 13 titles in Paris is the most memorable as "each one has had a particular resonance in my career."

However, he has no hesitation in pinpointing the low points. "My worst memories are without a doubt 2009 and the loss to Soderling, but also 2016, when I had to give up due to a wrist injury."

NAOMI OSAKA TO BOYCOTT MEDIA AT FRENCH OPEN

Paris: Naomi Osaka on Wednesday said that she will not take part in news conferences at the forthcoming French Open, believing that some post-match inquiries are little more than "kicking a person while they're down".

"I am writing this to say that I am not going to do any press during Roland Garros," the 23-year-old world number two announced on Twitter.

"I have often felt that people have no regard for athletes' mental health and this rings true whenever I see a press conference or partake in one.

"We're often sat there and asked questions that we've been asked multiple times before or asked questions that bring doubt into our minds and I am not going to subject myself to people who doubt me."

Under tennis tournament rules, all players are required to hold press conferences after each match.

Osaka regularly packs out media rooms due to her standing in the sport and her charismatic appeal to reporters.

She added on Wednesday: "I believe the whole situation is kicking a person while they are down and I don't understand the reasoning behind it." AFP

BIG 3 IN SAME DRAW

Paris: Rafael Nadal, Novak Djokovic and Roger Federer, the three most successful men in Grand Slam tennis history, were on Thursday all drawn in the same half of the French Open.

Having slipped to number three in the world, it was always likely that Nadal, who would face top-ranked Djokovic before the final. The two great rivals could now meet in the semi-finals this year.

Djokovic, the 2016 champion, is top seed and could possibly face 2009 winner Federer in the quarter-finals.

All three men are chasing

history at the French Open which starts on Sunday.

Nadal and Federer are locked on 20 Grand Slams each while Djokovic, who has 18, can become the first man in over half a century to win all four majors on more than one occasion.

In the women's draw, if the seedings pan out, world No 1 Ashleigh Barty and defending champion Iga Swiatek will face each other in the semi-finals.

Serena Williams is in the other half of the draw where Osaka is seeded to face Madrid champion Aryna Sabalenka in the last four. AFP



ZIDONE

Zizou resigns as Real Madrid boss, again

AFP ■ MADRID

Zinedine Zidane has resigned as Real Madrid manager with immediate effect, the Spanish club announced on Thursday, just days after they were beaten to the La Liga title by Atletico Madrid.

The Frenchman's departure comes at the end of a disappointing campaign for the 13-time European champions, who also lost to Chelsea in the Champions League semi-finals, as they failed to win a trophy for the first time in 11 seasons.

"We must now respect his decision and express our gratitude for his professionalism, dedication and passion over the years and what he means to Real Madrid," a club statement said.

"Zidane is one of Real Madrid's great icons and his legacy extends beyond what he has achieved as a coach and player at our club."

The announcement marks the end of Zidane's second spell in charge of the Spanish giants.

The 1998 World Cup

winner first took the helm in January 2016 and guided Real to the 2017 La Liga title and an unprecedented hat-trick of Champions League titles before abruptly quitting on May 31, 2018, saying the club needed "a different voice".

He returned in 2019 after Julen Lopetegui and Santiago Solari were sacked as managers in quick succession and only won the league title once and a Spanish Super Cup.

During his second stint, Zidane's task was to rebuild the club after Portuguese star striker Cristiano Ronaldo moved to Juventus.

Real Madrid president Florentino Perez then opened the coffers, signing Eden Hazard from Chelsea as well as several other rising stars such as Eder Militao, Luka Jovic and Ferland Mendy.

But playmaker Hazard has been injured for most of the season and most of the other new recruits disappointed, with Zidane forced to rely on veteran players such as Sergio Ramos and Raphael Varane in defence and Karim Benzema in attack.

Archer targets T20 WC after surgery

AFP ■ LONDON

England pacer Jofra Archer has targeted a return to action in time for the T20 World Cup in October and the subsequent Ashes series after "career-defining" elbow surgery.

The 26-year-old Sussex bowler is rehabilitating after an operation last week and is ready to miss England's summer fixtures in a bid to finally resolve a problem with his right elbow.

"One thing I am determined about post-elbow operation is not to rush my comeback because my primary focus is to be playing for England in the Twenty20 World Cup and Ashes later this year," Archer wrote in his column for the *Daily Mail*.

"Those are my targets. If I



Archer comes back before then and manage to play in the home Test series against India then fine, so be it. If I don't, I am quite prepared to sit out the summer.

"The way I am looking at things is that I would rather miss a few weeks of a year so that I

have a few more years in my career."

England play two Tests against New Zealand in June, followed by white-ball series against Sri Lanka and Pakistan before their five-Test series against India.

