

WORLD 7
OVER 200 BODIES FOUND
AT SCHOOL IN CANADA

MONEY 8
GST COUNCIL DECISION TO
HELP SMALL BIZ: EXPERTS

SPORT 10
JEMIMAH TO PLAY
IN THE HUNDRED



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Black fungus leaving Covid victims indigent

25% of infected patients don't go for treatment due to huge cost; 54% die even after treatment

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

The deadly fungal infections, particularly black fungus (mucormycosis), which have assumed alarming proportions among the Covid infected/survivors are leaving their kith and kin of the infected mentally, physically and financially drained.

Unable to bear the exorbitant treatment costs, at least 25 per cent of the fungus-infected patients either refuses to continue with the treatment or do not opt for it, leaving themselves on their fate, doctors said. "Most of them might not have survived," Dr Arunakole Chakrabarti, head of the department of microbiology, Post Graduate Institute of Medical Education and Research (PGIMER), Chandigarh, said and asserted that there is a need to bring down the cost as well as ensure a system to support them financially, before they move into BPL category due to out of pocket expenditure.

Though majority of States having high caseload of black fungus have notified the dis-



ease, the authorities are silent on the increasing cost which is leaving patients high and dry to arrange short supplied life-saving drugs — Liposomal Amphotericin B — in the market. Majority of patients are being forced to shell out hefty amount, ranging from ₹8,000 to over ₹10,000 for a vial.

To make the matter worse for the patients, at least 54 per cent opting for treatment succumb to the disease. A serious but rare fungal infection, mucormycosis is caused by a group of molds called mucormycetes. If not treated on time, it can leave one blind or with organ dysfunction, loss of body tissue and even death. Over 12,000 fungus infections, including mucormycosis cases, have been reported till date from across the country. Deaths are registered daily.

Dr Rahul Bhargava, Principal Director of the Hematology Division at Fortis

Memorial Research Institute, Gurugram, said treatment cost varies, depending on the gravity of the disease.

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Covid-19 IN INDIA	
TOTAL CASES:	2,78,92,629 (+1,64,301)
DEATHS:	3,25,985 (+3,450)
RECOVERED:	2,54,45,153 (+2,62,675)
ACTIVE:	21,10,334
MAHA:	57,13,215 (+20,295)
K'TAKA:	25,67,449 (+20,628)
KERALA:	24,94,386 (+25,513)
UP:	16,88,132 (+1,994)
DELHI:	14,24,646 (+956)

Pfizer jab less effective but neutralises strain found in India

AFF ■ PARIS

The Pfizer vaccine is slightly less effective but appears to still protect against the more transmissible strain of Covid-19 that first emerged in India, according to a study by France's Pasteur Institute.

"Despite slightly diminished efficacy, the Pfizer vaccine probably protects" against the variant found in India, according to laboratory test results, said Olivier Schwartz, the institute's director and co-author of the study that was published on the BioRxiv website ahead of peer review.

The study sampled 28 healthcare workers in Orleans. Sixteen of them had received two doses of the Pfizer vaccine, while 12 had received one dose of the AstraZeneca vaccine. People who had received two doses of Pfizer saw a three-fold reduction in their antibodies against the variant, B.1.617, according to the study, but were still protected. "The situation was different with the AstraZeneca vaccine, which induced particularly low levels of antibodies neutralising" the variant, the study said.

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Covid, farm laws to influence polls

The upshot of Covid-19 situations which led to tremendous suffering in Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand will play a key role in deciding the outcome of the next year's Assembly polls, whereas the impact of the ongoing farmers' protest against the three controversial farms law could become the single most important factor in settling the fate of political parties in Punjab.

BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■ LUCKNOW

With corona surge showing a downward trend in Uttar Pradesh, the political activities have started picking up. The virtual meetings with the call of "sewa" of corona-hit villagers has started emerging from almost all parties barring the BSP.

This is understandable because the election in Uttar Pradesh is just eight months away.

The spurt in corona cases leading to vehement cries of help, oxygen, hospital beds,

'Politics of sewa' in Covid-ravaged UP

and thousands of deaths has put the ruling BJP in the tight spot.

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has tried to salvage the situation by touring the length and breadth of the State but the death of people for want of medicine has emerged as an ugly war on Yogi's so-far clean image.

He has called lawmakers to

adopt PHCs and CHCs in their constituencies so that they can serve humanity.

Several BJP leaders, MLAs and workers have also shown their annoyance over the Yogi Government's style of handling the corona crisis. Their allegation was that this Government relied more on bureaucrats. BJP lawmakers and senior party leaders have

publicly showed their anger for not being able to extend help to people at this time of crisis.

This is the tailor made situation for the Opposition parties in Uttar Pradesh to make inroads into the BJP vote bank and can dislodge BJP in Uttar Pradesh.

In last election the BJP had 41 per cent vote share. Despite this, the recently held panchayat election is an indicator of groundswell of support for the Opposition as the ruling party lost elections in key districts like Ayodhya, Varanasi, Gorakhpur and Lucknow.

Continued on Page 4

Slashing tariff to retain power in Punjab!

AMITABH SHUKLA ■ CHANDIGARH

With the Punjab Government announcing a reduction in the power tariff up to 20 per cent for certain categories at the weekend despite facing a severe financial crunch, the election bugle has been truly sounded in the State with this populist move.

To be held in February-March next year, Assembly elections are 7-8 months away but political activity has increased the summer temperature in the border State. Two main rivals of the ruling Congress — AAP and SAD — too have upped the ante, tar-

geting both the State and Central Governments on a host of issues ranging from Covid management, farmers' protest to economic distress and rising inflation.

The main player at the moment — the Congress — has escaped unhurt from the political attacks of its rivals, deflecting the crisis at the Centre while taking credit wherever it possibly can. Of course, it is facing heat from within with firebrand leader and former Minister Navjot Singh Sidhu leading the charge against Chief Minister Capt Amarinder Singh.

Continued on Page 4

U'khand parties slug it out on Covid care

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

As Uttarakhand comes out of a deadly surge of corona, both the Bharatiya Janata Party and the Congress are trying to tackle the situation in their own way, knowing too well that suffering faced by the masses will play a key role in deciding the outcome of the next year's Assembly polls.

Both the national parties are trying to reach out to people and their cadre and provide them succour.

The Aam Aadmi Party has also undertaken some efforts to help the Covid-affected people and gain a foothold in the State.

But the BJP is way ahead in this exercise.

According to observers, the BJP with 57 MLAs in the 70-member Assembly remains in the driver seats in Uttarakhand due to its relatively better organisational structure and coordination between the State and Central Governments.

The party has tried to offset the anti-incumbency issues arising out of allegations of corruptions and lack of opportunity, by removing Trivendra Singh Rawat as Chief Minister just a few days before completion of his four years in office.

Continued on Page 4

CAPSULE

CLASS X UP BOARD EXAMS SCRAPPED

Lucknow: The UP Secondary Education Council on Saturday cancelled board examinations for Class 10 students and proposed to take a 90-minute test of each subject for Class 12 students in the second week of July, if feasible. The detailed examinations scheduled for class 12 board examinations will be announced soon.

COURT GRANTS BAIL TO NAVNEET KALRA

New Delhi: A Delhi court on Saturday granted bail to businessman Navneet Kalra in the oxygen concentrator black-marketing case, saying that he has clean antecedents and will not tamper with the evidence. During a recent raid amid the second wave of the coronavirus pandemic, 524 oxygen concentrators were recovered from Khan Chacha, Town Hall and Nege & Ju restaurants owned by Kalra in Delhi.

ALIGARH HOORH TRAGEDY: DEATH TOLL RISES TO 22

Aligarh: The death toll in the Aligarh hoorh tragedy went up to 22 on Saturday, and 28 more people are still in critical condition, an official said.

Ready to touch PM's feet...stop one-sided story, says Mamata

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Railing against what she recalled "Centre's politics of vendetta", an irked Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Saturday said she would even touch Prime Minister Narendra Modi's feet to soothe his ego provided he stopped humiliating her and the people of Bengal.

Taking a strong note of the PMO dishing out "selective, one-sided and partisan news to the media" regarding her late arrival and hasty departure from a pre-scheduled meeting with the Prime Minister at Kalaikunda Airport on Friday, the Chief Minister said, "There is planned effort to humiliate me and Bengal by catering selective, one-sided news to the media on the Friday's incident."

Detailing the timeline of her visit to Kalaikunda airport where she was to meet the Prime Minister who was on an aerial visit of Odisha and



Bengal to assess the post cyclone situation in the affected districts, Mamata said, "What is being said is only one-sided and partisan story... this is not true."

On her late arrival, she said, "I was travelling to Sagar Islands — to assess the extent

of damage myself — from where I was to take off for Kalaikunda but apparently because of security reasons we were asked to hold on for 20 minutes... as at that time the Prime Minister was flying... then after reaching Kalaikunda we were again delayed by another 15 minutes during when the SPG refused to let us in despite requests," and we were told that the PM had already come and that we could not be let in for an hour because already a meeting was going on... still we waited patiently.

Continued on Page 4

Recall Chief Secy letter, Didi tells Shah

Kolkata: Mamata Banerjee has strongly objected to the Centre's recalling of Bengal Chief Secretary Alapan Bandopadhyay to Delhi and asked the Union Home Ministry to withdraw its letter directing Bandopadhyay to

report at the North Block by Monday morning.

The Bengal Government has granted a three-month extension to the Chief Secretary who is scheduled to retire on May 31.

PNS

Dominican court extends stay on Choksi repatriation

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A top Dominican court late on Friday (India time) extended the injunction against repatriation of Indian fugitive Mehul Choksi till Wednesday (June 2) from that country where he was arrested this week for illegal entry. The court will hear Choksi's habeas corpus plea on that date.

The court also directed the authorities there to take Choksi to the Dominica-China Friendship Hospital for medical attention, including subjecting him to a Covid test.

"The applicant be allowed to meet with his legal counsel. The injunction restraining the respondents whether by themselves, servants, agents and/or representatives from removing the applicant from The Commonwealth of Dominica until...is continued until the further hearing" it ordered.

Continued on Page 4

Free education, monthly stipend, ₹10 L at age 23 for Covid orphans: PM

Govt will ensure life of dignity & opportunity for them, says Modi

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday announced a relief package, including free education, for the children who lost their parents due to Covid-19.

Apart from free education, the PM Cares Fund will provide a monthly stipend once they turn 18 and a fund of ₹10 lakh when they turn 23. The Fund will pay interest of the education loans taken from banks for the higher education.

The children will get free health insurance of ₹5 lakh under Ayushman Bharat till 18 years and premium will be



paid by PM Cares Fund.

"Supporting our nation's future! Several children lost their parents due to Covid-19. The Government will care for these children, ensure a life of dignity & opportunity for them. PM-CARES for Children will ensure education & other assistance to children." Tweeted Modi announcing the education and financial packages to the orphaned children.

Continued on Page 4

Week more lockdown in Capital

SAPNA SINGH ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Government on Saturday extended Covid-19 lockdown till June 7. Although production and construction activities will be allowed in industrial areas from May 31, several activities continue to be prohibited as per the Delhi Disaster Management Authority (DDMA's) guidelines issued on Saturday.

According to the DDMA order, the movement of workers/employees shall be allowed only on the possession of e-pass (in soft or hard copy), which can be obtained by the owners/employers/contractors by submitting online application on the website www.delhi.gov.in.

As per fresh guidelines, Delhiites and people from adjoining areas would require an e-pass to travel in the capital city. An e-pass is also mandatory for people crossing the border.

Detailed report on P3

MHA invites non-Muslim migrants from B'desh, Pak, Af to apply for citizenship

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Union Home Ministry has issued a notification under the 2009 rules of the Citizenship Act, 1955 asking non-Muslims belonging to Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan and residing in 13 districts of Gujarat, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh, Haryana and Punjab to apply for Indian citizenship.

The fresh order is in no way connected to the Citizenship Amendment Act passed in 2019 as the rules under it are yet to be framed by the Government.

The Union Home Ministry on Friday night issued the notification for immediate implementation of the order

under the Citizenship Act 1955 and Rules framed under the law in 2009. This benefit is extended to minorities from Afghanistan, Pakistan and Bangladesh who fulfill all conditions applicable to any foreign citizen seeking citizenship by naturalisation after a minimum of 11 years of residency in India.

People who are eligible to apply for Indian citizenship are those currently living in the districts of Morbi, Rajkot, Patan and Vadodara of Gujarat, Durg and Balodabazar in Chhattisgarh, Jalore, Udaipur, Pali, Barmer and Sirohi in Rajasthan, Faridabad in Haryana and Jalandhar in Punjab.

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BCCI to seek month's time for WT20 final call, formal nod for IPL in UAE in Sept-Oct

New Delhi: The general body of the BCCI on Saturday approved the IPL's resumption in September in the UAE and also decided to seek one month's time from the ICC to assess the Covid-19 situation in India before taking a final call on the ICC T20 World Cup.

The Special General Meeting (SGM), held virtually, lasted for about 50 minutes as members were unanimous in their approval of the two agendas on the day. "The SGM approved the decision to hold the remaining IPL matches between September and October. Dates will be intimated later," senior State association member, who was present in the meeting, told PTI on conditions of anonymity. PTI

Detailed report on P10

Pulwama martyr's wife takes his journey forward

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

Donning the olive green uniform, Lieutenant Nitika Kaul Dhoundiyal on Saturday stood tall in front of Lt-Gen YK Joshi, GoC-in-C Northern Command. He piped the stars on her shoulders after reviewing an impressive passing out parade at the Officers Training Academy (OTA) in Chennai.

The top general also greeted her saying, "We are really proud of you. Nitika's journey was not an easy one."

After her husband Major Vibhuti Shankar Dhoundiyal attained martyrdom during a fierce gunfight with a group of terrorists, which included the mastermind of a ghastly Pulwama attack in February 2019, she opted to join the Indian Army under the Short Service Commission.

Her husband was given

the gallantry award, "Shaurya Chakra" for his exceptional courage, devotion to duty, and supreme sacrifice.

During the last 11-months, she underwent rigorous multi-disciplinary training at the OTA in Chennai.

After the ceremony, Kaul said, "The journey has been marvellous and I believe my journey has just started. The last 11 months have made me learn so many things in life."

She also thanked her mother and mother-in-law and several others for having put their faith in her and being a part of her journey.

Remembering her husband, Kaul said, "I feel that I'm traveling the same journey that he did. I believe he's always going to be part of my life, even today he's somewhere around looking at me and I can feel that he's just holding me and



saying you just did it. I Love you Vibhu."

In her brief message for all the women out there, Lt Nitika Kaul said, "You need to keep faith in yourself. At times life seems very difficult and you may feel that you are going to lose it. Even if at that point you lose it you need to understand it's not the end of the life. You need to try again, get up. Some day for sure you are going to win it. Just keep faith in yourself."

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HOME THEATRE

Parineeti Chopra takes centrestage



SANDEEP AUR PINKY FARAAR
Amazon Prime Video
*ing: Parineeti Chopra, Arjun Kapoor, Jaideep Ahlawat as Tyagi, Raghubir Yadav, Neena Gupta
Rated: 5.5/10

The movie had a theatrical release on March 19, 2021. Given the present pandemic few would have heard of this movie getting released let alone going to the cinema hall to watch it. The good thing is that the makers decided to release it on an OTT platform catering to a much wider audience who are looking for meaningful cinema.

This is the third time that Arjun Kapoor and Parineeti Chopra have come together for a project; the previous ones being *Ishaqzaade* (2012) and *Namaste England* (2018). This is also the third film of Chopra that released in the last few months — *The Girl On The Train* and *Saina* were the other two. For Kapoor it is his second film to be released in a week, *Grandson Of Sardar* released last week.

Directed by Dibakar Banerjee, who has directed movies like *Khosla Ka Ghosla*, *Oye Lucky! Lucky Oye* and *Lust Stories* delivers yet another black comedy. Yet *Sandeep Aur Pinky*

Faraar is different from the films that Banerjee has directed in the past. Unlike *Khosla Ka Ghosla* which had plenty of comic moments, these provided by Neena Gupta and Raghubir Yadav fail to draw a smirk. But this has more to do with how the movie opens — bullets flying killing three people — unlocking a more sinister plot and a couple on the run to save their lives.

The good part is that the film is off on an interesting note — a killing — that too a wrong one. The pace picks up. With the story told in present and flashback, the picture gets clear about why a suspended cop, Pinky, played by Arjun Kapoor and a bank employee, Sandeep, played by Parineeti Chopra are on the run. Another plus is that the plot sucks you in from the word go even though the second half is sluggish.

While Arjun Kapoor stands tall, it is Parineeti Chopra who takes centrestage. After *The Girl On The Train*, she shines and the different shades and emotions that she showcases here has been done rather brilliantly. Jaideep Ahlawat does his bit as well. It would have been great to see more of Raghubir Yadav and Neena Gupta and their domestic squabbles to give respite from an otherwise intense film. — Shalini Saksena

Lucifer is back and how!

LUCIFER (SEASON 5 PART II)
Netflix
*ing: Tom Ellis, Lauren German, Dennis Haysbert, Kevin Alejandro, DB Woodside, Lesley-Ann Brandt, Scarlett Estevez, Rachael Harris
Rated: 6/10

The OTT platform, Netflix dropped Part II of Season 5 on May 28, 2021 — from episode nine to 16. Fans would remember that Season 5 part I ended on episode eight with a promise that there would be eight more episodes in this season. Fans would also remember that *Lucifer aka Lucy* was all set to say the magical three words before God descended on Earth. Yes, miracles do happen!

Given that Lucy has Dad issues, this season was bound to be filled with clashes and in trying to address these and we are not disappointed. Episode nine Season 5 opens with Dad stepping in before the three brothers on Earth — Amenadiel, Samael and Michael — end up fighting and killing each other. If one



wanted to kill all perceptions related to angels, demons, the Devil and God, this is the right series to follow. God and his family couldn't be a more dysfunctional family in the entire universe.

This means there is plenty of fun, drama and emotions running high not to mention song and dance at the drop of the hat. The reason. God is on Earth and he can't control his powers on this

planet. Fun times begin!
In the midst of all this, is Lucifer and detective Chloe trying to solve crime and murder. With God wanting to make amends with how he treated Samael (Lucifer), he tags along, opening doors to plenty of fun moments that bring a smile. One definitely doesn't want to get caught without clothes by your Dad. But then he is God and he knows and sees everything.

While some of the moments may border on being downright ridiculous, Lucy does manage to find a way in which it finds a connection with our lives — two brothers fighting, one son with Dad issues and the elder brother trying to pacify everyone. Throw in a family dinner and things are bound to get only interesting from here on given that God cooks and the taste is heavenly. How can it be anything else? He is heaven.

But the best part is that Season 5 is that it ends on a somewhat positive and romantic note. Does Lucy say those three magic words? Watch it to find out.

Plan Your Stay At Home Sunday

RAGI PANCAKES

Ingredients
■ 3/4th cup Ragi flour
■ 1/2 cup Blended Oats
■ 1 egg
■ 1/2 tsp Baking powder
■ 1 Tsp honey
■ 1 Ripe Banana
■ 1 Diced Mango
■ 2 tbsp Skimmed Milk
■ 1 tbsp Yoghurt (for garnish)
■ 1 Pinch Baking Powder
■ 1 tsp Oil
Preparation:
■ In a bowl Mash the ripe banana completely till soft.
■ To it add Ragi flour, Oat flour, egg, honey & 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 (1/2 quantity & reserve half).



■ Pour oil in a non-stick pan on medium heat. Pour a ladle of the batter & cook on one side till bubbles start appearing & sides are cooked.
■ Flip the pancake & 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 & a sprig of mint.
— Chef Shantanu Gupte, TV Celeb Chef Anchor, Founder of Shiifu and Chef Shan Cakes

SAFFRON LATTE

Ingredients
■ 3/4 cup whole milk
■ 3 to 4 saffron threads, crushed
■ 30ml espresso
Method:
■ In a small saucepan, heat milk and saffron over medium-low until hot and just bubbling around edges, 3 to 5 minutes. Remove from heat; whisk until thick and foamy.
■ Pour espresso into a mug, top with saffron milk, and serve.
■ If you don't have espresso at home, you can try with 40ml decoction of Il Matino Vivace brewed in a filter.
— Abdul Sahid Khan, Head Trainer, Lavazza India



TELLY TALE

NEW SERIES ON MX PLAYER

Weddings are a time of joy, a celebration of two souls becoming one but then — there are times when you hear of a runaway bride that leaves everyone wondering what compelled her to desert her own wedding.