The T20 World Cup is scheduled to take place in October and November in India and the Ashes series begins in Australia in December.

Archer is an established match-winner in the shortest format of the game and would be a certain pick for the T20 showpiece. He is also considered a vital weapon for the Ashes.

"I'm not going to do myself any good by coming back before I'm fully fit, so I will take my time and do what is best for me and my life," Archer said.

Langer under pressure to change coaching style

PTI ■ SYDNEY

Australia head coach Justin Langer must change his coaching style if he wants to continue in his role, an end-of-season review of cricket Down Under has warned.

A source-based report in the *Sydney Morning Herald* said, the 50-year-old was given a "strong and straightforward" feedback — taken from 40 players and support staff — about his coaching style as part of the team's regular end-of-season reviews.

Earlier this year, after an under-strength India came back from behind to hammer Australia 2-1 in their own den, some players had expressed dissatisfaction over Langer's management style because of his intensity and mood swings.

Langer's response to the feedback across the rest of the year will decide whether he will be handed a new contract. "This is effectively identical to the process undertaken before the last World Cup and the 2019 Ashes where the team performed strongly," CA's national teams boss Ben Oliver said in a statement to the publication.

"It's part of our ongoing commitment to on-and-off-field improvement and we expect it will have a similar benefit in the team's preparation for the upcoming T20 World Cup and home Ashes," he added.

Assistant coach Andrew McDonald received good reviews with players, saying he was more approachable.

"In contrast to reports from the dressing room during the Australian summer, players spoke glowingly in public of the mood and team environment under McDonald, whom members of the Test side had gravitated towards due to his more approachable manner."

Villarreal shoot out Man Utd to win Europa League title

AFP ■ GDANSK

Villarreal defeated Manchester United 11-10 on penalties to win their first major trophy after a 1-1 draw in the Europa League final as goalkeeper David de Gea missed the decisive spot-kick in a remarkable shootout.

Gerard Moreno gave Villarreal the lead 29 minutes into the Spanish club's first European final, but Edinson Cavani equalised early in the second half before Unai Emery's team prevailed on spot-kicks, extending United's four-year trophy drought.

"It's a disappointed dressing room. That's football for you. Sometimes it's decided on one kick — and that's the difference between winning and losing," said United boss Ole Gunnar Solskjaer.

"We have to learn from it, taste this feeling and make sure we don't get it again."

He added: "We didn't turn up. We didn't play as well as we know we can."

Villarreal midfielder Francis Coquelin was delighted that the victory also led to a place in next season's Champions League.

"It feels really good. To play against a very good side like



Gerard Moreno lifts Europa League trophy as he celebrates with his Villarreal teammates after the Spanish club beat Man Utd in the final on Wednesday. AFP

Manchester United, we knew it would be tough," Coquelin told *BT Sport*.

"We didn't manage to get to the Champions League through the league so to get it through the Europa League is something special — and a first title for the club as well — something amazing."

RACIALLY ABUSED

Marcus Rashford says he was racially abused on social media following Manchester United's defeat in the Europa League final.

The 23-year-old, who has previously been a victim of online attacks, said he had received "at least 70 racial slurs" following United's penalty shootout loss.

"At least 70 racial slurs on my social accounts counted so far," Rashford wrote on Twitter. "For those working to make me feel any worse than I already do, good luck trying. Rashford added he was "outraged" that he was sent "a mountain of monkey emojis" in a message from a person using a profile which identified them as a teacher.

shortpasses

DJOKOVIC IN BELGRADE SEMIS

BELGRADE: Novak Djokovic booked his place in the semi-finals in Belgrade with a 6-1, 6-0 win over Federico Coria that puts him fifth on the list of Open era wins.

NAGAL'S CAMPAIGN END

PARIS: Sumit Nagal could not make a hat-trick of Grand Slam main draw appearances following a straight-set defeat in the second round of the French Open qualifying event. He lost 3-6, 3-6 to Alejandro Tabilo.

GAYLE, SHAKIB RETURN TO CPL

GROS ISLET: Chris Gayle, Shakib al Hasan and Faf du Plessis will feature in the 2021 Hero CPL to be played in St Kitts & Nevis from August 28 to Sept 19.

OMAR RICHARDS JOINS BAYERN

MUNICH: Bayern Munich has signed defender Omar Richards on a free transfer from second-division English club Reading. The 23-year-old signed a four-year deal.

KUNDELA RACISM BAN UPHELD

LAUSANNE: Czech defender Ondrej Kudela's appeal against a 10-match racism ban has been rejected and he will miss Euro 2020, UEFA announced on Wednesday.