Be it the fabulous Julia Roberts' story in *Runaway Bride*, Kareena Kapoor Khan's epic escape in *3 Idiots* or Diana Penry's run in *Happy Bhaag Jayegi*, runaway brides have always made great entertainers. Ruhi Singh, recently seen as a runaway bride in MX Player's *Runaway Lugaai* says she thinks it's the thrill of taking this giant leap of faith to finding your own path that makes these stories a fascinating watch.

Talking about the same, Ruhi says: "My character Bulbul is bold, she's *bindaas* and as a small town girl, she goes through this dilemma of wanting to achieve and live her big dream even at the cost of running away from her life as a newlywed. While enacting that scene, there was this sense of purpose and adrenaline pulsing through me, and I was mentally cheering on my character who so bravely decided to make an unconventional choice. Stories of runaway brides might not be convincing for all, but there could be multiple reasons as to why a bride is fighting against this new chapter of her life. Bulbul finds a different path for herself a little while into her marriage, and she isn't afraid to go after it — this courage is what I love about her. It's the sheer thrill of being able to take a giant leap of faith that leaves most of us fascinated by these plots."

Runaway Lugaai follows the story of Rajnikant Sinha (Rajni — who is far from his namesake), the only child of MLA Narendra Sinha (Sanjay Mishra) who has lived his entire life under his father's thumb. But

things changed for him when he met Bulbul (Ruhi Singh) — a beautiful, feisty and free-spirited girl whom he marries soon after. Instead of a happily ever after, what follows for Rajni is a shocking turn of events when his *Lugaai* goes missing without leaving a trace, shortly after their marriage and thus begins Rajni's humorous and heart-warming quest to find his *Runaway Lugaai*.

SAPNA AND NEHA'S DANCE CHALLENGE

Zee TV's primetime show *Kyun Rishton Mein Katti Batti* depicts the innocent world of two adorable kids (Rishi and Roli) who have teamed up to rekindle the love between their parents and complete their 'happy family'. Together, they have vowed to be the glue, that will fill the cracks that have developed between their parents, Shubra (Neha Marda) and Kuldeep (Siddhaanth Vir Surryavanshi). While they continue to strive and fix the issues between their parents, Kuldeep also wishes for Shubra to resolve her issues with his love interest, Samaira (Sapna Thakur). The duo may have been involved in an endless heated dispute over Kuldeep, but this has never affected the off-screen bond that Neha Marda and Sapna Thakur share. In fact, they both have become the best of friends and their social media posts are a definite proof of that.

The leading ladies of the show are often seen creating some peppy dance reels for their fans when taking breaks from their shoot. Very recently on the sets of *Kyun Rishton Mein Katti Batti*, Sapna and Neha challenged themselves to the trending 'Don't rush challenge' where the former is seen effortlessly lifting Neha Marda who is posing in style, leaving all of us surprised and awed. Well, it surely seems like these two have



outstood all the performances seen so far. Sharing more about the moment, Neha

Marda said: "We were making a 'Don't Rush' challenge video and where I suggested that we could do a step where Sapna can lift me up at the end. Sapna is physically strong and has a lot of strength, so it was easy for her to lift someone like me who is so petite. Initially Sapna wanted to do the same step with Siddhaanth but that couldn't happen, therefore she decided to do it with me. When a dancer does a lift, it is important for it to be technically right, or else any injury can take place. I must say Sapna did it flawlessly in one take."

STYLE IT LIKE YESHA

Yesha Rughani's talent as an actress is well known to everyone, with a splendid performance alongside the heartthrob



Abhishek Nigam, Yesha has managed to steal the hearts of the audience with her acting as well as fashion skills.

Essaying the role of starlet, Zara in Sony Sab *Hero — Gayab Mode On*, Yesha is a simple girl next door but with a smacking sense of fashion. She pools some easy and chic fashion tips with her fans and those who are keen on grooming themselves but do not know where to start.

Yesha Rughani who plays the role of Zara said: "Fashion and makeup go hand in hand. Anyone interested in knowing about fashion naturally fosters a preference for makeup trends and vice versa. Fashion is a synonym for comfort, and I only abide by those fashion trends I am comfortable in. I have a soft corner for vintage style as it's something which is exceptionally beautiful. As I have studied styling, I always make sure whatever I buy I use it many ways from a skirt to a scarf. I make sure I style it in various ways for multiple events. I would always prefer a sweatshirt and *pyjama* and whatever I am wearing reflects my mood for that day. Playing Zara has changed a lot in my life I really love her styling and the glam make up she does. I am learning a lot from my role in terms of fashion and make up as well."

'Theatre made me fall in love with acting'

RAJAT VERMA, who shot to fame playing Rishi in *Beyhadh 2*, is now playing a parallel lead role on Sony TV's *Ishk Par Zor Nahi*. SHALINI SAKSENA chats him up

■ What is *Ishk Par Zor Nahi* about?

The show is about two ideologies related to marriage and how they collide in this situation. Hence, the parallel lead. The show progresses from here on and every character here has different views about how they perceive love and marriage, be it the character who plays my elder brother, everyone has a different take.

■ Tell us about your role.

I play Kartik. He is witty and whatever he says resonates with how people think in real life. His thoughts are similar to how the young think today — there should be equality between men and women — that a woman should be allowed to work because she is capable of working and looking after the home as well. This is such a positive message to send out to the viewers. I feel that my character's views are progressive and on the right track.

■ What made you say yes?

First, the director of *Beyhadh 2*, is the director of this show as well. But he left this show mid-way due to a family emergency. When he approached me for *Ishk Par...* I couldn't say no to the project. Second, in *Beyhadh*, my character, despite being good, was small. I couldn't explore different shades that a character can have. With Kartik, I have that opportunity.

■ How much do you identify with Kartik?

This is another reason why I agreed to this project, Kartik is very close to what and who I am in real life. Kartik is from Delhi; he is 22-23. He is like how people are at this age. I am from Noida; a lot of my friends are from Delhi. I am able to relate to how they speak and think. Kartik's thinking about equality is something that I subscribe to as well. It made it easy for me to play this role. There are some things that one keeps hidden in real life, we



don't want to show people certain aspects of our life. Kartik is able to showcase all that.

■ Did you think your character in *Beyhadh 2* would get so much attention?

I was not expecting it at all. Jennifer Winget, was someone that I looked up to when I was in my teens. When I was offered the show, I knew that I would not say no. I had to work with her. *Beyhadh* had become a brand even before Season 2 was announced. I knew that this season would be loved as well even though my role was for a short span. I had given it my 100 per cent and am glad people appreciated my work there.

■ You did comic content on YouTube. Tell us about that.

I created content and started with a web series — *Nalayaks Season 1 & 2* with Nazarbattu Productions on

YouTube. I wanted to work on the digital platform; that was the time when TikTok was at its peak. It led to the era of influencers and I too got inspired from this and decided to explore this platform. Then the production house offered me to do comedy sketches. During my Mass Communication days, we would make short videos. Doing these sketches made it easy for me to understand cinema better.

■ How did acting happen?

It's a long story. I was in Lucknow and did a fashion show. That got me interested. I was already on the stage before acting happened. When I dropped B'Tech, I was looking for something to do. Family and friends would tell me that I was a bit of a *nautanki baaz* and decided to explore acting. I got to work with Ras Theatre Group. I got a lot of clarity there. Theatre made me fall in love with acting.

■ Is it tough to shoot during the present pandemic?

It's been rather tough. Where we go, the place where we have to shoot, one has to take a lot of precautions. We have to be careful who we meet, who we speak with. We keep having quick COVID-19 tests. In our subconscious mind there is constant stress. On the sets, we have senior actors as well. We have to be careful that they remain healthy. I am lucky that my parents were not with me when I was shooting in Mumbai, they are in Delhi. Otherwise, I would have kept myself in one room.

■ What next?

At present, I am concentrating on this show but am also looking for other projects that offer me a chance to explore different shades and characters. Due to the pandemic, it is tough to deal with it. I am grateful that I have work.

Kartik is very close to what and who I am in real life. He is from Delhi and is 23. He is like how people are at this age. I am from Noida; a lot of my friends are from Delhi. Hence, I am able to relate to my character



COVID-19 Drive-through jab centre launched



Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal interacts with a beneficiary as he visits a drive-through Covid vaccination centre at Chhatrasal Stadium in New Delhi on Saturday. RANJAN DIMRI | PIONEER

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Saturday kick started the "drive-through vaccination centre" at the Chhatrasal Stadium where people above the age of 45 can get themselves vaccinated for free. Kejriwal said the Delhi Government has started this centre for 45 plus and will further start for 18 plus on receiving adequate vaccines and people are highly satisfied with the arrangements made.

"The Delhi Government has floated a global tender for vaccines and is making all the efforts from its side but big vaccine manufacturing companies want to deal with the Central Government directly," he said. The Chief Minister said, "The drive-in vaccination facility started at the Chhatrasal Stadium. People can come here in their cars, motorcycles and on foot and can get vaccinated here. The vaccination is free at this center. Right now, this has been initiated for those above the age of 45 years because there is no vaccine for those

below the age of 45 years. As soon as adequate vaccines arrive, vaccination for those below the age of 45 (18-45 years) will also be started." Talking about cases of Black Fungus in hospitals run by the Delhi Government. The central government hospitals are dealing directly with the Centre. We have demanded the medicines accordingly but there is a countrywide paucity of medicines. The Central Government is giving whatever it can. As I

understand, more injections of this medicine will be procured and will be distributed to all the state governments." "Today, only 900 cases have emerged for the first time. We will continue to unlock further if cases keep on decreasing in the upcoming weeks. We want the economic activities to come back on track so that the economy can be revived. I can understand the troubles being faced by the traders. We also open up everything when the situation comes under control," he added.

City extends lockdown till June 7 with a few relaxations

SAPNA SINGH ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Government has extended Covid-19 curfew till June 7. However, production units and construction activities are being allowed to function in industrial areas from May 31. Several activities still continue to be prohibited as per the Delhi Disaster Management Authority (DDMA's) guidelines issued on Saturday.

After reviewing the Covid-19 situation, the DDMA authority has decided to extend the lockdown.

"The situation of Covid-19 in NCT of Delhi has again been reviewed and observed that, though the number of Covid-19 patients and positivity rate is declining, the situation is still precarious, therefore, in order to contain the spread of virus and to further break the transmission chain, curfew needs to be extended for another week in the territory of NCT of Delhi (except for essential activities / services), permitting reopening of certain prohibited activities in a phased manner in areas outside the containment zones for overall well-being of the people of N.C.T of Delhi," the order said.



According to the DDMA order, the movement of workers / employees shall be allowed only on the possession of e-pass (in soft or hard copy), which can be obtained by the owners/employers/contractors by submitting online application with details of workers/employees on the website delhi.gov.in. As per fresh guidelines, Delhiites and people from adjoining areas would require an e-pass to travel in the capital city. An e-pass is also mandatory for people crossing the border, it implies that those travelling from Noida, Ghaziabad, Faridabad to Delhi must apply for an e-pass before getting into the city. Bank and private sector employees, people working in IT and Internet services, broadcasting and cable services will have to produce an e-pass before concerned authorities if they want to travel to the national capital. On Friday, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal had said that Delhi will start the unlock process from May 31.

Decision to open markets turned down by L-G, says AAP

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) has alleged that the proposal to open markets was made by the Delhi Government in the meeting of Delhi Disaster Management Authority, but was turned down by Lieutenant Governor Anil Bajjal.

AAP's industry wing convenor Brijesh Goyal on Saturday said that the Lieutenant Governor was not convinced with the idea of resuming market operations but industries and construction works were permitted to reopen.

"I would like to urge the BJP not to put the blame on Delhi government as it was the Lieutenant Governor Anil Bajjal who did not sanction the reopening of markets. If the BJP leaders are indeed so concerned about the markets, they must request the LG to allow markets to reopen from June 1," he said.

Responding to the claim, Delhi BJP spokesperson Praveen Shankar Kapoor said that the AAP should stop misleading traders on Unlock decisions taken by Delhi Government.

"The decision to not to unlock trading activities was taken with consent of the Lieutenant Governor. If Kejriwal wanted to unlock markets from 31 May and Lt Governor stopped him then the Chief Minister should come forward and raise the issue himself," he added.

City to get 5.5L jabs from Centre in June: Sisodia

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia on Saturday said the city Government will receive 5.5 lakh Covid-19 jabs for beneficiaries in the 18-44 age group from the Centre in June.

Sisodia questioned the lack of vaccines for the youth of the country and attributed it to the negligence and gross mismanagement of the Central Government.

"All states are waiting for vaccines. It is due to gross mismanagement on part of the central government that young people are not getting vaccinated. State governments have had to close down vaccination centres for the 18-44 age group due to end of supply. The Central Government told us that more stocks for the youth will not be available before 10th June. Even after 10th June, there will not be enough to vaccinate everyone. Youth are the strength and energy of our country. The only way to keep them safe is to vaccinate them," he said.

Adding to the dearth of vaccines in Delhi, Sisodia said, "We are prepared to vaccinate all 92 lakh people in the 18-44 age group within three months but we do not have enough vac-



cines. We need 1 crore 84 lakh vaccine doses for that. However, we are being told that there is not enough availability of vaccines. The Delhi Government only received 4.5 lakh doses in April, followed by 3.66 lakh doses in May." Further referring to a meeting of the GST Council on Friday, where Finance Ministers of all states discussed the possibility of making vaccines and other COVID essentials tax-free, Sisodia said, "As the finance minister of Delhi, I proposed to make vaccines and other essential health equipment such as pulse-oximeter, PPE kits, etc. tax-free. Finance Ministers of West Bengal, Punjab and Chhattisgarh too demanded the same. However, many officials of BJP resisted this suggestion and therefore a consensus could not be concurred. I want to know why the BJP, in a time of grave difficulties and challenges, is protesting against removing the GST on vaccines and medical equipment."

Central Delhi accounts for most red zones among 22,701 containment zone

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Of the total 22,701 containment zones in the national Capital, Central Delhi accounts for the maximum 6,523 red zones, according to official figures.

Delhi had 31,570 containment zones on April 27. The number, due to a significant drop in Covid-19 cases, has now come down to 22,701 -- a decrease of over 28 per cent -- by Thursday.

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Saturday said the national capital recorded around 900 new coronavirus cases in the last 24 hours and stressed that if new infections continue to decline, more activities will be allowed to open up in the city.

This is the fourth consecutive day when the daily cases count have stood below the 1500-mark.

According to data from the Delhi government's revenue department, central Delhi has the maximum number of 6,523 containment zones -- accounting for nearly 29 per cent of the total zones -- followed by New Delhi (4,229), southwest Delhi (2,313), south Delhi (2,308) and north Delhi (1,848).

East Delhi (197) has the lowest number of containment zones. Shahdara has 262 zones and north-east Delhi 326.

Of the 11 districts in the city, seven have less than 2,000 containment zones -- north Delhi (1,848), northwest Delhi (1,608), southeast Delhi (1,604), west Delhi (1,483), northeast Delhi (326), Shahdara (262) and east Delhi (197), as per the data.

Since the beginning of the pandemic, Delhi has had a total of 85,908 containment zones, with south Delhi recording 32,383, the highest in the city. Of these, 63,207 have been de-contained so far.

There are 14,253 active containment zones in the city.

In compliance with the Union Health Ministry regulations, an area or building is marked as a containment zone when three or more COVID-19 positive cases are reported there. To prevent further contamination, more stringent restrictions are imposed in these areas.

The process of lifting the lockdown gradually in the national capital will begin from Monday, starting with resumption of construction activities and reopening of factories for a week, Kejriwal had announced on Friday.

The phase-wise unlocking process in Delhi will begin after over six weeks of lockdown enforced in view of the second wave of COVID-19.

Kalra gets bail, directed not to connect with customers whom he sold O2 concentrators

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Directing the businessman Navneet Kalra not to contact the customers to whom he had sold the oxygen concentrators, a Delhi court on Saturday granted him bail in a case pertaining to the seizure of concentrators from his upscale restaurants in the national Capital.

While granting the bail, the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Arun Kumar Garg has directed Kalra not to contact the customers to whom he had sold the concentrators, not to tamper with evidence or influence the witnesses, and join the investigation as and when called by the police.

During the course of hearing on the bail plea, Additional Public Prosecutor Atul Shrivastava, representing the Delhi Police, told the court that the businessman committed a white-collar crime and made profit by selling medical devices at exorbitant price to those on death beds.

Kalra's lawyers, senior advocate Vikas Pahwa and advocate Vineet Malhotra, opposed the contentions of the police and said that their client is being made a scapegoat and had no criminal intent to cheat people as he sold the oxygen concentrators to merely help family and friends.

During a recent raid, 524 oxygen concentrators, which are a crucial medical equipment used for COVID-19 patients, were recovered from Khan Chacha, Town Hall, and Nege & Ju restaurants owned by Kalra.

The businessman, accused of black-marketing the critical medical device, was nabbed from Gurugram on May 16 and formally arrested the next day. He had been on the run ever since the police raided his restaurants and seized the medical devices. A court had later sent him to judicial custody till June 3.

The police claimed that the concentrators were imported from China and were being sold at an exorbitant price of Rs 50,000 to 70,000 a piece as against its cost of Rs 16,000 to Rs 22,000.

Man held for duping 200 shopkeepers through online payment app

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Police has arrested a man for allegedly cheating over 200 shopkeepers using a fake online payment application in the national Capital.

The accused identified as Kunal Sharma is a resident of Uttam Nagar in West Delhi. Police said Sharma could cheat the shopkeepers as he was well versed with the working of such an app and presently he was unemployed.

According to Ingit Pratap Singh, the Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP), Southwest district, the matter came to light on May 28, after a shopkeeper who was duped by Sharma of Rs 2,560 lodged a complaint at the Palam police station.

"In his complaint, the shopkeeper told police that a customer had come to buy refined oil at his shop, but did not have cash, and so offered to make the payment through an online application, they said, adding that the complainant never received the payment," said the DCP.

"With the help of technical surveillance, our team identified the accused and

accordingly, a raid was conducted and Kunal Sharma was arrested from the Palam village area," said the DCP.

"During interrogation, Sharma said he had cheated more than 200 shopkeepers using a spoof app. Sharma cheated shopkeepers by offering to pay through an online app. Sharma used a fake application to show that he had made a payment. He never scanned QR codes but asked for a shopkeeper's mobile-phone number to pay and then sent a pre-drafted message to the number confirming payment," said the DCP.

Explaining the accused modus operandi the DCP said that instead of scanning the QR code, he asked for their mobile number attached to the app for making the payment.

"Later, he would generate a fake payment transaction receipt using a fake app and send a pre-drafted message that said payment made. But in reality no money was transferred to the victims accounts," said the DCP.

The mobile phone used by Sharma in committing the offences has been seized, police said.

Lockdown relaxations: Top cop reviews preparations

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Police Commissioner DS N Shrivastava on Saturday in a weekly meeting, reviewed preparations and plans following the announcement of ease in lockdown by the Delhi Government.

Earlier, Delhi was placed under strict Covid-related curbs on April 20 that has been extended on a week-by-week basis ever since.

"Discussing the possibilities of a gradual opening up of the lockdown, the CP reviewed the plans and arrangements to be put in place to implement covid appropriate behaviour when there would be more people on the streets and markets," said Chinmoy Biswal, the Public Relation Officer (PRO) of Delhi Police.

During the meeting Shrivastava also directed the field officers to study the infection positivity rates area and locality wise, identify the spreader areas and likely vulnerable spots to enforce covid measures like social distancing



The CP also directed the Deputy Commissioners of Police that police staff should go mobile on ground to check violations and take necessary action.

Meanwhile, taking stock of the crime situation, cases pending investigation, surveillance of criminals, jail released persons Shrivastava also cautioned the senior officers that with the increase in movement of people, incidents of street crime might also rise in the city.

Woman constable dies in hit and run case at Maurya Enclave

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

In a hit and run incident, a 27-year-old woman constable of the Delhi Police died after she was allegedly hit by an unidentified vehicle in northwest Delhi's Maurya Enclave area on Saturday. Police said that they were scanning CCTV cameras in the area to identify the vehicle and nab the accused.

The deceased has been identified as Manisha and she was posted as a constable at Raj Park police station that falls under the jurisdiction of the outer district of Delhi Police. Police said that she was residing in Delhi's Burari area.

According to a senior police official, the incident took place on Outer Ring Road at around 9 AM when the woman was returning home on a two-wheeler after her night duty when she was allegedly hit by an unidentified vehicle.

"On reaching the spot, the woman and her two-wheeler

The deceased has been identified as Manisha. She was posted as a constable at Raj Park police station

was found in an accidental condition. She was rushed to a nearby hospital where she succumbed to her injuries during the course of treatment," said the senior police official.

"A case under section 279 (Rash driving or riding on a public way) and 304 A (Causing death by negligence) of Indian Penal Code was registered at Maurya Enclave police station and an investigation is underway to identify the offending vehicle," said police.

"The police teams are looking for CCTV cameras in and around the scene of crime to ascertain and establish the sequence of events," police added.

Illegal casino busted in Gurugram, 5 arrested

PNS ■ GURUGRAM :

The Gurugram Police have busted an illegal casino being run in a house in Sushant Lok Phase-1, Gurugram and arrested five people, including an official of the German Embassy, who is also the owner of the house, the police said on Saturday.

"We received a tip-off on Friday evening regarding illegal gambling which was going on in the basement of the house for the past one month. A raid was conducted in the house during which five people were found gambling using colourful chips and cards. These chips were used as a transaction currency and the actual cash payment was made the next day," Karan Goyal, Assistant Commissioner of Police (DLF) said.

The arrested were identified as Praveesh Pal Kapoor (the owner of the house), Kawaljeet Singh Sethi, Naresh Kumar, Mohal Lal and Harender Singh all residents of Gurugram.

The police also claimed that Kapoor works in the



German Embassy as protocol advisor.

All of them were taken into police custody. The police have recovered 325 chips worth Rs 2,200 and 60 sets of open cards, 6 sets of new cards and 290 expensive liquor bottles of different brands were recovered during the raid, Goyal said.

During probe the police

came to know that the Kapoor was also running illegal bar inside his house without licence.

A case has been registered against the culprits under relevant sections of the Gambling Act, Disaster Management Act and Haryana (Amendment) Excise Act at the Sector-29 police station, he said.

UP sees continuous decline in Covid cases

Lucknow: The daily Covid test positivity rate is under one per cent and there has been a continuous decline in fresh cases in Uttar Pradesh, the Government said on Saturday, attributing the decreases to aggressive testing, tracing and treatment, and restrictions imposed in the State.

Uttar Pradesh recorded 2,287 new cases on Saturday, while it was 2,402 on Friday, 3,278 on Thursday, 3,371 on Wednesday and 3,957 on Tuesday.

The recovery rate in the State stands at 96.10 per cent, the Uttar Pradesh Government

said in a statement.

The State's Covid-19 graph continues to show a declining trend with 2,287 new cases recorded in the last 24 hours, the lowest daily spike from the peak (38,055 on April 24) last month, it said.

The fresh cases have pushed Uttar Pradesh's active Covid-19 cases to 46,201, the statement said.

It said that 7,902 Covid patients have recovered and have been discharged from health facilities in the last 24 hours, and the total recoveries now stand at 16,21,743.

Recoveries outnumbering

daily cases have ensured a high recovery rate, and the State has recorded a recovery rate at a significant 96.10 per cent, the statement said.

The Uttar Pradesh government has followed the '3T' formula of tracing, testing and treatment to aggressively tackle the rise in cases in both urban and rural areas, it said.

The State has conducted 3,30,289 Covid tests in the last 24 hours and out of these tests, 1,54,000 were done through swab samples subjected to polymerase chain reaction (PCR) testing.

PTI



Needy people collect vegetables and food packets for free, arranged by DYFI, amid Covid pandemic, at Athanikhal in Kozhikode on Saturday

UP: Death toll in Aligarh hooch tragedy rises to 22

Aligarh (UP): The death toll in the Aligarh hooch tragedy went up to 22 on Saturday, and 28 more people were still in critical condition, an official said here.

Seven people have died since Friday night, he said and added that the condition of 28 people undergoing treatment at the Jawaharlar Nehru Medical College Hospital, AMU, and the Malkhan Singh District Hospital is critical.

Local BJP MP Satish Gautam, however, told reporters in the afternoon that the death toll has "crossed 30", citing information he has received from the ground.

District Magistrate Chandra Bhusan Singh while confirm-

ing the death toll of 22, said, "Exact figures would be available after the post-mortem examination of the bodies lined up at the mortuary is conducted."

Locals fear the death toll may rise further as reports from several villages are still trickling in. A cursory count of the bodies lined up at the district hospital mortuary suggest the death toll could be considerably higher than the official figure.

Singh, however, hinted at the possibility that some of those bodies at the post-mortem unit "could belong to those who have died of other causes, but are being linked to the deaths caused by spurious liquor".

PNS

Northern Rly to crack down on theft cases

New Delhi: Ashutosh Ganagal, General Manager, Northern Railway, said in view of three subsequent theft incidents of OHE balance weights within a week over Ballabgarh -Palwal section over Delhi Division, to identify and nab criminals, a joint special team was formed in the supervision of Sr DSC(C) and with ASC, Hazrat Nizamuddin comprising CIB/DLI- East & West, IPF/Palwal, IPF/Ballabgarh & IPF/Faridabad along with staff to crack the CC no.02/2021,04/2021 U/S 3 RP(UP) and 82/2021 U/S 147,153 & 174 Rly Act towards detection.

Sikkim logs 273 new cases, 4 more fatalities

PTI ■ GANGTOK

Sikkim on Saturday reported 273 new Covid-19 cases pushing the tally to 14,907, a health department bulletin said. The death toll in the Himalayan state rose to 247 after four more patients died of coronavirus, the bulletin said. Sikkim at present has 3,831 active cases. While 10,616 patients have recovered from the disease so far, 213 others have migrated out of the State.

East Sikkim district registered 183 new positive cases, followed by 54 in South Sikkim, 31 in West Sikkim and 5 in North Sikkim.

Goa Government extends 'corona curfew' till June 7

Panaji: With the Covid-19 positivity rate still hovering at 21 per cent, the Goa Government on Saturday decided to extend the ongoing "corona curfew", which was supposed to be lifted on May 31, by another week till June 7.

"Government of Goa has decided to extend the curfew till 7 am of 7th June 2021. The orders regarding the same shall be issued by respective District Collectors," the Chief Minister's Office (CMO) tweeted.

The pandemic-induced curfew was initially imposed in Goa on May 9. It was supposed to be lifted on May 24 but the state government extended it till May 31 given the surge in fresh coronavirus positive cases. The Covid-19 positivity rate- the percentage of positive

tests- was hovering around 21 per cent in the state.

Goa Chief Minister Pramod Sawant on Friday told reporters that though the case positive rate dropped to 21 per cent, efforts are on to bring it down further.

Moreover, the state is also preparing itself to tackle the projected third wave of Covid-19 and creating health infrastructure for children.

In the orders issued on Saturday night, collectors of North Goa and South Goa districts said a surge in Covid-19 cases is being witnessed in Goa and other parts of the country, and the situation might further aggravate due to public gatherings and active interactions along with high positivity rate.

PTI

783 new Covid cases in Tripura

Agartala: Tripura registered 13 more Deaths due to Covid-19, the highest so far in a single day, pushing the toll to 495, a health department bulletin said on Saturday.

The Covid-19 caseload in the northeastern State rose to 49,290 as 783 more people tested positive for the coronavirus infection in the last 24 hours, it said.

West Tripura district reported the maximum number of fresh cases at 378, followed by South Tripura at 110, Unokoti at 73 and Gomati at 62.

The remaining new cases were recorded in several other districts. Meanwhile, the Tripura Government has decided to launch a 'mass test-

ing drive' from Sunday in Agartala Municipal Corporation (AMC) area and formed 12 teams of health workers and officials to carry out the exercise, an official said.

"The Covid-19 positivity rate in the AMC area is high. But some people are reluctant to go for tests. Keeping this in mind, the administration has decided to launch the mass testing drive from Sunday," Sadar sub-divisional magistrate Asim Saha said.

The administration has set a target to complete the exercise in all the 49 wards of the civic body in one month, but the duration could be increased depending on the caseload, the official said.

PTI

Free education...

From Page 1

"Children represent the future of the country and we will do everything to support and protect the children. It is our duty, as a society, to care for our children and instill hope for a bright future," the PM said.

The Prime Minister emphasized that children represent the future of the country and the country will do everything possible to support and protect the children so that they develop as strong citizens and have a bright future. All children who have lost both parents or surviving parent or legal guardian/adoptive parents due to Covid-19 will be supported under 'PM-CARES for Children' scheme.

He also added that the measures being announced have only been possible due to the generous contributions to the PM CARES Fund which

will support India's fight against COVID-19.

"PM CARES will contribute through a specially designed scheme to create a corpus of Rs 10 lakh for each child when he or she reaches 18 years of age. This corpus will be used to give a monthly financial support/ stipend from 18 years of age, for the next five years to take care of his or her personal requirements during the period of higher education and on reaching the age of 23 years, he or she will get the corpus amount as one lump-sum for personal and professional use," said PMO in statement.

Children under 10 years, will be given admission in the nearest Kendriya Vidyalaya or in a private school as a day scholar. If the child is admitted in a private school, the fees as per the RTE norms will be given from the PM CARES. PM CARES will also pay for expenditure on uniform, text books and notebooks, said the statement.

The PMO said that such children will be assisted in obtaining education loan for professional courses / higher education in India as per the existing education loan norms. The interest on this loan will be paid by the PM CARES.

books and notebooks.

Similarly, children between 11-18 years will be given admission in any Central Government residential school such as Sainik School, Navodaya Vidyalaya etc. In case the child is to be continued under the care of Guardian/ grandparents/ extended family, then he or she will be given admission in the nearest Kendriya Vidyalaya or in a private school as a day scholar. If the child is admitted in a private school, the fees as per the RTE norms will be given from the PM CARES. PM CARES will also pay for expenditure on uniform, text books and notebooks, said the statement.

The PMO said that such children will be assisted in obtaining education loan for professional courses / higher education in India as per the existing education loan norms. The interest on this loan will be paid by the PM CARES.

Pfizer job less effective but...

From Page 1

Patients who had had Covid-19 within the past year and people vaccinated with two doses of Pfizer retained enough antibodies to be protected against the variant found in India, but three to six times less antibodies than against the UK variant, Schwartz said.

Schwartz said the study shows that this variant has acquired partial resistance to antibodies since first emerging in late 2019 in China, the SARS-CoV-2 virus that causes Covid-19 has developed several variants, usually named for the places where it first appeared, including the so-called South Africa and UK strains.

The variant first detected in India appears to be much more transmissible than earlier variations.

It has now been officially recorded in 53 territories, according to a World Health Organization report.

To try to curb its spread, France and Germany have re-introduced tighter rules on arrivals from affected countries, including the United Kingdom.

Pulwama martyr's wife...

From Page 1

Union Minister Smriti Irani also congratulated Kaul. Irani tweeted, "Kaul you're an embodiment of dedication, determination and devotion of India's Nari Shakti. Major Vibhuti Dhoundiyal would be smiling today with joy and pride seeing Stars on your shoulder. My best wishes to you in all your endeavours."

She was among the 198 cadets that passed out of the academy, 167 were gentleman cadets, 31 were women cadets. Five gentleman cadets and seven women cadets from the mountain Kingdom of Bhutan also had undergone the 11-month course at the academy, along with their Indian counterparts.

The passing out parade at the Parameswaran Drill Square was reviewed by Lieutenant General YK Joshi, General Officer Commanding-in-Chief (GOC-in-C) Northern Command. However, owing to the Covid-19 protocols in place parents watched the ceremony live on TV and YouTube from their homes.

'Politics of...'

From Page 1

In this scenario the Opposition parties namely the Samajwadi Party, the Bahujan Samaj Party, the Congress, the Rashtriya Lok Dal and small caste based parties like Suheldev Bharatiya Samaj Party of Om Prakash Rajbhar, Mahan Dal of Keshav Dev Maurya, Nishad Party, representing Bindis and Nishad and other Muslim outfits like Peace Party and Asaduddin Owasi's AIMIM are planning for possible alignment and realignment to break BJP's Hindutava hegemony.

The Samajwadi Party and Rashtriya Lok Dal have more or less decided to contest the next election as an ally. These parties had already contested Panchayat elections together. "We have an understanding and we will go ahead with that understanding," Jayant Chaudhry, told this reporter recently.

This alliance is important in the context of western UP. Besides the corona mishandling leading to deaths, the on-going farmers' agitation is more or less west UP centric now. The anger of the farmers is palpable and RLD has in over a year's time has positioned itself very well and has gained confidence of Jats. Then, the untimely death of Chaudhry Ajit Singh will help the RLD to get emotional traction.

"This time we will do very well in Uttar Pradesh. The RLD is on a firm footing. We do not want a division of vote banks and therefore are ready for an alliance with the

U'khand parties...

From Page 1

His successor Tirath Singh Rawat wasted no time in reversing some of the controversial decisions of the previous Government and accelerated Covid-19 relief exercise. The Government and the BJP are now focusing majorly on providing assistance and relief to Covid affected persons and their families especially in the rural mountainous regions of the State.

On the other hand, the Congress continued to be plagued by factionalism even though the Pradesh Congress Committee president Pritam Singh asserted that the party will be united in the 2022 Assembly elections.

Though some Congress leaders are doing their bit to help the Covid-affected people, organisationally the Congress is yet to undertake relief works on the scale executed by the BJP.

The AAP is hoping to achieve results in the Assembly elections with the recent induction of colonel (ret'd) Ajay Kothiyal, the former principal of Nehru Institute of Mountaineering also known for his role in the Kedarnath reconstruction project and social works. Political observers point out that though these efforts will also have an effect on the Assembly elections, it is still too early to evaluate the electoral chances of the parties. The developments in the coming months will make the picture clearer.

MHA invites...

From Page 1

"In exercise of powers conferred under Section 16 of the Citizenship Act, 1955 (57 of 1955), the central government hereby directs that powers exercisable by it for registration as citizen of India under Section 5, or for grant of certificate of naturalisation under section 6 of the Citizenship Act 1955 in respect of any person belonging to a minority community in Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan namely, Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis and Christians, residing in the districts mentioned and the states mentioned below..." the fresh notification said. "The application for registration as citizen of India or grant of certificate of naturalisation as citizen of India under the said rules (Citizenship Rules, 2009) shall be made by the applicant online," the notification said. In 2016, the Central Government had in a similar step sought applications from members of these minority communities from Afghanistan, Pakistan and Bangladesh living in 16 districts in Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh.

OFFICE OF SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER AGRA CIRCLE, P.W.D AGRA

Notice Inviting E-Tender

Letter No. 2418/14M-A.C/2021 Dated : 6.5.2021

1. The Superintending Engineer Aggra Circle, U.P.P.W.D. on behalf of Governor of Uttar Pradesh invites the percentage rate bids online from the eligible and approved registered Contractors. As the work comprises of specialized Road Signage work, hence contractors bidding for this work must be registered in Road Signage work with UP P.W.D. Bidders are advised to note the minimum qualification criteria specified in Clause 4 of the Instructions to Bidders to qualify for the award of the contract.

2.

Sl. No.	Dist. No.	Name of Work	Estimate Cost (Rs. in Lac)	Bid Security (Rs. in Lac)	Cost of Document (in Rs.)	Time of Completion	Address of Executive Engineer Executing the Work	Address of Superintending Engineer	Address of Chief Engineer	Category of Contractor
1	1	Construction of Crash Barrier work on both side of Goverdhan road (Goverdhan Drain) in Distt. Mathura	325.00	-	Rs. 2000.00 STC +3000.00TC+ 36.00 GST+ 2336.00	06 Months	Executive Engineer, Provincial Division, P.W.D. Mathura	Superintending Engineer, Aggra Circle, P.W.D. Aggra	Chief Engineer, P.W.D. Aggra	Class A

3. Time allowed for completion is including Rainy Season.

4. Bid document with detailed terms and conditions will be available online on website <http://etender.up.nic.in> and Prahari (<http://wms.upppwd.gov.in/Prahari>) From 04-06-2021 to 09-06-2021. Bids must be submitted online only at e-tendering portal of <http://etender.up.nic.in> and Prahari App with all documents as per GO No 14/2020/879(1)/ 23-7/2020/176(400)/06 Dt 25-06-2020 on or before 12:30 Hours Dt. 09-06-2021. Technical Bid received online will be opened on 10-06-2021 at 12:30 Hours.

5. The prospective bidders who do not possess Digital Signature Certificate (DSC) must get the same issued from approved agencies before submission of bids.

6. Contractor should Quote their rates without G.S.T. which shall be paid extra as per applicable at the time of payment.

7. Labour Cess @ 1.00% will be Deducted from contractors bill at the time of payment.

8. Original MM-11 forms proof of royalty shall have to be produced at time of every running bill in accordance to Principal Secretary, Directorate of geology & mining Uttar Pradesh Letter No-2146/86-2019-52(Iko)/2019 Dt.30.09.2019, G.O. No- 115(1)/86-2020 dated 15.01.2020 and other relevant Government orders, circulars for all the materials procured from the quarries.

9. The bidders are required to submit Original receipt of Internet Banking of E-tender portal Account as per G.O.No.-742/78-2-2018-42 I.T./2017 T.C., LT & Electronics Section-2 Dated-03-12-2018 follows as :
(1) Online Tender Cost towards the cost of bid document (As per Column 6) by Internet Banking of E-tender portal Account (Non Refundable).
(2) Regarding the deposit of Performance security/Additional Performance Security/Bid security/Earnest Money from the bidder. It will be mandatory to submit an affidavit for the earnest money as per the instructions of ENC UP PWD Lucknow L. No. 3951/MT/General Section/60M.T/2020 Dated. 13/04/2021 and U.P.Government Lucknow GO No. 16/2020/A-1-10-Bharat Sarkar/10-2020 Dated. 29-12-2020.

(Sansveer) Executive Engineer Provincial Division, P.W.D, Mathura
(Yogesh Panwar) Superintending Engineer Aggra Circle, P.W.D, Aggra

UP- 163880 Date 25.5.2021 विक्रम वेसाहट www.upgwd.nic.in पर उपलब्ध है।

Black fungus...

From Page 1

But usually, it can be around 5 lakh a week incurred on equipment, investigations, room rent and surgery besides vital cost, he said.

"Main treatment involves costly antifungal medicines and injections (which are in short supply) and tedious surgeries by a battery of surgeons — ENT, ophthalmologist, Faciomaxillary, neurosurgeon and reconstructive surgeon. This all cost money," he explained. Dr Bhargava said a 5mg dose is needed per kilogram (kg) of body weight. Hence, if a person is 70 kgs, he would require 350mg of the dose. So, a patient needs at least eight vials which costs 70,000 daily.

Chakrabarti, who manages the WHO Collaborating Centre for Reference and Research on Fungi of Medical Importance at PGI, Chandigarh, said it has been noticed that quite a few hospitals are prescribing a cocktail of drugs, including doxycycline, ivermectin, steroids etc.

Often, hospitals prescribe dexamethasone five times more than what has been recommended by the WHO. Dexamethasone should not be more than 6mg in Covid-19 patients, which is being given 30mg at times. This is increasing glucose levels affecting the other parameters and making mucor conducive for growth."

He suggested that if Liposomal amphotericin is not available, doctors can use amphotericin B deoxycholate. "At our WHO Centre we are teaching them how to reduce toxicity triggered by these drugs." "Many patients who cannot afford the treatment cost do not come again after they are told about the expenses they would have to incur," he said as also was highlighted by a study conducted by him a few years ago.

In the study "Mucormycosis: Battle with the Deadly Enemy over a Five-Year Period in India," published in Dr Chakrabarti along with a string of other experts examined at least 82 cases of mucormycosis.

Most common presentation was rhino-orbito-cerebral (37), followed by cutaneous (25), pulmonary (14), oral cavity involvement (4) and gastrointestinal (2). The most common risk factors were diabetes and intramuscular injections, the study said.

The mainstay of the treatment was amphotericin B, along with extensive surgical debridement whenever feasible. "Around 50 patients recovered but 25 dies. The rest left against medical advice," they said, maybe because they could not sustain paying the hefty bills.

Ready to hold PM's feet...

From Page 1

"After that we were told that the meeting has moved to the conference hall, so the Chief Secretary and I decided to go there. When we reached there, we saw the PM was in a meeting with the Honourable Governor, central leaders and even some MLAs of the Opposition Party."