KIEL CLOSE TO BUNDESLIGA

BERLIN: Holstein Kiel took a huge step closer to a first promotion to the Bundesliga with a 1-0 play-off victory over Cologne. The second leg is on Saturday in Kiel.

SHEFFIELD APPOINT JOKANOVIC

LONDON: Sheffield United have appointed Slavisa Jokanovic as their new manager following their relegation from the Premier League. The former Watford and Fulham boss has signed a three-year contract.

MILAN SIGN LILLE'S MAIGNAN

MILAN: Lille goalkeeper Mike Maignan has signed a five-year contract with AC Milan, the Serie A club announced on Thursday.

KANTE, MENDY BACK IN TRAINING

LONDON: Chelsea were given a Champions League final fitness boost as midfielder N'Golo Kante and goalkeeper Edouard Mendy returned to training. Agencies

Japan medics warn against Big Games

AFP ■ TOKYO

A Tokyo medical group warned on Thursday that the Olympics should be held without spectators because of virus risks, while a doctors' association urged outright cancellation, warning of potential "disaster".

Several parts of Japan are under virus states of emergency over a surge in infections, and the public is largely opposed to holding the Games this summer.

Medical groups have warned the massive event could introduce new variants to Japan and strain medical resources as the country battles a fourth virus wave.

The Tokyo Medical Association, with over 20,000 members, has not called for an outright cancellation.

But its chairman Haruo Ozaki said Thursday that "holding the Games without spectators is the bare minimum given the current situation."

"This is the Olympics in a time of emergency," he said



at a press conference.

Organisers have already barred overseas fans from the Tokyo Games, an unprecedented decision for the Olympics.

A decision on domestic spectators is expected in late June.

The virus states of emergency in several regions, including Tokyo, are expected to be extended this week until June 20.

Ozaki urged the Government to take stricter measures against the virus immediately, warning "this is the last chance" to subdue infections before the Games.

Tokyo's current virus restrictions allow venues to have up to 5,000 fans or 50 percent capacity, whichever is fewer.

All members of Tokyo-bound Indian contingent will be vaccinated before departure

New Delhi: Indian Olympic Association (IOA) on Thursday said all the Tokyo Games-bound athletes and officials have got their first Covid-19 vaccine and they will get their second doses before their departure from the country for the multi-sporting event.

"The IOA is... ensuring that all the participants through the IOA for the Tokyo Olympics including athletes, technical officials and delegate members will follow all precautions and will be vaccinated before leaving for Japan," the IOA said. "... Presently each of the above (athletes, technical officials and delegate members) has had the first vaccination and 2nd will happen as per vaccination protocols," IOA President and Secretary General said in the statement. PNS

Mary, Sakshi in Asian C'ship final

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Six-time world champion MC Mary Kom (51kg) and Sakshi (54kg) stormed into the Asian Boxing Championship finals in Dubai on Thursday after notching up gruelling victories in their last-four stage bouts.

While 2012 London Olympics Bronze medalist Mary Kom prevailed 4-1 over Mongolia's Lutsaikhan Altantsetseg, two-time youth world champion Sakshi upstaged top-seeded Kazakh Dina Zholaman 3-2.

However, Monika (48kg) and debutant Jaismine (57kg) settled for Bronze medals after losing their respective semifinal bouts. Monika went down 0-5 to second seeded Alua Balkibekova of Kazakhstan. Jaismine too was bested in a unanimous verdict by another Kazakh in Vladislava Kukhta.

The top-seeded Mary Kom dug from her huge reservoir of experience to outwit the sprightly Altantsetseg.



MC Mary Kom, left, celebrates after she wins her 51kg semifinal bout. BFI

"It has taken a lot to adjust to the humid weather here. Today, I was a bit slow in the first round but got my rhythm from the second round onwards. I had already fought

her once so it didn't take much to understand her gameplan," Mary Kom told PTI.

The veteran's right hooks were particularly impressive in a compelling performance. She

fought with a perilously low guard despite the aggressive intent shown by her rival and relied on her sharp reflexes to score on counter-attacks.

"The guard wasn't needed, I knew her quite well," she quipped.

The 38-year-old will now be gunning for her sixth Gold medal at the continental showpiece. She will be up against Kazakhstan's Nazym Kyzaybay, a two-time world champion.

"I have faced Nazym earlier and have even defeated her in a couple of past tournaments. Let's see what's the challenge I get this time," said Mary Kom.

Sakshi also endured a tough one against Zholaman but came out trumps, riding on her grit. She will face Uzbekistan's Sitara Shogdarova in the summit clash.

Earlier, in an intense contest, Monika just could not keep pace with Balkibekova, who craftily dodged the Indian's attacks and connected some eye-catching combination punches to dominate the proceedings.