The BJP and a section in the Union Government had earlier criticised the Chief Minister for being indecorous in skipping a pre-scheduled meeting with the Prime Minister and scurrying out of the venue showing great disrespect. Attacking the Centre for breaking the standard protocol, the Chief Minister said, "it was supposed to be a meeting of the Prime Minister and Chief Minister ... even I would not mind the presence of Governor or other Ministers ... but how could it be that the BJP leaders and MLAs were allowed in?"

"Can an Opposition Leader remain present in PM-CM meetings ... if so why Opposition leaders were not present in Odisha or for that matter his own State Gujarat ... why the Centre is not giving any Opposition leader status to any party in Parliament even after two years of elections?" The Chief Minister was apparently replying to the allegations leveled against her by the BJP that "she had shown utmost disrespect to the Prime Minister by skipping his meeting."

On her hurried departure from the venue she said, "Before leaving the place I took honourable Prime Minister's permission not once but thrice when I said, 'Sir, with your kind permission, may I please leave? ... sir, with your kind permission, may I please leave? ... sir, with your kind permission, may I please leave? ... sir, with your kind permission, may I please leave? We need to go to Digha for assessment and the weather is also not too good' ... and here they are insulting me every day. I want to tell the Prime Minister that if has anything against me then I am ready to hold his feet to soothe his ego but please do not insult me and my State every day."

Reacting to the Chief Minister's counterattack Bengal Opposition Leader Suwendu Adhikari who too was present at Kalaikunda during the Prime Ministerial meeting said "the Chief Minister should tell the truth ... she is giving an untrue information ... I was not called as a BJP MLA but as an Opposition Leader ... where was a wrong in it ... is this against the democratic norms ... the Chief Minister should follow the rules of democracy?"

Slashing tariff to...

From Page 1

All attempts to thrash out a truce between Sidhu and Captain have failed till now. A couple of Cabinet Ministers and two Rajya Sabha MPs too have joined hands, forcing the Congress high command to form a panel to thrash out the differences within the party.

Coming on to the fourth party in the electoral scenario, the BJP, the situation on the ground is worrisome. Not that the leaders are not aware of it. They know for sure that the farm Acts have completely washed out whatever little support it had in the state.

Ironically, despite Governments in the neighbouring states of Haryana and Himachal Pradesh, the BJP has been completely marginalised in the State after its dominant ally, SAD, walked away from the Central Government and broke its almost three decade long alliance with the saffron party last year on the three contentious agricultural Acts. The BJP's problem has been compounded by a complete boycott of its leaders by every farmer organisation so much so that the leaders have been provided police protection when they move out and do not go out for political functions.

To be held under the backdrop of the farmers' protest, the polls would see a fierce attack and counter attacks on each other in the days and weeks from now on who is the 'real benefactor' of the farmers. The abuses hurled at political opponents and the colorful and multi-meaning slangs would only intensify now.

As of now, there seems to be no end to the impasse between the farmers and the Central Government and there is no indication whatsoever that the Modi Government would take back the Acts as demanded by the farmers' organisation. So it's almost certain that the three contending parties - the Congress, the SAD and the AAP - would fight the polls claiming to be the "real champions" of the farmers in the State.

Amid the cacophony of who is the 'real benefactor' of the farmers, the Congress has managed to have an edge by making all the right noises and also passing Bills in the State Assembly to negate the Central Acts. These may be political stunts as the bills would remain pending with the Governor "forever" but they managed to take the message across that they mean business.

SIT probe sought into Bengal post-poll violence

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A civil society outfit — Group of Intellectuals and Academicians (GIA) — on Saturday called for an SIT probe, under a retired Supreme Court judge, into the post-poll Bengal violence in which women were singled out, “raped, stripped beaten and violated in the most horrific ways”. While it also recommended an NIA investigation as the violence “may have cross border terror angle”, the GIA pointed out that the “victims primarily belong to very marginal sections of Hindu society that are BJP supporters or voters”.

Crude bombs have been used, men murdered and shops and ration cards looted, the GIA said in its report, titled ‘Khela in Bengal 2021: Shocking Ground Stories’, submitted to Minister of State for Home G. Kishan Reddy.

“Women have been singled out for most horrific terror and intimidation. Our data reveals many incidents of rape, grievous bodily harm, the threat of rape, stripping and sexual violence. The streets were sites of dehumanisation of women of

all ages. While the TMC party high command and leaders belong to privileged backgrounds and did not face the violence overtly and covertly supported by them, the most marginal communities suffered, it stated

The GIA said it interviewed 20 victims of the post poll violence in West Bengal on online platforms like Zoom and Goggle meet as well as on phone. Almost all our respondents mentioned having to pay up large amounts of extortion money to TMC after the election results came out, it said.

“The main modus operandi of the TMC is to debilitate political opponents by targeting their bodies, economic resources and their psychological wellbeing,” the GIA maintained.

Reddy later said the Trinamool Congress (TMC) is running government in Bengal against the constitution of Dr Baba Saheb and the State police is working as TMC workers. “To protect the fundamental rights of people, the Central Government will discuss the issue in the coming days,” he said adding a Home Ministry-led committee has

also submitted report on the same issue.

The BJP, for its part, it will organise an outreach programme from June 1-3 to create awareness among party cadres through social media and other media outlets, regarding the post-poll violence in West Bengal.

The GIA in its report further said that the National Human Rights Commission, The National Commission for Women, the National Commission for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and National Commission for Protection of Child Rights should take cognizance of the cases. “A larger ground study of victims and data collection should be undertaken by the commissions,” the report said.

The report said that treating the violence in Bengal merely as “political violence is to trivialise the horrors faced primarily by marginal sections of Hindu society who supported or voted the BJP”.

GIA convenor Monika Arora, Prof Vijeta Singh Aggarwal, Sonali Chitalkar and Shruti Mishra submitted the report to the Minister.

War of words begins between Amul, PETA over vegan milk

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

Netizens witnessed a war of words between India’s largest dairy brand Amul and People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) India over the latter’s advice to switch to producing Vegan milk.

RS Sodhi, managing director of Gujarat Cooperative Milk Marketing Federation (GCMMF) which makes Amul milk, butter, ice-cream and cheese slammed PETA, for advising it to switch to producing vegan milk saying the animal rights organisation wanted it to snatch livelihood of 100 million poor dairy farmers, of which 70 per cent are landless. Earlier, the Advertising Standards Council of India (ASCI) had dismissed a plea filed by PETA against Amul for stating that plant-based products can’t be called ‘milk’.

Within a few hours, countless netizens have joined the debate, with some extolling the virtues of vegan milk even as others lashed out at PETA India over its various campaigns.

Vegan milk, a new rising trend in millennials, is an umbrella term referring to various kinds of non-dairy, plant-based ‘milks’ such as soy, coconut and almond. Non-dairy milk is the latest toast in the world of nutrition. From Virat Kohli to Amir Khan; Hollywood actress Netalie Portman to Jessica Chastain and Jacquelin Fernandez to Alia Bhatt, all have switched to Vegan milk products. Kohli recently revealed the reason behind him turning vegan. He left eating meat before the England Test series in 2018, when he got a ‘cervical spine issue’. Kohli follows a plant-based diet and draws his protein from it. Actress Sonam Kapoor who is associated with PETA turned vegan.

Sodhi, while replying to a tweet by Ashwini Mahajan, national co-convenor of Swadeshi Jagran Manch said, “Don’t you know dairy farmers are mostly landless. Your designs may kill their only source of livelihood. Mind it milk is in our faith, our traditions, our taste, our food habits an easy and always

available source of nutrition.”

Sodhi took further to Twitter to ask Peta if switching over to vegan milk will provide 100 million dairy farmers, 70% of whom are landless, with a livelihood, and pay their children’s school fees, and how many people in India can actually afford lab manufactured milk. “Will they give livelihood to 100 million dairy farmers (70% landless)? Who will pay for their children’s school fees? How many can afford expensive lab manufactured factory food made out of chemicals and synthetic vitamins?” Sodhi tweeted.

Owing to the growing scope of veganism in India, PETA urged the largest dairy producer of the country Amul to start producing vegan milk, instead of cattle milk. It took to Twitter and wrote, “We would again like to encourage Amul to benefit from the booming vegan food and milk market, instead of wasting resources trying to fight the demand for plant-based products that are only grow-

‘Burger King outlet in Germany trying to go completely meat-free’

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

PETA India wrote that a Burger King outlet in Germany was trying to go completely meat-free. Tagging Burger King India, the organisation suggested that the latter come up with a vegan Burger King outlet, or to at least start a vegan option of the fast food chain’s ‘whoppers’ category of burgers. Netizens had mixed reactions to the post.

While some backed PETA India for the idea, and one even promised to eat the vegan burgers, some claimed that vegan burgers were already a part of the menu.

Others felt that it was not right to impose a particular food-eating habit and that people had their choice to consume any food that they wished to.

ing. Other companies are responding to market changes, and Amul can too.”

PETA in its letter to Sodhi cited a 2018 report by global food corporation Cargill which claims that demand for dairy products around the world is on the decline as dairy is no longer considered an essential part of a diet.

Revocation of Article 370 biggest achievement of Modi 2.0: Survey

New Delhi: Revocation of Article 370 in Jammu & Kashmir is the biggest achievement of Narendra Modi government in its second term, as per the ABP-C Voter Modi 2.0 Report Card.

As per the ABP-C Voter survey, 47.4 per cent respondents said that abrogation of Article 370 is the biggest achievement, while 23.7 per cent feel that the Supreme Court decision on Ram Temple is the biggest achievement.

The sample size of the survey was 1.39 lakh with the samples spread across 543 Lok Sabha seats. The fieldwork was done between January 1 and May 28, 2021.

Voters are also supporting the government on lockdowns, the survey found. A massive 68.4 per cent said imposing countrywide lockdowns last year was a right decision.

Similarly, 53.4 per cent said not imposing country-wide lockdowns this year is a right decision of the Modi government.

There is support for the Central Vista project with 41.8 per cent respondents backing the Modi government’s decision to start and continue with the project during Corona times.

The opinion is divided on the handling of the vaccination programme though with 44.9 per cent saying the government has appropriately handled vaccine management in the country, while 43.9 per cent feeling otherwise.

The decision to export vaccines also enjoys wide support as 47.9 per cent backing the government’s decision to export Covid vaccines.

A majority of 51 per cent said revocation of Article 370 in Jammu & Kashmir has led to the permanent solution of the vexed issues in J&K. Similarly, 59.3 per cent say that the situation in Kashmir has improved in the past two years.

There is massive endorsement of foreign policy with 62.3 per cent saying India’s relations with different countries around the world have improved during the tenure of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

However, voters support the farmers’ agitation with 41.9 per cent saying the Centre should have accepted farmers’ demand of revoking the three new farm laws. IANS

41.9% feel Centre should have accepted farmers’ demands

New Delhi: Around 40 per cent people in the country believe that the Union Government should have accepted the demands of the protesting farmers, according to the ABP-C Voter Modi 2.0 Report Card.

The C Voter-ABP News survey found that only 41.9 per cent respondents feel that the Centre should have accepted the demands of the farmers. Farmers from Punjab, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh have been protesting at the borders of the national capital for over six months now, demanding the three Central farm laws be repealed.

About 32.8 per cent respondents said that the Centre should not accept the farmers’ demands, while 25.3 per cent did not comment on the matter.

Interestingly, the survey found that more urban people in comparison to rural population feel that the government should have accepted the farmers’ demands.

As per the survey, about 43.8 per cent urban people feel that the Centre should have accepted the farmers’ demands, while 41.1 per cent rural respondents also hold similar views.

About 41.1 per cent urban and 29.3 per cent rural people believe that the Union Government should not accept the demands of the farmers. A total of 15.1 per cent urban and 29.7 per cent rural population have nothing to say on the issue. The survey was carried out between May 23 and May 27 on 12,070 people across the country. IANS

IIL to produce drug substance for Covaxin



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

PSU, Indian Immunologicals Ltd, will produce the drug substance required for manufacturing Covaxin.

IIL Managing Director, Dr K. Anand Kumar said: “IIL is planning to start the production of drug substance for Covaxin from next month (June) and send out the first batch to Bharat Biotech Ltd by July.”

Stating that Indian Immunologicals is expected to produce the drug substance for about 10-15 million doses per month, he said it will be initially 2-3 million doses and will be scaled up to 6-7 million per month later in the year.

Kumar said that they are converting IIL’s Karkapatla manufacturing unit near Hyderabad into a Bio Safety Level-3 (BSL3) facility for the production of the drug substance and is also taking up construction of another block. The IIL is also working on another Covid-19 vaccine and

the animal trials are underway currently and is expected to come out by next year for human vaccination.

Under Atmanirbhar Bharat 3.0, Mission Covid Suraksha was announced by the government to accelerate the development and production of indigenous Covid vaccines. “This is being implemented by the Department of Biotechnology, IIL Hyderabad has been sanctioned a grant of Rs 60 crore towards enhancing production capabilities,” said the statement.

As of today, India has only three vaccines against Covid-19 pandemic in its immunisation drive - two made-in-India vaccines: Serum Institute of India’s Covishield and Bharat Biotech’s Covaxin. Russian Sputnik V is the third vaccine to get approval from the Drug Controller General of India for Emergency Use Authorisation and is being used in a few private hospitals which are expected to be increased over the coming days.

Remdesivir production ramped up, Centre stops allocation to States

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Government has decided to discontinue the central allocation of Remdesivir to States even as it has ramped up its production by 10 times between April and May. Minister of State for Chemicals and Fertilizers Mansukh Mandaviya has directed the National Pharmaceuticals Pricing Agency & CDSCO to continuously monitor the availability of Remdesivir in the country.

During the peak of the second wave of the pandemic in April, there was an acute shortage of Remdesivir across the country. The drug, which is only to be used in severe cases, was hoarded, black-marketed which too contributed to the shortage.

“Now the country has enough #Remdesivir as the supply is much more than the demand. So we have decided to DISCONTINUE the Central Allocation of Remdesivir to States,” Mandaviya said in a tweet.

The Minister noted that

the supply of the drug, which is being used to treat COVID-19, has been ramped up over ten times from just 33,000 vials a day on April 11, 2021 to 3,50,000 vials per day currently. The government has also increased the number of plants producing Remdesivir from just 20 to 60 plants within a month, he added. The overall Covid-19 situation of the country has stabilised in the past few days and on Saturday, the country recorded 1.73 lakh fresh Covid-19 infection, the lowest in the last 45 days.

Besides, the Centre has decided to procure 50 lakh vials of Remdesivir to maintain it as a strategic stock for emergency requirement, Mandaviya said. “But I have also directed @nppa_india & @CDSCO_INDIA_INF to continuously monitor the availability of Remdesivir in the country,” he noted.

In order to improve supply, the government has already waived customs duty on Remdesivir, its raw materials and other components

used in making the antiviral drug in order to help augment domestic availability and reduce the cost of the injection. On April 11, in view of increased demand for Remdesivir, the Centre banned the export of the injection and its active pharmaceutical ingredients (APIs) till the situation improves.

Various drug companies have also cut the prices of Remdesivir injection following intervention of the government.

Remdesivir is a patented drug that was recommended as an investigational therapy drug given in acute and severe Covid-19. This drug is to be administered only to patients under oxygen support. Seven pharmaceutical companies, including Cipla, Dr Reddy’s Lab., Hetero, Jubilant Pharma, Mylan, Syngene and Zydus Cadila, manufacture Remdesivir in India under voluntary licences granted by Gilead Life Sciences USA, the company which holds the patent of Remdesivir.

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

As the tool-kit controversy snowballs with the Government-Twitter faceoff intensifying, the BJP on Saturday scaled-up its attack on the Congress accusing it of a collaboration with Pakistan.

BJP IT cell chief Amit Malviya and national spokesman Sambit Patra claimed that the Congress tool-kit has found resonance across the borders in Pakistan and that the opposition party should be happy about it.

“Congress finally has reasons to be elated. Their malign India tool kit now has collaborators in Pakistan! #CongressToolKitExposed”, tweeted Malviya quoting Pakistani media referring to “Indian Coronavirus variant.”

In a similar vein, Patra targeted former Congress president Rahul Gandhi on the tool-kit issue and also referred to the Pakistani media.

“Congratulations Rahul Gandhi Congress’ Mission accomplished”, tweeted Patra against whom Congress has lodged an FIR on the tool-kit issue which it had described as “fake”.

Microblogging site twitter has termed Patra’s tool-kit tweet

Microblogging site twitter has termed Patra’s tool-kit tweet as “manipulated media, triggering confrontation with the union government which has sought it to comply with the country’s law

as “manipulated media, triggering confrontation with the union government which has sought it to comply with the country’s law.

A day before IT and Law Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad had accused twitter of adopting “double standards” even as Union I & B Minister Prakash Javadekar said Rahul’s unsavoury comments on Prime Minister Modi confirmed that the “Congress toolkit” was to defame the government and derail the Indian vaccination programme.

Javadekar said the kind of language the Congress leader used and the way he tried to stoke “fears” and “confusion” has confirmed that the “tool-kit” was produced by his party.

Shah urged to withdraw controversial steps taken by Praful Khoda Patel

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Former Administrator of Lakshadweep Omesh Saigal on Saturday urged Union Home Minister Amit Shah to withdraw the controversial steps taken by the incumbent Praful Khoda Patel.

In a detailed letter, Saigal who was also Chief Secretary, Delhi, said that Patel’s drastic steps have created a lot of repercussions in the Island and turned the people against the Central Government. He said that Lakshadweep’s development and tourism promotion cannot be copied like Maldives and stopping meat from school meals were unnecessarily-created troubles.

“Within five months of joining, the new Administrator has taken a number of drastic but negative steps which have disturbed the normally placid waters of the territory. This reminds one of the oft quoted ‘fools rush in where angels fear to tread’. He has closed anganwadis, sacked dozens of employees who worked for many years, banned meat from schools, demolished dozens of sheds of fishermen which were built as per integrated scientific plan prepared by a Supreme Court appointed committee, brought in a goonda act in a territory which has strong family bonds and has had no crime for at least one century, closed dairy farms, amended panchayati rules as per his whims.

CBI nabs FCI officials for graft

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The CBI on Saturday arrested four officials, including a divisional manager, of Food Corporation of India, in a bribery case of Rs 1 lakh and recovered Rs 3.01 crore in cash, a note counting machine, and gold and silver jewellery besides property documents during the searches.

Besides the Divisional Manager Harish Hinonia, the agency also arrested Manager (Accounts) Arun Shivastava, Manager (Security) Mohan Parate and Assistant (Grade-I) Kishore Meena.

Searches were conducted at six places in Bhopal at the official/residential premises of the accused persons. “During the searches, cash of Rs 3.01 crore (approximately), gold jewellery 387 gms and 670 gms of silver articles/jewellery and also certain documents were recovered. The said cash amount was allegedly kept in different envelopes, some of the bundles marked/written with names, dates and amounts etc. Some cash was allegedly found in a heavy safety vault/chest which was concealed in the wooden almirah. A note counting



machine was also found,” the agency said in a statement.

Further, a diary was recovered during the searches containing the alleged records, including cash amounts obtained, date, name and the like, it said.

A case was registered on a complaint against Manager (Accounts) Arun Shivastava posted at FCI’s Divisional Office in Bhopal (Madhya Pradesh) on the allegations of demanding a bribe of Rs 1,50,000 for releasing the pending bills of complainant’s company for January, February and March at the rate of Rs 50,000 per month. It was also alleged that the accused demanded Rs 70,000 each for the new bills to be submitted.

The CBI laid a trap and caught the accused while demanding and accepting the bribe of Rs 1,00,000 from the complainant, it said.

BJP to move to villages to help Covid patients

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The BJP will reach out to one lakh villages in the country to provide help to those suffering from Covid-19 under the second wave of Coronavirus.

The BJP is stepping up its Covid-19 work under ‘Seva hi Sangathan’ programme after receiving critical feedback from the BJP-ruled States. The party will not celebrate the completion of 7th year of the Modi government at the Centre and would rather gear-up its organization to assist Covid patients in the country, said BJP’s National Media-in-charge Anil Baluni.

The party has asked each of its MPs, MLAs, Central and State Ministers to “fix their duty and responsibility for at least two-villages”, said Baluni adding “Responsibility upto booth-level has been outlined”.

The BJP president has instructed that the selection of villages be on the basis of the degree of infection there.

The party leaders and ministers will “personally go and distribute relief and food material as also Oxymeters, sanitisers and mask”, he said.

Kashmiri Pandit diaspora appeals for donations to Covid affected



IANS ■ NEW DELHI

Global Kashmiri Pandit Diaspora (GKPD) has made an appeal for donations to step up the relief work for those in distress due to the Covid pandemic.

GKPD said India has suffered a devastating second wave of the Covid pandemic. Amid all the gloom and doom, civil society rose admirably to the occasion.

Thousands of volunteers from across the globe joined hands with volunteers in India,

to help and support the needy. “Our medical fraternity, the law-and-order authorities, media, civic workers, crematorium staff and so many others have worked day and night, without care for their personal well-being for the sake of the suffering. The efforts have borne results and the peak seems to be waning. The need of the hour now is to massively step-up long-term aid for those in distress”, it said.

Amongst the most affected are orphans, widows, people with disabilities, the indige-

nous population, refugees, migrants, minorities and artists among others.

It is in this context, that the GKPD, the I Am Buddha Foundation and the Anupam Kher Foundation, in partnership with leading non-profits organisations such as Sewa International Foundation, Kashyap Seva Foundation, the US India Pragati Foundation and Federation of Indian Physician Associations are organising a global, online Bollywood concert featuring India’s leading musical artists.

SKILL DEVELOPMENT

Assam to provide ₹3,500/mth to kids orphaned by Covid

PTI ■ GUWAHATI

Assam Chief Minister Sarma on Saturday said his Government will be providing ₹3,500 per month to the guardian of every child orphaned due to Covid-19 in the State, for their education and skill development.

Sarma, while addressing a press conference here, also said that the ones who have no extended family will be sent to residential schools or institu-

tions, with the state bearing their expenses.

All such children, who have lost their parents to the pandemic, will be given vocational or skill-based training to ensure they get to earn a livelihood, he said.

The initiative, to be undertaken under a new programme 'Chief Minister's Shishu Seva Scheme' - will be launched on Sunday, marking seven years of the PM Narendra Modi-led NDA Government at the Centre.

Class 10 UP board exams scrapped

Lucknow: The UP Secondary Education Council on Saturday cancelled board examinations for Class 10 students and proposed to take a 90-minute test of each subject for Class 12 students in the second week of July, if feasible.

The detailed examinations scheduled for Class 12 board examinations will be announced soon, UP's Deputy Chief Minister Dinesh Sharma said.

The Council's decision to cancel Class 10 examinations would benefit over 29.94 lakh students, allowing their promotion to the next class, he said in an official statement.

Owing to "the importance of Class 12 examinations" for students' future, they have been proposed to be held from the second week of July, if circumstances allow, the Minister added.

The UPSEC's decision is in line with the Central Board of Secondary Education, which too has cancelled the class 10 examination all over the country and abroad and at present, is mulling over the desirability and feasibility of taking class 12 examinations.

"Owing to the extraordinary circumstances triggered by the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, and in the larger interest of students besides the general interest of the public, the UP Government has decided to cancel the class 10 board examinations conducted by the UP Secondary Education Council," Sharma, who also holds the secondary education portfolio, said. "This will benefit as many as 29,94,312 students (of class 10th)," he added.

About the class 12 examinations, he further said,

"Keeping in mind the future of students and the importance of class 12 marks for them, the board examinations have been proposed for the second week of July if circumstances are conducive.

The examinations will be taken "with adherence to all Covid-19 norms and social distancing", he added. He added that the detailed timetable for the class 12 examinations will be shared soon.

"As in the past, this year also, the examinations will be held in 15 working days," Sharma said.

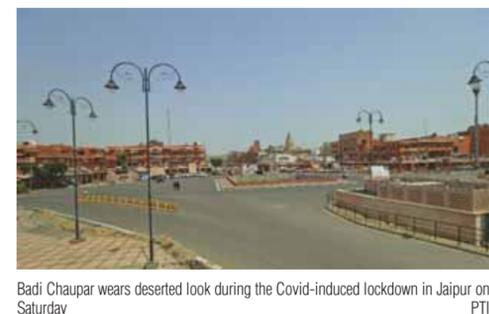
Elaborating about the nature of the examination, he added, "The duration of the examination will be of one-and-half hours and the students will have the freedom to answer any three questions out of the 10 given ones."

PTI



Clouds hover in the sky in Lucknow on Saturday

PTI



Badi Chaupar wears deserted look during the Covid-induced lockdown in Jaipur on Saturday

AP reports 13,756 Covid-19 cases, 104 deaths in 24 hrs

PTI ■ AMARAVATI

Andhra Pradesh reported 13,756 fresh cases of coronavirus from 79,564 tests in 24 hours ending 9 am on Saturday at a positivity rate of 17 per cent.

The State also reported 20,392 recoveries and 104 Covid-19 fatalities in a day, a

health department bulletin said.

The gross positives increased to 16,71,742, recoveries to 14,87,382 and deaths 10,738, it said. The number of active cases dropped to 1,73,622. In 24 hours, East Godavari district added 2,301 and Chittoor 2,155 new coronavirus infections.

DRDO's 500-bed Covid hospital inaugurated in Jammu

PNS ■ JAMMU

The Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir on Saturday witnessed significant improvement as more than 4,000 patients were discharged from different hospitals and 2,253 new cases tested positive.

However, the mortality rate has not come down. 46 patients, 30 in Jammu and 16 in Kashmir division succumbed to the virus. The positivity rate, for the first time, dropped down to 5.14 per cent and total active positive cases also came down to 39,255.

Meanwhile, Lieutenant Governor, Manoj Sinha on Saturday inaugurated the Defence Research and Development Organisation's (DRDO) 500-bedded Covid Hospital and dedicated the facility to the people of Jammu region.

Of the total 500 beds here at Bhagwati



Nagar Centre, 125 would be Intensive Care Unit (ICU) beds, while others would be a set of covid-beds with 24 hours oxygen facility. The hospital would be equipped with Ventilators, Monitors; in-house Pharmacy, Diagnostic Facility, X Ray and CT Scan facility. CT scan machine has not been installed as yet as civil works were still going on to install the machine.

Speaking on the management of ongoing pandemic and future challenges, the

Lt Governor observed that the DRDO hospital, with efficient mechanisms, will play an important role in adding to the government's efforts in the fight against Covid pandemic.

"I must congratulate and appreciate Chairman, DRDO Dr. G Satheesh Reddy and his entire team working round-the-clock to build this well-equipped medical facility in record time", the Lt Governor added.

Financial Commissioner, Medical Health and Education department Atal Dullo on the occasion said the patients would be admitted in the covid hospital from June 1 after completing the dry and trial run of the facilities. The team of doctors and paramedics, technicians are also undergoing orientation programs at Government Medical College hospital to provide better patient care facilities to the patients.

Maha infections drop to 20,295, deaths down to 832

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

The Covid-19 infections in Maharashtra dropped marginally further to 20,295 on Saturday, while the daily deaths came down to 832.

A day after the State recorded 20,740 infections and 973 deaths, the daily infections dropped to 20,295, while it added 832 deaths - comprising 443 current ones and 389 previous unrecorded one - to its fatality tally.

With 832 deaths reported on Saturday, the total number of deaths in the State climbed from 93,198 to 94,030. Similarly, with 20,295 new infections, the total number of cases climbed from 56,92,920 to 57,13,215.

As 31,964 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 53,07,874 to 53,39,838. The

recovery rate in the State rose from 93.24 per cent to 93.46 per cent. The total "active cases" in the state increased marginally from 2,89,088 to 2,76,573. The fatality rate in the state increased from 1.64 per cent to 1.65 per cent.

With 25 fresh deaths, the Covid-19 toll in Mumbai increased from 14,750 to 14,775, while the infected cases crossed 1,000 mark from Friday's 924 and touched a figure of 1,038 on Saturday to

Gangrape of girl in Pak upsets Christian community in Kerala

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

The gangrape of 14-year-old Christian girl Sunita Masih by Muslim zealots in Pakistan's Faisalabad early this week has left the Christian community in Kerala appalled and speechless.

Sunita was not only gangraped but was subjected to the worst kind of physical torture in an incident which brought back memories of the unparadigmatic crimes committed on Nirbhaya in 2012 in New Delhi, according to Kevin Peter, president, Christian Association and Alliance for Social Action, an umbrella organisation of all Christian sects in Kerala.

He said Sunita was tortured for refusing to convert to Islam as demanded by the zealots who kidnapped her from her house. "This is not an isolated incident. Information reaching us from Pakistan says that minority communities are not safe in that country as members of the majority community has unleashed a reign of terror on them," said Peter.

A joint statement issued by Peter, Joy Abraham (secretary) and Jomer K Jose (Treasurer) of CASA has asked Prime Minister

Narendra Modi to immediately implement the Citizenship Amendment Act passed by the Indian Parliament so that minority communities getting tortured and face annihilation in countries like Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan could come back to India, their homeland.

"When the State of Pakistan was formed by partitioning India in 1947, minorities like Christians, Sikhs, Hindus, Parsees and Jains constituted 30 percent of the population. But as on date the Islamic Republic of Pakistan has less than 3 per cent of these communities. The remaining 27 per cent were annihilated by genocide or subjected to religious conversion by persecution," said the CASA leaders.

They said religious minorities including Christians in Pakistan suffer hell from physical and mental torture. "The only job reserved for a Christian in Pakistan is in the military and that too as drainage and toilet cleaners," they said in the statement.

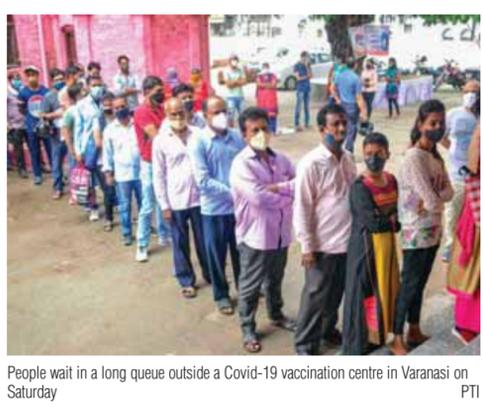
The statement says that religious persecution of minorities in Pakistan has become a regular feature in that country.

Kerala Government extended the total lockdown till June 9 in the backdrop of the high Test Positivity Rate prevailing in the State due to pandemic. This was stated by Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan in his daily media briefing on Saturday.

He said though the death toll on Saturday was 198, there has been a decrease in the number of new Covid-19 patients. "On Saturday 23,513 persons tested positive for Covid-19. The Test Positivity Rate in the State except Palakkad and Thiruvananthapuram districts was 16.59 per cent," said the Chief Minister.

Vijayan said the hike in death toll was due to the unabated transmission of the pandemic. "But the number of people getting cured of Covid-19 is more than the number of persons getting afflicted with the pandemic," he said.

He said though the lockdown was being extended up to June 9, a series of concessions like allowing industrial units to operate with 50 per cent staff have been made. Shops selling mobile phones, spectacles and essential materials are allowed to open for three days a week. **PNS**



People wait in a long queue outside a Covid-19 vaccination centre in Varanasi on Saturday

PTI



JIWAJI UNIVERSITY, GWALIOR
(NAAC Accredited "A" Grade)

ADMISSION NOTIFICATION 2021-22

Jiwaji University, established in 1964, as M.P. State Govt. University, invites online applications (<http://jiwaji.edu>) for admission to the following academic programs being offered by the University at its Campus for the academic year 2021-22

(i) Under-Graduate Courses :
B.A. LLB and B.Com. LLB (5 Years Integrated); BBA, BCA, Bachelor of Hotel Management & Catering Technology, Bachelor of Tourism Management
B.Sc. (Honors) : Physics, Chemistry, Mathematics, Botany, Zoology and Biochemistry; **B.A. (Honors) :** Mass Communication, B.Com. (Honors)

(ii) Post-Graduate Courses :
M.Sc. : Physics, Electronics, Chemistry, Environmental Chemistry, Pharmaceutical Chemistry, Instrumentation and Commercial Methods of Chemical Analysis (MICA), Industrial Chemistry, Mathematics, Computer Science, Zoology, Molecular & Human Genetics, Neuroscience, Botany, Microbiology Biotechnology, Biochemistry, Food Technology, Environmental Science, Geology, Remote Sensing and GIS, Electronics & Instrumentation,
M.A. : Ancient Indian History Culture and Archaeology (AIHC&A), History, Economics, Political Science, Public Administration, Extension Education and Social Work, Women Studies, Jyotirvigyan, English, Hindi, Sanskrit, Yoga
M.B.A. : Business Economics, Chemical Sales & Marketing Management, e-Commerce, Financial Administration, Human Resource Development, Hospital Administration, Tourism Administration
M.Com. : LL.M.; B.Lib.I.Sc., M.Lib.I.Sc.; MJMC
M.Pharm. : Pharmaceutics, Pharmacology, **M.Tech. :** Electronic Engineering, Chemical Engineering

(iii) Vocational Courses :
B.Voc. : Food Processing, Cosmetic Science & Beauty Culture, Logistic Management in Tourism, Culinary Skills and Arts
M.Voc. : Food Processing

(iv) P.G. Diploma : Computer Application (PGDCA), Forensic Science, Museology, Yoga
Admission in "B.P. Ed., M.P. Ed., B.E. (all subjects), B. Pharma, D. Pharma, MBA and MCA" will be done by DTE, MP Higher Education or other regulatory bodies of M.P. Govt. The candidates willing to seek admission in these courses should visit the related websites of DTE/MP Higher Education etc. and profile of department at [jiwaji university website](http://jiwaji.university.edu).

- The admission rules, fee and departmental information can be seen at : <http://www.jiwaji.edu>.
- Admission will be given purely on the basis of merit in the qualifying examinations.
- The printout of admission form along with the photocopies of the mark sheets and other required documents (SC/ST/OBC/EWS/FF/PH/Kashmiri migrant/Parsi/Staff Ward/NRI/ NCC/NSS/Sports, etc.) must be brought at the time of admission in the respective departments.
- The university reserves the right to continue or discontinue a course depending upon the number of students admitted and financial viability of the course.
- University has hostel facility for both Boys and Girls. After admission separate application form is to be submitted for hostelfacility.
- Due to COVID-19 situation, lockdown announced by the Govt., declaration of 12th result by the respective boards and other circumstances, university may change the dates of admission process.
- After the last date of filling the admission form, first list of provisionally admitted students in respective courses, prepared on the basis of merit in the qualifying examinations, will be displayed on <http://www.jiwaji.edu>
- After wards, the provisionally admitted students have to deposit the prescribed course fees online within given time period, otherwise their right of admission in the respective course will be forfeited.
- The candidates who will be appearing/have appeared in the final year of the qualifying examination may also apply for admission in Post-Graduate courses.
- Reservation to SC, ST, OBC, Women, FF & Physically handicapped, EWS and others is applicable only for domicile of M.P. as per M.P. Govt./University rules.

Availability of Admission Form for online submission through jiwaji.edu or mponline.gov.in	Tuesday May 25, 2021
(i) Under-Graduate Courses including B. Voc. Course	(ii) Post-Graduate Courses including M. Voc. and PG-Diploma Courses
Last date for filling the admission form Friday Aug. 20, 2021	Last date for filling the admission form Saturday July 31, 2021
Declaration of first admission list Friday Aug. 27, 2021	Declaration of first admission list Wednesday Aug. 11, 2021
Declaration of second admission list Tuesday Sept. 07, 2021	Declaration of second admission list Friday Aug. 20, 2021

• University may declare further admission list(s), if seats remainvacant.

• The student can apply for admission by filling application form online through <http://www.jiwaji.edu> or <http://www.mponline.gov.in> Payment for the application fees can be made through credit/debit card or by net-banking. The application fee is Rs. 1000/- (Rs.800/- for SC/ST/OBC). Each student can apply separately for a maximum of five courses. Separate registration fee of Rs. 200/- per course has to be deposited, in addition to application fee Rs. 1000/- along with the admission form.

• The preference and choice of course for admission given by candidate while filling admission form will be final. Admission will be given on merit cum choice basis.

Contact Numbers : 0751-2442712, 2442743, 2442777, 7415289194, 9425742232, 9301123457, 9826618442, 9425364178, 9406503583, 9425339300, Toll free : 1800-233-1964

REGISTRAR

M.P. Madhyam/100828/2021

POST-CYCLONE BLUES IN MAHA

Fishermen complain about oil spill around stranded barge

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Twelve days after cyclone Tauktae wreaked havoc in and around the ONGC's Mumbai High oil fields as it passed to Gujarat, oil spill has been reported by local fishermen along the Palghar coast in Maharashtra, from one of the barges that ran aground.

Having noticed the oil spill around GAL Constructor that got stuck in the rocky shores of Vadrai, the local fishermen have reported the matter to the Satpati coastal police station.

Vadrai Machimar Sarvodaya Society chairman and a member of Maharashtra Machhimar Kruti Samiti Manendra Arekar, has flagged the issue, said: "We estimate that is at least 80,000 litres of diesel, besides large quantities of lubricants and grease on board the barge. It is 12 days since the barge ran aground, no agency concerned has turned up here to remove diesel and oil board the barge. As a result, diesel and oil are leaking in a big way from the barrage into

the sea. We have already noticed an oil spill in the water around the stranded barrage. We anticipate a big ecological problem in the days to come."

Till July 31, the Maharashtra government has imposed a ban on fishing in the area, because of the south west monsoon As a consequence a lot of fishermen depend on fishing in the water along the shores.

"Already some people have started complaining about the smell in the fish that we catch along the shore. Before long, the oil spill will affect the fish in the area. If no steps are taken to address the oil spill issue, the livelihoods of fishermen in the area will be severely affected. Hence, I appeal to the state government and other authorities to remove diesel and oil on board the barge immediately and also do something about the oil spill in the area," Arekar said.

On their part, the local fishermen have already reported the matter to the Satpati coastal police station which has

in turn reached out to the contractors and owners of the barge for containment oil spill in the area.

In a related development, reacting to the concerns expressed by the local fishermen about the oil spill in their area, the Indian Coast Guard said that the barge was carrying 78,000 litres of "high flash high speed diesel" and not crude oil.

"No breach of the oil tank is reported... Afcons Infrastructure Ltd has arranged M/s Seacore which has laid a 400 mts boom around the barge while M/s Shree Krishna is undertaking hull repairs. Besides, M/s Smith & Coy has been hired for removal of the vessel," the ICG said.

The ICG said that its Guard helicopters had reported "silvery oil sheen" of 50 meters width. "No oil spill has been reported on shore now and continuous liaison has been maintained with agent of GAL Constructor," an ICG spokesperson said.

"Sorbent pads have been laid along the boom. It will be recovered with barge oil with the help of fishing boats," the spokesperson said.

Of the total 350 floating and fixed assets in the Mumbai High region, five were affected in the cyclone that passed the Maharashtra coast on May 17. The five floating vessels comprised Papaa-305, an accommodation barge with 261 persons on board, GAL Constructor barge with 176 persons on board, its anchor handling vessel Varaprada with 13 persons on board, drill ship Sagar Bhushan with 101 persons on board and construction barge Support Station with 202 persons on board.

A total of 714 persons were on board these vessels of which 628 were saved while 86 lost their lives.

The deceased oil workers were from Papaa-305 and Varaprada.

All those on board the GAL Constructor were rescued by Indian Navy and Coast Guard.

Over 200 bodies found at school in Canada

AP ■ KAMLOOPS, BRITISH COLUMBIA

The remains of 215 children, some as young as 3 years old, have been found buried on the site of what was once Canada's largest Indigenous residential school — one of the institutions that held children taken from families across the nation.

Chief Rosanne Casimir of the Tk'emlups to Secwépemc First Nation said in a news release that the remains were confirmed last weekend with the help of ground-penetrating radar.

More bodies may be found because there are more areas to search on the school grounds, Casimir said Friday.

In an earlier release, she called the discovery an "unthinkable loss that was spoken about but never documented at the Kamloops Indian Residential School." It was the



The former Kamloops Indian Residential School is seen on Tk'emlups to Secwépemc First Nation in Kamloops, British Columbia, Canada on Thursday

on the site of Canada's largest residential school.

From the 19th century until the 1970s, more than

150,000 First Nations children were required to attend state-funded Christian schools as part of a program to assimilate

them into Canadian society. They were forced to convert to Christianity and not allowed to speak their native languages.

Many were beaten and verbally abused, and up to 6,000 are said to have died.

The Canadian government apologized in Parliament in 2008 and admitted that physical and sexual abuse in the schools was rampant. Many students recall being beaten for speaking their native languages; they also lost touch with their parents and customs.

Indigenous leaders have cited that legacy of abuse and isolation as the root cause of epidemic rates of alcoholism and drug addiction on reservations.

A report more than five years ago by a Truth and Reconciliation Commission said at least 3,200 children had died amid abuse and neglect, and it said it had reports of at least 51 deaths at the Kamloops school alone between 1915 and 1963.

"This really resurfaces the issue of residential schools and

the wounds from this legacy of genocide towards Indigenous people," Terry Teegee, Assembly of First Nations regional chief for British Columbia, said Friday.

British Columbia Premier John Horgan said he was "horrified and heartbroken" to learn of the discovery, calling it a tragedy of "unimaginable proportions" that highlights the violence and consequences of the residential school system.

The Kamloops school operated between 1890 and 1969, when the federal government took over operations from the Catholic Church and operated it as a day school until it closed in 1978.

Casimir said it's believed the deaths are undocumented, although a local museum archivist is working with the Royal British Columbia Museum to see if any records of the deaths can be found.

Quad fills gap that has emerged in contemporary times, says Jaishankar

Washington: The informal Quad grouping in the strategically vital Indo-Pacific region comprising Australia, India, Japan and the US fills a "very important gap" that has emerged in contemporary times and New Delhi has clarity on its membership in it, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said.

The Quad aims at strengthening a rules-based order in the Indo-Pacific amid China's aggressive actions in the region.

"Quad today fills a very important gap that has emerged in contemporary times, where there are global or regional requirements, which cannot be filled by a single country. It cannot even be filled by one bilateral relationship, and which is

not being addressed at the multilateral level," he told a group of Indian journalists as he concluded most of his meetings here on Friday.

Jaishankar, who is on an official trip to the US, is the first Indian Cabinet minister to visit the country since Joe Biden became the President on January 20. He asserted that India has clarity on its membership to Quad, adding that he had been personally involved with its progress over the past several years, including when he was India's foreign secretary. "We are members of Quad."

When we are members of anything, we are very keen about it, we won't be its members. We have clarity on the Quad," Jaishankar underlined. **PTI**

GLOBE TROTTER

ROADSIDE BOMB KILLS 4, WOUNDS 11 IN AF

Kabul: A roadside bomb struck a minivan full of university lecturers and students in Afghanistan's northern Kapisa province on Saturday, killing at least 4 and wounding 11 others, Afghan officials said. Interior ministry spokesman Tariq Arian said the minivan was targeted while travelling to bring the group to Alberoni University.

CHINA LAUNCHES CARGO SPACECRAFT TO DOCK

Beijing: China on Saturday successfully launched an automated cargo spacecraft carrying supplies, equipment and propellant for the country's new space station Tianhe. The Long March-7 Y3 rocket, carrying Tianzhou-2, blasted off from the Wenchang Spacecraft Launch Site on the coast of the southern island province of Hainan, the China Manned Space Agency, (CMSA) announced.

SCIENTISTS IN VIETNAM IDENTIFY NEW VARIANT

Hanoi: Vietnam has discovered a new coronavirus variant that's a hybrid of strains first found in India and the UK, Vietnamese health minister said. Health Minister Nguyen Thanh Long said Saturday that scientists identified the variant while examining the genetic makeup of the virus that had infected some recent patients. He said lab tests suggested it might spread more easily than other versions of the virus. Long says the new variant has spread to 30 of Vietnam's 63 municipalities and provinces, and could be responsible for a recent surge in confirmed cases.

Ex-premier's graft case a test of justice in oil-rich Kuwait

AP ■ DUBAI, UAE

Where is Sheikh Jaber? Kuwait was abuzz with the question as citizens on social media demanded to know the whereabouts of their 79-year-old former prime minister. He'd been ordered detained pending trial in an unprecedented move last month over the alleged embezzlement of millions of dollars from a military aid fund.

When the scandal involving the sheikh and another royal family member erupted into public view nearly two years ago, it unleashed a rare wave of street protests. It prompted the Cabinet's resignation and forced a reckoning in the Gulf Arab state about endemic corruption that has entrapped ministers and stained the country's sprawling bureaucracy for generations.

Activists believe corruption runs rampant through the region of oil-rich Gulf Arab sheikhdoms, but public criminal cases against senior officials and royal family members remain rare, typically playing out behind palace doors.

That may be changing, however, with recent explosive feuds over money laundering in Kuwait, a major corruption sweep in Saudi Arabia and last week's arrest of Qatar's powerful finance minister in an embezzlement probe.

Chinese city locks down neighborhood after virus upsurge

AP ■ BEIJING

The southern Chinese city of Guangzhou shut down a neighborhood and ordered its residents to stay home Saturday for door-to-door coronavirus testing following an upsurge in infections that has rattled authorities.

Guangzhou, a business and industrial center of 15 million people north of Hong Kong, has reported 20 new infections over the past week. The number is small compared with India's thousands of daily cases but alarmed Chinese authorities who believed they had the disease under control.

The spread of infections was "fast and strong," the official Global Times newspaper cited health authorities as saying.

Saturday's order to stay home applied to residents of five streets in Liwan District in the city center. Outdoor markets, child care centers and entertainment venues were closed. Indoor restaurant dining was prohibited. Grade schools were told to stop in-person classes.

People in parts of four nearby districts were ordered to limit outdoor activity.

The city government earlier ordered testing of hundreds of thousands of residents following the initial infections. The government said some 700,000 people had been tested by Wednesday. China reports a handful of new cases every day but says almost all are believed to be people who were infected abroad. The mainland's official death toll stands at 4,636 out of 91,061 confirmed cases.

On Saturday, the National Health Commission reported two new locally transmitted cases in Guangzhou and 14 in other parts of the country that it said came from abroad.

Most of the latest infections in Guangzhou are believed to be linked to a 75-year-old woman who was found May 21 to have the variant first identified in India, state media say. Most of the others attended a dinner with her or live together.

Philippines ends ban on workers' travel to Saudi

Manila: The Philippines has lifted a ban on the deployment of workers to Saudi Arabia, which it imposed after receiving reports that workers were being asked to shoulder Covid-19 test and quarantine costs in the oil-rich kingdom.

Philippine Labour Secretary Silvestre Bello III said that after Saudi Arabia formally notified his country Saturday that recruitment agencies and Saudi employers would bear the costs of tests and 10 days of quarantine for Filipinos, he decided to lift the ban.

The ban, which Bello imposed Thursday, prevented more than 400 Filipino workers from boarding their Philippine Airlines flights for Saudi Arabia on Friday.

Many were stranded at the Manila airport, with some begging in tears for the government to immediately lift the ban.

"I apologise for the inconvenience and momentary anguish that it may have caused our dear overseas Filipino workers," Bello said, but added "our Saudi-bound workers will no longer be disadvantaged." **AP**

US blocks seafood from Chinese fleet over crew mistreatment

Washington: The US government blocked imports of seafood Friday from the entire fleet of a Chinese company that authorities say forced crew members to work in slave-like conditions that led to the deaths of several Indonesian fishermen last year.

Customs and Border Protection said it will place an immediate hold on any imports linked to the more than 30 vessels operated by Dalian Ocean Fishing, under a US law that bars goods suspected to have been produced with forced labor.

Imports from Dalian, which primarily fishes for tuna, have exceeded USD 20 million as recently as 2018. Shipments linked to the company have dropped over the past year to about USD 200,000, officials said.

"We will not tolerate any amount derived from forced labor," Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas told reporters as he announced the measure.

CBP issued what is known as a withhold release order that halts shipments that have suspected links to forced labor, under a law that has been on the books for decades, ostensibly to protect US producers from unfair competition.

The law has been used with increased frequency in recent years, given the growing awareness of the prevalence of what is essentially modern-day slavery in a range of industries, with workers forced to work long hours for low pay, or none at all, and subjected to violence. **AP**

Belarusians increasingly cornered after EU cuts air links

AP ■ KYIV (UKRAINE)

As fear of repression rises following the arrest of a dissident journalist whose plane was forcibly diverted to Minsk, those who want to leave the country are feeling increasingly cornered.

Its land borders already were under tight restrictions, and now the European Union has banned flights from Belarus after a jetliner was diverted to Minsk earlier this week and authorities arrested a dissident journalist who was aboard.

That leaves opposition-minded Belarusians with few options to get out from under the authoritarian rule of President Alexander Lukashenko.

Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir. Office of the Executive Engineer, (Jal Shakti) PHE, Ground Water Division, Nowshera, Sgr.

Gist of e-Tender. e-N.I.T. No:- PHE/GWDS/ 01 of 05/2021

For and on behalf of lieutenant Governor of Jammu and Kashmir, e-tenders are invited in two cover system for "Construction of 125 mm dia Machine Drilled Hand pump Wells" in below mentioned Districts with 60 meters depth from registered Water Well Drillers/Contractors as per the details given in tender document.

S.No 1. Name of work :- Kulgam
No. of Hand Pump Wells:- 10 No's, Est. Cost Rs. in Lacs :- Rs. 24.80 Lacs, Cost of Tender Document :- Rs. 1000/-, Time of completion :- 30 Days, Class of Contract :- Registered for Drilling 125 mm dia Machine Drilled Hand Pump Wells, Programme :- CAPEX
S.No 2. Name of work :- Shopian
No. of Hand Pump Wells:- 05 No's, Est. Cost Rs. in Lacs :- Rs. 12.40 Lacs, Cost of Tender Document :- Rs. 500/-, Time of completion :- 20 Days, Class of Contract :- Registered for Drilling 125 mm dia Machine Drilled Hand Pump Wells, Programme :- CAPEX
S.No 3. Name of work :- Pulwama
No. of Hand Pump Wells:- 15 No's, Est. Cost Rs. in Lacs :- Rs. 37.20 Lacs, Cost of Tender Document :- Rs. 1000/-, Time of completion :- 45 Days, Class of Contract :- Registered for Drilling 125 mm dia Machine Drilled Hand Pump Wells, Programme :- CAPEX

S.No 4. Name of work :- Anantnag
No. of Hand Pump Wells:- 15 No's, Est. Cost Rs. in Lacs :- Rs. 37.20 Lacs, Cost of Tender Document :- Rs. 1000/-, Time of completion :- 45 Days, Class of Contract :- Registered for Drilling 125 mm dia Machine Drilled Hand Pump Wells, Programme :- CAPEX
S.No 5. Name of work :- Budgam
No. of Hand Pump Wells:- 10 No's, Est. Cost Rs. in Lacs :- Rs. 24.80 Lacs, Cost of Tender Document :- Rs. 1000/-, Time of completion :- 30 days, Class of Contract :- Registered for Drilling 125 mm dia Machine Drilled Hand Pump Wells, Programme :- CAPEX
S.No 6. Name of work :- Baramulla
No. of Hand Pump Wells:- 08 No's, Est. Cost Rs. in Lacs :- Rs. 19.84 Lacs, Cost of Tender Document :- Rs. 500/-, Time of completion :- 25 days, Class of Contract :- Registered for Drilling 125 mm dia Machine Drilled Hand Pump Wells, Programme :- CAPEX
S.No 7. Name of work :- Kupwara
No. of Hand Pump Wells:- 14 No's, Est. Cost Rs. in Lacs :- Rs. 34.72 Lacs, Cost of Tender Document :- Rs. 1000/-, Time of completion :- 45 days, Class of Contract :- Registered for Drilling 125 mm dia Machine Drilled Hand Pump Wells, Programme :- CAPEX

S.No 8. Name of work :- Ganderbal
No. of Hand Pump Wells:- 08 No's, Est. Cost Rs. in Lacs :- Rs. 19.89 Lacs, Cost of Tender Document :- Rs. 500/-, Time of completion :- 25 days, Class of Contract :- Registered for Drilling 125 mm dia Machine Drilled Hand Pump Wells, Programme :- CAPEX
S.No 9. Name of work :- Bandipora
No. of Hand Pump Wells:- 10 No's, Est. Cost Rs. in Lacs :- Rs. 24.80 Lacs, Cost of Tender Document :- Rs. 1000/-, Time of completion :- 30 days, Class of Contract :- Registered for Drilling 125 mm dia Machine Drilled Hand Pump Wells, Programme :- CAPEX

AAA ; Accorded:
ACCORD OF ADMINISTRATIVE APPROVAL No:- PHE/MCN/Works-33 of 02/2021
Dated: 22-02-2021

Critical Dates / Information.

1. Publishing Date :- 29-05-2021 (09:00 A.M)
2. Period of Downloading of Bids :- 29-05-2021 (09:00 A.M) to 04-06-2021 (12:00 P.M)
3. Period of Submission of bids :- 29-05-2021 (09:00 A.M) to 04-06-2021 (12:00 P.M)
4. Date of opening of Tender :- 05-06-2021 at (02:30 P.M)
5. Tender Receiving Authority: Executive Engineer (Jal Shakti) PHE Ground Water Srinagar Kashmir- 190011.
6. Document Cost : Non-Refundable in the shape of Treasury Challan/ receipt deposited to Account Head 0215 in favour of Executive Engineer (Jal Shakti) PHE Ground Water Division Srinagar (at Saddar Treasury Srinagar) (The firm shall specify the name of work for which apply)
7. Bid Validity Period: 180 Days
8. The bids can be downloaded or uploaded on www.Jktenders.gov.in
9. The bids of only those agencies shall be accepted who possess valid registration certificate of construction of 125mm dia machine drilled Hand pump wells. However due to Pandemic the renewal Registration for 2021-22 is waived off for a period of 6 months from 01-04-2021 to 30-09-2021.
10. Instead of EMD the firm has to furnish "Bid Security Declaration", format of the declaration is mentioned in the Bid Document.

Sd/- Executive Engineer,
 Jal Shakti PHE Ground Water Division, Srinagar.

No. DIPK-2196/21 Dated: 29-05-2021

WESTERN RAILWAY

E-PROCUREMENT TENDER NOTICE NO. S/20/2021 Date : 25.05.2021

S.N.	Short Description of item	Quantity	T.O.D
491	Bend Coupling Link	169 Nos.	10.06.2021
492	Step Sheet	1738 Nos.	11.06.2021
493	Sriker Casting with Wear Plate Assly.	53 Nos.	11.06.2021
494	R/M Paint, Smoke Grey	31700 Ltr.	14.06.2021
495	Vinyl Coated Upholstery Fabric	110353 Mtr.	14.06.2021
496	Flexible Poly Vinyl Chloride (PVC) floor	318 Nos.	14.06.2021
497	Self Priming Mono Block Pump	480 Nos.	14.06.2021
498	IRS Electric Point Machine 143 mm	128 Nos.	14.06.2021
499	Axle Box Housing Finish Machined	278 Nos.	14.06.2021
500	Hex Head Bolt with Split	47 Nos.	14.06.2021
501	Brake Block L Type	2736 Nos.	14.06.2021
502	Air Brake Hose Coupling	3300 Nos.	14.06.2021
503	Protective tube complete Assly.	3505 Nos.	14.06.2021
504	Stopper assembly for pin	6891 Nos.	14.06.2021
505	Anchor link bracket	409 Nos.	14.06.2021
506	Hex Head Bolt with Split	5366 Nos.	14.06.2021
507	Set of Labyrinth and Bearing Cap	115 Set	14.06.2021
508	Locking Plate for CTRB	103880 Nos.	14.06.2021
509	Bolser Liner 153X120X8 mm. thick	14452 Nos.	14.06.2021
510	Wedge for Casnub Bogies	1049 Nos.	14.06.2021
511	Axle box helical spring	397 Nos.	14.06.2021
512	Sriker Casting with Wear Plate	18000 Nos.	14.06.2021
513	Coupler Body with Shank Wear Plate	30 Nos.	14.06.2021
514	Shank Wear Plate for Upgraded High Tensile CBC	14100 Nos.	14.06.2021
515	Universal Lock Lift Lever Connector	3618 Nos.	14.06.2021
516	Knuckle Thrower for Upgraded High Tensile CBC	4163 Nos.	14.06.2021
517	Upgraded High Capacity Draft Gear	308 Nos.	14.06.2021
518	Lock Lift Lever Hook for Upgraded High Tensile CBC	10341 Nos.	14.06.2021
519	Cross Bar	501 Nos.	14.06.2021
520	Polyurethane Packing Washer	2472 Nos.	14.06.2021
521	Door way Cross Bar Pressing with Back Plate & Packing Piece	603 Nos.	14.06.2021
522	Packing Plate 12 mm Thick for Height Adjustment	3108 Nos.	14.06.2021
523	APM Device	12 Nos.	14.06.2021
524	PVC Flooring Sheet	1496 Nos.	15.06.2021
525	D.L.Sheet-3MM Blue Shade	12385 Nos.	15.06.2021
526	Copper Catenary Wire 65Sq.mm	141240 Mtr.	15.06.2021
527	Copper Contact Wire Jointless, 107 Sq.mm	128750 Mtr.	15.06.2021
528	Air Brake Hose Coupling	3100 Nos.	15.06.2021
529	Stopper for Rotating Spring Seat	200 Nos.	15.06.2021
530	Clevis	18 Nos.	15.06.2021
531	Poly Ring (Donuts)	11983 Nos.	15.06.2021
532	Coronary Tray Consist of 13 Items.	1 Set	15.06.2021
533	Yoke Pin for Upgraded High Tensile CBC	96 Nos.	16.06.2021
534	Internal Combustion Engine Oil Grade SAE-40	34230 Ltrs.	16.06.2021
535	Collar for Direct Mounted Roller Brg.	1800 Nos.	17.06.2021
536	Safety Strap Complete	2403 Nos.	17.06.2021
537	Set of Susp. Spring (Helical) of WAG-7	10 Set	17.06.2021
538	R-Charger	380 Nos.	17.06.2021
539	Ring for Direct Mounted Roller Bearing	150 Nos.	18.06.2021
540	Top Side Bearer Liner	3622 Nos.	18.06.2021
541	Toggle for Upgraded High Tensile CBC	2113 Nos.	18.06.2021
542	Safety Loop for Uncoupling Rod	5309 Nos.	18.06.2021
543	Rotary Bottom Operated Articulated Lock Assly. Components	250 Nos.	18.06.2021
544	Flexible Hose Assly.	54 Nos.	18.06.2021
545	Centre Pivot Top for BLC Wagon	172 Nos.	18.06.2021
546	3 Types of Metallic Self Expanding Biliary Stent	13 Nos.	18.06.2021

Corrigendums:- Please visit www.ireps.gov.in for corrigendums issued to following Tenders: Sr.No. 364 (K Type High Friction Composite Brake Block) of Tender Notice No. S/17/2021 dt.05/05/21 due on 25.05.2021 is postponed to 10.06.2021.

Regarding detailed notice EMD, Purchase restrictions and detailed tender conditions, please visit website www.ireps.gov.in and www.wr.indianrailways.gov.in.

For Principal Chief Materials Manager
 Like us on : [facebook.com/WesternRly](https://www.facebook.com/WesternRly) | Follow us on : twitter.com/WesternRly

IMPORTANT NOTICE

This is notified for the information of passengers that Railways have decided to revise the timings of Train No. 09731 Jaipur-Delhi Sarai Rohilla Express Special (Daily) at Rewari, Delhi Cantt. & Delhi Sarai Rohilla Railway Stations as per details given below :-

Revised Timings of Train No. 09731 Jaipur-Delhi Sarai Rohilla Express Special (Daily) at Rewari, Delhi Cantt. & Delhi Sarai Rohilla Railway Stations

STATION	TRAIN No. 09731				With Effect From
	Existing Timings	Revised Timings			
	ARR.	DEP.	ARR.	DEP.	
REWARI	11:53	11:55	11:48	11:50	01.06.2021 (Tuesday)
DELHI CANTT.	13:14	13:16	13:28	13:30	
DELHI SARAI ROHILLA	13:45	----	13:55	----	

Remaining instruction holds good.

For any kind of information such as detailed Time-Table of stations enroute etc., passengers are requested to contact RailMadad Helpline No. 139 or visit Indian Railways website <https://enquiry.indianrail.gov.in> or NTES App.

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

RailMadad Helpline No. **139** Visit RailMadad Website :- www.railmadad.indianrailways.gov.in Please join us on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/RailMadad) [Instagram](https://www.instagram.com/RailMadad) [YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/RailMadad) [WhatsApp](https://www.whatsapp.com/RailMadad) **NORTHERN RAILWAY** Your Convenience - Our Concern Visit us at : www.nr.indianrailways.gov.in

IMPORTANT NOTICE

It is notified for the information of all concerned that due to operational reasons, following trains will remain cancelled as per details given below:-

CANCELLATION OF SPECIAL TRAINS

Train No. & Name	Date from Cancellation
05483 Alipur Duar Jn.-Delhi Jn. Express Special	01.06.2021 to till further advice
05484 Delhi Jn.-Alipur Duar Jn. Express Special	03.06.2021 to till further advice

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** Please join us on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/RailMadad) [Instagram](https://www.instagram.com/RailMadad) [YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/RailMadad) [WhatsApp](https://www.whatsapp.com/RailMadad) **NORTHERN RAILWAY** Your Convenience - Our Concern Visit us at : www.nr.indianrailways.gov.in

Industry chambers hail late fee relief for GST non-filers

New Delhi: Industry chambers on Saturday said the GST amnesty of reducing late fees for delayed monthly return filing will provide some relief to small taxpayers, and demanded complete waiver of the late fees and interest.

They, however, expressed disappointment over no decision on demands of zero-rating of healthcare services, medical devices and equipment used in COVID-19 treatment.

PHD Chamber President Sanjay Aggarwal said that small and medium businesses have been severely impacted due to the pandemic and allowing them to file pending returns with reduced late charges, will encourage them to file returns and ease their compliance burden.

Industry body Ficci said the recommendation on the amnesty scheme to reduce the late fee will provide some relief to the small taxpayers. "However, Ficci recommends a waiver from the late fees and interest".

The GST Council, chaired by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman and comprising state ministers, on Friday decided to come out with an amnesty scheme to provide relief to taxpayers in late fee for pending returns.

The late fee for non-fur-

nishing of GSTR-3B for July 2017 to April 2021 has been capped at Rs 500 per return for those taxpayers who did not have any tax liability.

For those with tax liability, a maximum of Rs 1,000 per return late fees will be charged, provided such returns are filed by August 31, 2021.

The GST Council in its 43rd meeting on Friday left taxes on COVID-19 vaccines and medical supplies and formed a group of ministers (GoM) to recommend tax rates on these items. The panel will submit its report by June 8.

The Council also decided that import of COVID-related goods such as medical oxygen and vaccines will be exempt from GST till August 31, even if those are imported on a payment basis or free of cost for donating to the government or a state-approved agency.

Ficci President Uday Shankar said a quick decision on GST rates on COVID-related essentials will help us attain self-sufficiency in this need of the hour.

"FICCI was also hoping to see a decision regarding our long-pending demand for zero-rating of healthcare services for a period of 24 months during this pandemic period for the healthcare sector," Shankar added.

Medical Technology Association of India (MTAI) President Sanjay Bhutani said the industry's request for a zero-rating of medical devices and equipment used in the treatment of COVID-19 has not been considered.

"The MedTech industry has been shouldering the fight against the pandemic since day one when even the COVID vaccination was not developed.

"Zero-rating at least the COVID management products would have reduced the cost of imports, while for a domestic manufacturer, they would have been able to avail input tax credit and utilise against other products or claim refund," Bhutani added.

Lakshmi Kumar & Sridharan Attorneys Director Shweta Walecha said though the GoM has been directed to submit the report by June 8, 2021, to examine the need for further reductions and decide on any new rates or exemptions, however, the final decision on rate could delay further since the date for next council meeting has not been announced.

"Industries hit hard due to COVID such as hospitality, tour and travel, automobiles, etc. Also require some relaxation in GST to be able to sustain themselves," Walecha added.

PTI

GST Council decision to help small biz, add to revenue: Experts

New Delhi: The rationalisation of late fees for delayed filing of monthly GST returns will give relief to small businesses and add to the Government revenue, according to tax experts.

The GST Council, chaired by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman and comprising State Ministers, on Friday decided to come out with an amnesty scheme to provide relief to taxpayers in late fee for pending returns.

The late fee for non-furnishing of GSTR-3B for July 2017 to April 2021 has been capped at Rs 500 per return for those taxpayers who did not have any tax liability.

For those with tax liability, a maximum of Rs 1,000 per return late fees will be charged, provided such returns are filed by August 31, 2021.

Besides, the council has made it optional for taxpayers with turnover up to Rs 2 crore to file annual returns for 2020-21.

Also, the reconciliation statement in Form GSTR-9C for fiscal 2020-21 will have to be filed by taxpayers with an annual aggregate turnover of above Rs 5 crore.

EY Tax Partner Abhishek Jain said, "Overall, it can be said that the Council has duly considered the interest of the small industry players and provided them with requisite reliefs,

especially since these businesses were most impacted due to the pandemic".

AMRG & Associates Senior Partner Rajat Mohan said this is a substantial relief in payment of late fees for non-filers of GSTR-3B.

"This one time Amnesty scheme will push up overall compliance, contributing extra funds in the exchequer," he added. Shardul Amarchand Mangaldas & Co Partner Rajat Bose said the relaxation in compliance-related measures should provide temporary relief to small and medium taxpayers.

"However, on an overall basis, the council has failed to address major pain points of the industry and the common man resulting from the pandemic," Bose added.

Deloitte India Senior Director M S Mani said while the amnesty scheme would significantly benefit small businesses, there is a need to extend the same to other businesses who may not have fulfilled their obligations due to the pandemic.

Athena Law Associates Partner Pawan Arora said, although the council has allowed self-certification of Annual Reconciliation instead of GST Audit from CA, taxpayers should review their annual compliances to ensure proper compliance.

PTI

GoM set up to examine need for exempting GST on Covid essentials; to submit report by June 8

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

An eight-member Ministerial panel under Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad Sangma will examine the need for exempting GST or cutting rate on Covid essentials like vaccines, drugs, hand sanitisers, masks, PPE kits and oxygen related equipment.

The GST Council in its meeting on May 28 had decided to set up a Group of Ministers (GoM), which will submit its report by June 8.

"As a follow up of the decision of the GST Council at its 43rd meeting, a Group of Ministers (GoM) has been constituted to examine the issue of GST concession/exemption to COVID relief material," the Finance Ministry said.

As per its terms of reference (ToR), the GoM would examine whether a GST rate cut or exemption would be required for medical grade oxygen, pulse oximeters, hand sanitisers, oxygen therapy equipment like concentrators, ventilators, PPE kits, N-95 and surgical masks and temperature checking equipment.

Besides, the panel would also look into Covid vaccines, drugs and medicines for Covid treatment and testing kits for Covid detection.

PTI



The other members of the GoM are Gujarat Deputy Chief Minister Nitinbhai Patel, Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar, Goa Transport Minister Mauvin Godinho, Finance Ministers of Kerala (K N Balagopal), Odisha (Niranjan Pujari), Telangana (T Harish Rao) and UP (Suresh Kr Khanna).

The GST Council on Friday left taxes on COVID-19 vaccines and medical supplies unchanged after the BJP and Opposition-ruled states sparred over whether the tax cut benefits will reach the common man.

Congress and other Opposition ruled states have been demanding a reduction in taxes but the central government felt the move may not result in tangible gains for people.

Currently, 5 per cent GST is levied on domestically manufactured vaccines, while it is 12 per cent for COVID drugs and oxygen concentrators.

PTI

Bharti-backed OneWeb says 36 more satellites launched

New Delhi: Bharti Group-backed OneWeb, a Low Earth Orbit (LEO) satellite communications company, on Saturday announced the successful launch of 36 satellites by ArianeSpace from the Vostochny Cosmodrome in Russia.

This brings OneWeb's total in-orbit constellation to 218 satellites, the company said in a statement.

Announcing the launch of 36 more satellites, the company said, "This launch brings OneWeb a step closer to completing its 'Five to 50' ambition and the start of commercial service by the end of the year".

The satellites will form part of OneWeb's 648 LEO fleet that will deliver high-speed and low-latency global connectivity.

"There is now only one launch to go until the company has the satellites required to enable its connectivity solution to reach all regions north of 50 degrees latitude by June 2021," OneWeb added.

The latest satellite launch marks the fourth in a five-launch programme to fulfil the 'Five to 50' service, enabling OneWeb to offer connectivity across the United Kingdom, Alaska, Northern Europe, Greenland, the Arctic Seas and Canada.

PTI

Kotak Mahindra Bank board approves proposal to raise ₹ 5k crore via debt



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Kotak Mahindra Bank on Saturday said its board has approved proposal to raise up to ₹ 5,000 crore by issuing debt securities.

The board of directors of Kotak Mahindra Bank, at its meeting held today i.e. On May 29, 2021, have approved the proposal for issuance of unsecured, redeemable, non-convertible debentures/bonds/other debt securities, on private placement basis for an amount up to Rs 5,000 crore," the bank said in a regulatory filing.

The capital is to be raised in one or more tranches, subject to the approval of the members of the bank at the ensuing Annual General Meeting and any other approvals, it said.

PTI

Homegrown HiHi dating app gets first 400k downloads in India

Bangalore: Meotida Private Limited, the makers of the HiHi dating app announced the first 400k downloads since the app was released in Aug 2020. The app has won the hearts of the audiences in a short time. HiHi is an app that is designed for young and dynamic individuals seeking friendship and meaningful relationships through their smartphones. They provide a platform where youngsters can find like-minded people with whom they can spend their life.

With the increasing use of HiHi among youngsters in metropolitan cities, the app has expanded to T2 and T3 cities. HiHi aims to attract youths in smaller B-towns and become widespread, making it different from other apps in the market. HiHi noticed a trend where the women users have begun to spend more time applying and doing more actions, which is a very great indicator for the dating product. The app has worked great in the Android version next HiHi aims to launch on the iOS store.

"There is an increase in returning users and in-app purchases. Previously the app came up with three new features which were liked by the



users. The two new features planned are audio and video calling. Through these features, one person can audio and video call with their matches and know more about the person, taking the relationship to the next step. This new feature also gives you the option to plan virtual dates with your matches. This will also make the interaction and bonding more interesting. In this pandemic situation, people are preferring to take the dating process slow, know the personalities of their matches and check how compatible they are with them," says the HiHi executive.

extremely happy with the results. In a short span, we have grown into a thriving community of 400k users.

Our journey has just started. We are working on many new features along with the launch of the HiHi iOS app."

For the last few months, the HiHi team fixed more than 10 critical bugs and optimized the matching algorithms, increasing matching to 40 percent. The effectiveness increased by working on better matchmaking. There was a change in the user selection strategy with a 7-step funnel approach, steps include collecting data on every step and helping the algorithm to match profiles as well. The parameters include religion or preferences that the user can specify. It helped them increase engagement by almost 50 percent. The company has big plans for the future and will prepare the new versions of the app soon to allow getting a great fresh experience with social dating.

About HiHi Founded by Meotida Private Limited, HiHi commenced operations in India in 2019 and has successfully created a user-friendly and clutter-free platform for its users. The app is a vibrant community of young and dynamic individuals seeking friendship and meaningful relationships through a digital medium. HiHi wishes to build a welcoming community of diverse people where every person online can find like-minded friends and enjoy fascinating and safe communication.

PTI

Petrol price crosses ₹100 a litre in Mumbai

New Delhi: Petrol price on Saturday crossed the ₹ 100-a-litre mark in Mumbai after the 15th increase in fuel prices this month.

Petrol price was increased by 26 paise per litre and diesel by 28 paise a litre, according to a price notification of State-owned fuel retailers.

The increase - 15th this month - took petrol and diesel prices to a fresh all-time high across the country.

The price of petrol, which had already crossed the Rs 100-mark in several cities in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra, breached the psychological barrier in Mumbai on Saturday.

Petrol now costs Rs 100.19 a litre in Mumbai and diesel comes for Rs 92.17 per litre.

Fuel prices differ from state to state depending on the incidence of local taxes such as VAT and freight charges. Rajasthan levies the highest value-added tax (VAT) on petrol in the country, followed by Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra.

In Delhi, the petrol price rose to Rs 93.94 a litre and



diesel to Rs 84.89.

This is the 15th increase in prices since May 4, when state-owned oil firms ended an 18-day hiatus in rate revision they observed during assembly elections in states like West Bengal.

Oil companies revise rates of petrol and diesel daily based on the average price of benchmark fuel in the international market in the preceding 15-days, and foreign exchange rates.

Sri Ganganagar district of Rajasthan had the costliest petrol and diesel in the country at Rs 104.94 per litre and Rs 97.79 a litre, respectively.

In 15 increases, petrol price has risen by Rs 3.54 per litre and diesel by Rs 4.16.

PTI

Ladakh gets Centre's nod for transmission lines at revised cost of ₹ 1,310 crore

Leh: The Central Government has approved intra-State transmission works at a revised cost of ₹ 1,309.71 crore to link far-flung villages of Ladakh to the grid and phase out DG sets towards achieving carbon neutrality in the Union Territory, a top official said on Saturday.

The project on completion would also provide the army and the far-flung villages with clean power round the clock, he added.

Congratulating the people of Ladakh on the approval of the project, Lt Governor R K Mathur said the intra-state transmission works have been sanctioned by the Union Ministry of Power and include 220 KV S/C transmission lines of D/C tower (total 307 km), including Kargil-Padum (Zanskar) (207 km) and Phyang to Diskit (Nubra) (100 km) and two 220/33 KV Grid substation - one each at Diskit, Nubra (50 MVA) and Padum, Zanskar (50 MVA) with an outlay of Rs 1,309.71 crore.

Mathur expressed gratitude to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Home Minister Amit Shah and Power Minister R K Singh.

Secretary Power, UT Ladakh, Ravinder Kumar said

these projects were part of the Prime Ministers Development Package (PMDP) 2015, which could not have been taken up due to various issues.

However, due to the painstaking efforts of the Lt Governor, his administration and public representatives, it is now approved and ready for tendering of works, Kumar added.

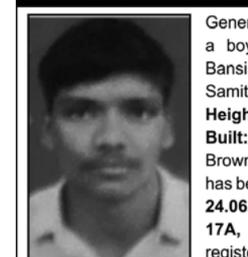
He said the REC Transmission Projects Company Limited (RECTP-CL) is the project implementing agency for executing the transmission works in Ladakh, while Power Grid Corporation India Limited (PGCIL) is the project management agency.

"These transmission lines will link far-flung villages to the Grid and phase out DG sets used in far-flung villages, thus taking one more step towards achieving Carbon Neutrality in Ladakh. This will also provide the Army and far-flung villages with clean power round the clock," he noted.

The DPR cost of the projects has been revised from Rs 354.74 crore to Rs 1,309.71 crore by the Central Electricity Authority (CEA), Kumar added.

PTI

SEARCH FOR MISSING



General Public is hereby informed that a boy namely **Vinod Kumar**, S/o Bansi Lal, R/o H.No. 724, Shanti Kust Samiti, Tahirpur, Delhi, **Age:** 23 years, **Height:** 5'5", **Complexion:** Sallow, **Built:** Thin, **Face:** Long, **Wearing:** Brown Colour Shirt and Black Pant has been missing from his home since **24.06.2008**. In this regard **DD No. 17A**, dated **04.07.2008** has been registered at **P.S. Nand Nagri, Delhi**.

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

E-mail : cic@cbi.gov.nic.in
Ph. : 011-24368638, 24368641
Fax : 011-24368639
SHO
PS Nand Nagri, Delhi
DP/747/NE/2021 Ph. : 011-22137761, 8750870733

SEARCH FOR MISSING



General Public is hereby informed that a girl namely **Ishika**, D/o Emanuel Massey, R/o H.No. 15, Gandhi Kusth Ashram, Tahirpur, Delhi, **Age:** 20 years, **Height:** 5'7", **Face:** Round, **Complexion:** Sallow, **Built:** Medium, **Wearing:** Pink colour suit-salwar and Brown Colour Sandal in her feet has been missing from her home since **05.05.2021**. In this regard a vide **DD No. 64-A**, dated **06.05.2021** has been registered at **P.S. Nand Nagri, Delhi**.

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

E-mail : cic@cbi.gov.nic.in
Ph. : 011-24368638, 24368641
Fax : 011-24368639
SHO
PS Nand Nagri, Delhi
DP/776/NE/2021 Ph. : 011-22137761, 8750870733

CENTRAL RAILWAY

MATERIALS MANAGEMENT DEPARTMENT
E-PROCUREMENT AT NOTICE NO. E-19/2021, DT. 27-05-2021

Tender No	Description	Qty.	T.O.D.
38213379	Set of Prevalling Torque Type	615 Sets	14-06-21
27211472	POH Maintenance Kit	20 Set	19-06-21
41212012	2/3 Overlap polyimide	7800 Kgs	21-06-21
18212212	Brake block	3716 nos	22-06-21
41213958	Silicon impregnating resin wacker	2745 Kg	22-06-21
50215025	Electric Point Machine	30 Nos	22-06-21
79213089	Rubberised coil mattresses	3193 Nos	22-06-21
80213194	Servo Press-150 RR	49560 Ltrs	22-06-21
27211040	16 Teeth Pinion	221 Nos	23-06-21
27211949	Axle Box Housing	234 Nos	23-06-21
81211035A	Dye penetrant test kit	6600 Nos	23-06-21
27212995	Manifold Mount EP Valve	2418 Nos	24-06-21
79214145	Dusters cotton khadi	42446 Nos	24-06-21
27212286	Auxiliary Switch	12696 Nos	25-06-21
27211570	Self-Illuminated Pressure Gauges	109 Set	28-06-21
27213001	Panto Mounting Insulator	731 Nos	28-06-21
27213341	Push Pull Rod	37 Nos	29-06-21
27213492	Set of Wiper Arm Assembly	192 Set	29-06-21
27214668	Micro process based Speedometer	10 Set	30-06-21
42214007	High voltage cable assembly	09 Nos	30-06-21
42214281	Centering Device Complete	383 Nos	30-06-21
27213239	DE & NDE Suspension Tube Bearing	196 Set	05-07-21
38213311A	Constant contact polyurethane slide.	700 Nos	12-07-21
38212578	Silent Block for Anchor Link.	3200 Nos	26-07-21

Regarding detail notice & Tender Conditions please visit www.reps.gov.in
Principal Chief Material Manager 157
RailMadad Helpline No. 139

Event community steps forward for Covid assistance

New Delhi: Amid the Covid-induced national distress, Event and Entertainment Management Association (EEMA) has come to the rescue of people in need with the formation of Covid task force. Under this initiative, EEMA

roped in volunteers and staff for the management of the Sant Nirankari Covid facility, Burari and at Rakab Ganj Gurudwara. It provided real-time updates on oxygen availability in Delhi NCR along with addresses twice a day. In part-

nership with Apollo, it provided priority doctor consultation and 15 per cent discount on medicines.

It also launched CoviHeal Covid Facility, Gurugram. "We believe the event management community is best at crisis

management, planning, innovation and execution," said EEMA president Roshan Abbas. While its general secretary Siddhartha Chaturvedi added, "EEMA with its strong member support has showed its mettle." PNS

PGCIL facilitates critical healthcare infrastructure to fight Covid-19 pandemic

New Delhi: State-run Power Grid Corporation of India Ltd (PGCIL) has contributed to the fight against the coronavirus pandemic by facilitating critical healthcare infrastructure such as cold chain equipment, oxygen plants and insulated vans for vaccination.

"PGCIL is proactively working towards supporting and contributing in India's fight against Covid-19 by extending help to various States across the country," a statement said.

Through its dedicated effort of contributing towards better healthcare facilities, PGCIL has provided cold chain equipment (181 Ice Lined Refrigerators and 130 Deep Freezers) costing around Rs 2.66 crore to the States of Punjab, Sikkim, Mizoram and UT of Ladakh under CSR, it said.

Two insulated vans have

also been provided for facilitating COVID-19 vaccination drive in remote areas of Leh, Ladakh.

For oxygen support, PGCIL is going to establish oxygen generation plants at Tau Devi Lal Stadium, Gurugram (Haryana) having capacity of 2 x 50 Nm3 per hour and at Jaisalmer (Rajasthan) having capacity of 50 Nm3 per hour.

Adopting a holistic approach to confront the pandemic, a catheterisation laboratory is being set up to diagnose and treat cardiac issues by Government Rajaji Hospital, Madurai through financial assistance provided by POWER-GRID which will benefit the people of Tamil Nadu, it stated.

PGCIL as a responsible corporate citizen has been regularly investing in an array of healthcare projects, believing in its philosophy of giving back to the society.

Recycling zones to be established for plastic waste management

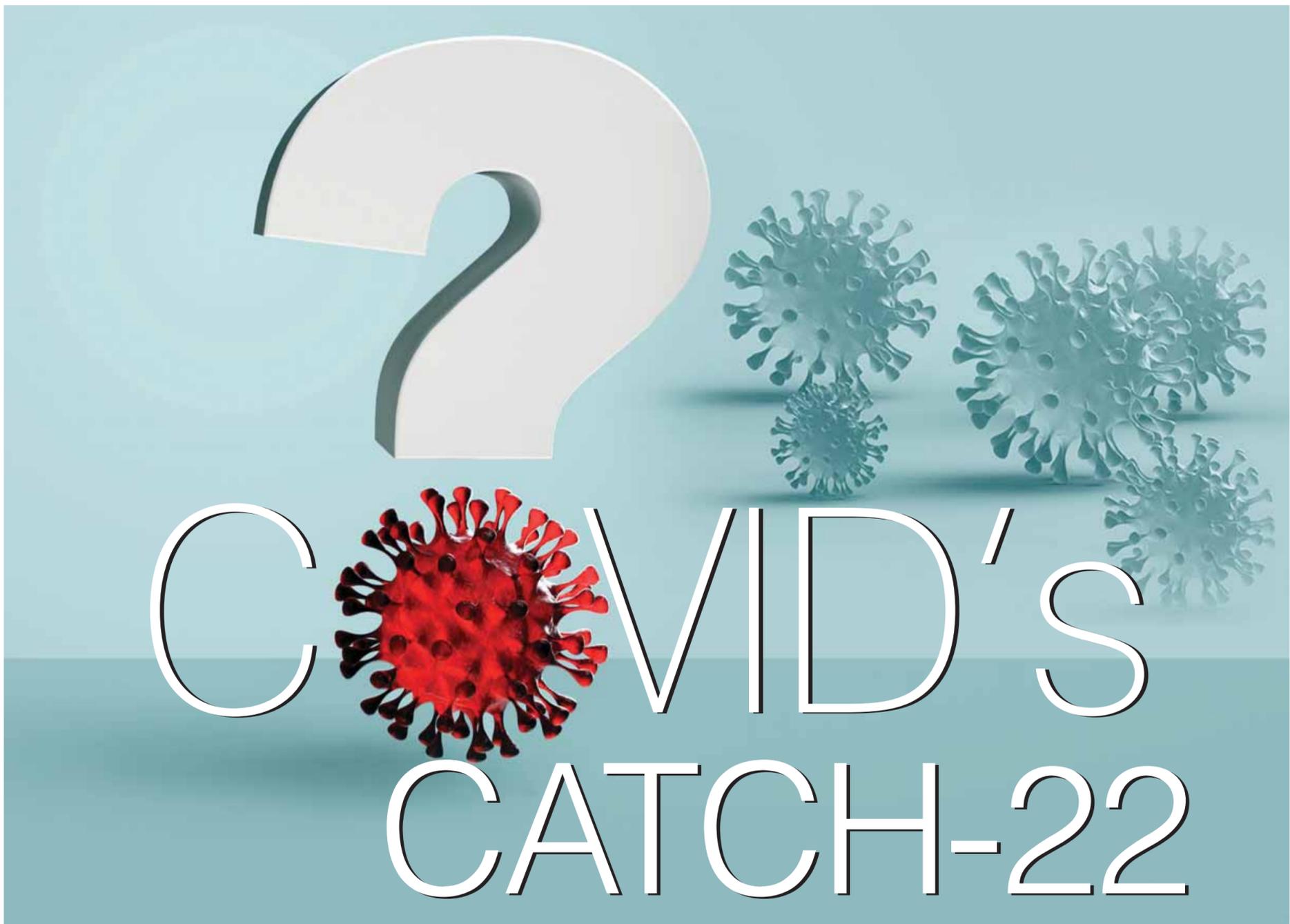
Rajasthan: PHD Chamber, Rajasthan Chapter organised a Webinar on Plastic Waste Management Rules-2016 - "Extended Producers Responsibility (EPR)". During the webinar the various provisions of these important Rules and the implementation mechanism stipulated therein discussed threadbare by different stakeholders.

Shri Sanjay Aggarwal, President, PHD Chamber of Commerce in his Presidential Address emphasized the importance of the Rules and called upon Plastic industry to adopt best practices and techniques for implementation of these Rules for containing pollution. Mr. Aggarwal observed that the use of plastic in day to day life in very dominant and in the ongoing COVID times the use of various plastic products has increased significantly in the Healthcare system for safety, security and hygienic

reasons. He very strongly suggested that the Government and Plastic industry should take initiative for accelerating waste recycling by adopting best practices, State of Art technologies and developing robust infrastructure facility for scientific management of waste. In this regard he strongly advocated for development of dedicated Recycling Parks and Zones in the Country at different places which will not only generate tremendous business opportunities and promote Circular Economy but also facilitate implementation of Rules.

Shri Dignvijay Dhabriya, Chairman, PHDCCI-Rajasthan Chapter welcoming the speakers informed that a significant quantum of plastic waste generated in the Country (Approximately 40%) is not recycled which causes lot of environmental problems.

PNS



It's been more than a year-and-a-half into the pandemic, yet experts worldwide are struggling to completely understand the nature of the Coronavirus. This has led to Catch-22 leaving lakhs clueless about what to do next. MUSBA HASHMI brings you a report

Remember, last year, experts and even the World Health Organisation suggested that everyone need not wear a mask, but only those looking after COVID patients. Not only this, people even anticipated that the Coronavirus would die in summers because of the high temperatures, not to mention the perception that the elderly and people with comorbidities are at a higher risk of getting infected. There is more. A certain type of UV rays were believed to inactivate the virus. However, all these notions got nullified sooner than later.

"Few new reliable scientific studies say that temperature, humidity or UV rays do not play a significant role in Coronavirus spread. That means whether it's hot or cold outside, the transmission of COVID-19 from one person to the other depends almost entirely on human behaviour. Weather influences the environment in which the Coronavirus must survive before infecting a new host. But it also influences human behaviour, which moves the virus from one host to another," Dr Mubasheer Ali, Senior Internal Medicine Consultant, Apollo TeleHealth, tells you.

Whenever a pandemic breaks out, the origin country knows more about the virus than any other country and for all the right reasons. "When COVID broke, initially it was believed to transmit through droplets; hence, the mask was only mandatory for COVID caregivers. For the rest, a six-foot distance and hand hygiene was enough. But gradually, with time, it was found that the virus is air borne and can sustain in the air for about four hours. Hence, masks were made mandatory for everyone," Dr AP Singh, Senior Consultant Physician, Yashoda Super Specialty Hospital, Ghaziabad, tells you.

That said, about two years into the pandemic, experts worldwide are struggling to completely understand the virus' nature completely. So much so, that there are clashes of opinions even when it comes to treating the disease. Be it the use of common drugs like Remdesivir and Fabipiravir or steroids, dark clouds of confusion have engulfed everybody's mind resulting in a Catch-22 situation, and many people worldwide remain clueless of what to do next.

"Many are asking why experts haven't been able to find a treatment or cure for the virus. The simple answer: there's too much they don't know. Two years feels like a long time, but it's no time at all when it comes to medical research. COVID-19 is a novel virus, which means that very few have natural immunity to it and experts couldn't research on it prior to the outbreak in December 2019," Ali says.

While the reasons for the usage of unproven drugs are complicated, for once, it is difficult in a pandemic to treat a patient with only minimal care. "This pressure to 'do something' might nudge physicians towards creating guide-

lines for unproven drugs that are either considered innocuous, or may have shown promise in animal studies or theoretical models, based on biological pathways. Another reason is that constantly reviewing the rapidly changing evidence in a pandemic is an intensive exercise, which many doctors are finding it difficult correlating with individual patients and their conditions. Making quick changes to treatment protocols to reflect evidence may be challenging for everyone, given that they have to coordinate with people across institutions, States and local administrations," Ali explains.

Singh adds and tells you that both Remdesivir and Fabipiravir drugs are repurposed for COVID. These are the drugs that helped fight several infections earlier, but for COVID, the efficacy was less and that we are yet to find anti-viral drugs for COVID. "These drugs are for emergency use only; they are not fit for long-term use," he says.

This is not all. The use of steroids are under the scanner too. Steroids are a life saving medicine and have been used historically for a long time in conditions of acute stress and where the patient's life is in danger. And they should, in the same way be used in COVID as well when the cytokine shower is starting, and is in imminently danger of becoming a cytokine storm that is when the steroids should be started.

"They should not be started too early, especially never during the viremic phase, because they suppress your antibodies, your immune response and will allow the virus to replicate in an unlimited form," Dr Shuchin Bajaj, Founder Director, Ujala Cygnus Group of Hospitals, opines.

Singh agrees with Bajaj and says that steroids have been used in the treatment of several diseases for years and so is being done in COVID. However, it should only be started in the second phase of the disease where a patient experiences cough, chest pain and his oxygen levels start to fall.

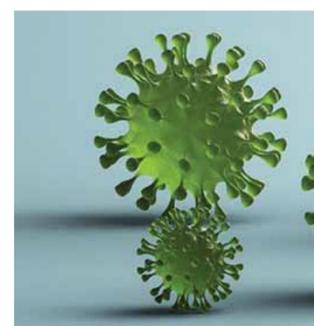
"There are cases of Black Fungus in various hospitals which are being attributed to extensive use of steroids. However, in our hospital we haven't seen a single case of this fungal infection. Like I said, steroids aren't a new treatment. Then there are some, who call it a hospital acquired infection. The reason being the use of industrial oxygen and lack of hygiene practices. But, again there are no facts to support it. Hospitals are doing everything they could. It is too early to predict whether Black Fungus is a post-COVID complication or a hospital acquired opportunist fungal infection," Singh opines.

The other side of the story is many people are avoiding hospital visits due to the fear of catching infection. Bajaj has a take on that.

"Hospital visits being avoided by patients is the right thing to do actually, patient should not

THE REASON WHY THE MORTALITY RATE IS MORE AMONG THE YOUNG ADULTS THIS YEAR IS DUE TO TWO REASONS. ONE, THE ELDERLY HAVE BEEN FULLY VACCINATED. TWO, BECAUSE THE ELDERLY WERE MORE VULNERABLE THE YOUNGSTERS STEPPED OUT WITH MANY BECOMING COMPLACENT, THINKING THEY HAVE A LOW RISK OF CATCHING INFECTION. ALSO, THE MUTATION OF THE VIRUS CAN BE A REASON FOR THEM COMING IN THE RADAR OF THE CORONAVIRUS

— DR AP SINGH, SENIOR PHYSICIAN CONSULTANT, YASHODA SUPER SPECIALTY HOSPITAL, GHAZIABAD



CONFLICTING CLAIMS

- Last year, it was suggested that only COVID caregivers should be wearing a mask. Later, masks were made mandatory for everyone.
- Experts, last year, anticipated that the high temperatures would kill the virus. However, it was later said that the virus is not temperature sensitive.
- It was said that ventilators would be the only cure, then it was said maybe ventilators are not necessary and maybe you need to have high flow nasal cannulas. Also, it was said smokers would be most affected because their lungs are already weak and they will die. Later, it was changed to that smokers may be the only people who will survive this.
- Initially, it was believed that the elderly and people with comorbidities were at a higher risk of getting infected. However, in the second wave, both youngsters and young adults got equally affected, if not more.

be visiting hospitals unnecessary. What we see in India and especially North India is that people even for the smallest of ailments like common cold will go and visit the highest super specialty hospital. So it's a good thing that now due to COVID patients are avoiding hospital visits most of the conditions, more than 90 per cent, can be solved easily at home, especially in these times with the availability of teleconsultation. And even if you don't trust teleconsultations you can visit your neighbourhood clinic or the doctor who you want to see, I think most of them have their own standalone clinics. So you can go and visit them, only in very unavoidable cases should you go and visit the hospital directly," Bajaj suggests.

Singh has a different take on the matter. He doesn't find this as a feasible option. Many peo-

ple with serious diseases, too, are avoiding their visits to the hospital. They keep on tolerating the symptoms; this leads to the advancement of the disease.

"Take proper precautions and visit the hospital if you are undergoing treatment for cancer of tuberculosis. Avoiding it can pose serious threat to your health. Remember, mortality rate of COVID is only 2 per cent, while for cancer, it is much higher. So, if it's the fear of catching infection that is holding you back from going to the hospital, don't forget there are other diseases that are equally or, for that matter, even more deadly. But, this doesn't mean that you start taking the virus lightly," Singh advises.

Doctors believe blaming experts and scientists worldwide for not finding a cure for the disease is not the right thing. It takes years to come up with a proper treatment for diseases.

"COVID is a new disease which none of us understand right now. So there is a lot of conflicting claims coming in. It was said that ventilators will be the only cure, then it was said maybe ventilators are not necessary, maybe you need to have high flow nasal cannulas. Then it was said that smokers will be most affected because their lungs are already weak and they will die. Later, it was changed to that smokers may be the only people who will survive this. So this is something that is coming back and forth. But it is, I think, exactly like how science functions. Science works on getting evidence. And we are unearthing a lot of evidences which will take some time to understand. Most of the diseases that came in usually took hundreds of years for us to understand and find an effective cure. We've seen this only for one year. So I think within the next one or two years, we will have a much better understanding and we will develop a sure shot cure for it as well. Historically, viruses have been difficult to cure. HIV we have not been able to cure even now, even after 40 years of its emergence. So it may take some time, but we will definitely find drugs to control it," Bajaj asserts.

Ali adds that researchers are moving as quickly as they can to find a complete cure for this virus and as part of this scientists have spent the past two years developing vaccines and treatments to slow the pandemic and lessen the disease's damage. "Healthcare professionals are working tirelessly to fight this disease, but they can't do it alone. The people will still have to help flatten the curve by following all the precautions and guidelines," Ali says.

Singh concludes by saying that the need of the hour is to be patient. The focus of every doctor right now is to save lives. Research can wait. Having said that, there are people who are studying the virus, but they need time as well. Once, the situation is under control, we will be conducting research to get more insights about the virus.

IPL 2021 TO RESUME IN UAE

Remaining matches will be played in Sept-Oct; BCCI has requested more time for final decision on T20 WC

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The remaining 31 matches of Indian Premier League 2021 season will take place in United Arab Emirates (UAE) in September and October, Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) announced on Saturday after its Special General Meeting (SGM) held virtually, where members unanimously agreed to resume the cash rich tournament.

The cricket administrative body also decided to seek an extension of time from the ICC to take an appropriate call on the hosting of ICC T20 World Cup 2021 that is scheduled to take place here in October and November.

"The BCCI on Saturday announced to complete the remaining matches of VIVO Indian Premier League 2021 season in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) considering the monsoon season in India in the months of September-October this year.

"The BCCI SGM further authorised the Office Bearers to seek an extension of time from the ICC to take an appropriate call on the hosting of ICC T20 World Cup 2021," secretary Jay Shah said in the statement.

The likely dates for the tournament will be between September 18 and October 10 as it was reported few days back by PTI.

"The SGM approved the decision to hold the remaining matches of IPL between September and October. The dates will be intimated later," a senior state association member, who was present in the meeting, told PTI.

"In September, it's the time for retreating monsoon in India. Also the fact that three grounds in the UAE makes it easier as we had seen in 2020."

He also said all the members



want the T20 World Cup to be held in India in last week of October but no decision can be taken right now.

"The BCCI representatives — president Sourav Ganguly and secretary Jay Shah — will be seeking time till July 1 after which another SGM will be held to decide on whether we would go ahead with hosting of World T20.

"Right now, the health situation in the country doesn't allow us to take any final decision."

The senior state association member said there is also a tax rebate issue which is still an ongoing process.

"ICC wants tax waivers but we have to abide by government guidelines. But a World T20 in India means that all the stake-

holders happen to gain. But sitting in May, you can't predict the health emergency in October. So we need some time," he said.

While IPL's UAE shift was a foregone conclusion, the office bearers intimated the general body about the issue of availability of players.

England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) has already stated that it won't release its players for the unfinished league while Cricket Australia is yet come out with its position on the matter.

"The BCCI is pretty clear that even if there is a case of unavailability of English players due to their series against Pakistan, we are not going to plead to any of the boards about releasing their players.

"The first and foremost thing is to complete the 31

Jemimah will play for Northern Superchargers in The Hundred

Mumbai: Young India batter Jemimah Rodrigues will play for Northern Superchargers in the inaugural edition of *The Hundred* in the UK starting on July 21.

The 20-year-old joins her T20I skipper Harmanpreet Kaur, vice-captain Smriti Mandhana, opener Shafali Verma and all-rounder Deepti Sharma in the 100-ball tournament involving eight men's and women's teams.

"I am really looking forward to it (The Hundred). Something new, something

remaining games of IPL. We believe other aspects will be taken care of," he added.

According to *Cricbuzz*, BCCI has decided that the franchises will be told to take replacements, both from India and overseas, to refurbish their line-ups.

GANGULY, SHAH GOING TO DUBAI

BCCI president Sourav Ganguly and secretary Jay Shah will join vice president Rajiv Shukla in Dubai for the ICC Board Meeting on June 1 where there will be discussions on the fate of the T20 World Cup in India in October.

"As they will ask for one month's time, the best option for BCCI is to hold it in Maharashtra — three grounds in Mumbai and one in Pune. However, the issue of Pakistan travelling to Mumbai could be more of a political decision where the security will also need to be factored in," the official said.

Indian women to undergo hard quarantine in Southampton



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Indian women's cricket squad, which will be travelling to the United Kingdom along with the men's team for their month-long series, will also undergo their hard quarantine in Southampton instead of Bristol where they are supposed to play their one-off Test match.

Both the Indian teams are awaiting their complete quarantine routine from the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB).

"The Indian women's contingent is not moving to Bristol on landing. Instead they will also be going to Southampton with the men's team and start their room quarantine. With ECB yet to send us the routine that we need to follow, the

THE INDIAN WOMEN'S CONTINGENT IS NOT MOVING TO BRISTOL ON LANDING. INSTEAD THEY WILL ALSO BE GOING TO SOUTHAMPTON WITH THE MEN'S TEAM AND START THEIR ROOM QUARANTINE — BCCI SOURCE

women's team will only leave for Bristol once the quarantine period in Southampton is over," a senior BCCI official privy to travel details told PTI.

Both the teams will be putting up at the Hilton Hotel, which is a part of the Hampshire Bowl Stadium property.

"We need to plan our

quarantine schedule and for that intimation about the duration of hard and soft quarantine period is very important. It is the ECB which will handover a complete chart starting from day one of our managed isolation," the official said.

It is expected that the women's team will be putting up at the same hotel which is adjacent to the County ground in Bristol to ensure a safe bio-secure zone for the squad.

The women's team will play their one-off Test from June 16-19 which also overlaps, for a couple of days, with the men's World Test Championship final against New Zealand to be played at the Hampshire Bowl starting June 18.

KOHLI, SHARMA TO HIT GYM TODAY

India captain Virat Kohli and his white ball deputy Rohit Sharma will end their seven-day hard quarantine in India on Sunday and are expected to hit the gym for a full workout.

"Tomorrow their seven day hard quarantine ends. They can now do their sessions for the next three days before departure. If you come to think of it, despite team's hard quarantine in India and six negative RT-PCR test, they will have to undergo another round of hard isolation on reaching UK. But these are tough times and you have to adapt accordingly," the official added.

Indian team to stay in managed isolation before WTC final: ICC

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Indian team will stay in "managed isolation" before the World Test Championship final against New Zealand in Southampton from June 18, the ICC announced on Saturday but did not mention the exact period of hard quarantine upon reaching United Kingdom.

While the Kiwis are already in England for a two match Test series against the hosts, the Virat Kohli-led Indian team will arrive in the UK on June 3 after competing a 14-day quarantine period in India.

"The event has now been granted an exemption by the UK Government as outlined in the Health Protection (Coronavirus, International Travel and Operator Liability) Regulations 2021," released on 17 May 2021," the ICC said in a release.

"...Upon landing, they will proceed directly to the on-site hotel at the Hampshire Bowl where they will be tested again before commencing a period of



managed isolation," said the ICC release.

However the release doesn't specify the duration of hard (room) quarantine in Southampton.

For New Zealand team, ECB made it a three-day mandatory room quarantine before allowing the players to train.

Regular tests will be conducted during the period of isolation.

The Indian team will enter

UK after completing 14-days in a bio-bubble in Mumbai with six RT-PCR negative tests.

Some of the players like Ravichandran Ashwin, Mayank Agarwal, Washington Sundar are now allowed to use the hotel gymnasium from May 25 after a week-long room quarantine and three negative tests.

However a few like skipper Virat Kohli, Rohit Sharma, all of whom joined late will have a complete room quarantine before boarding the UK flight.

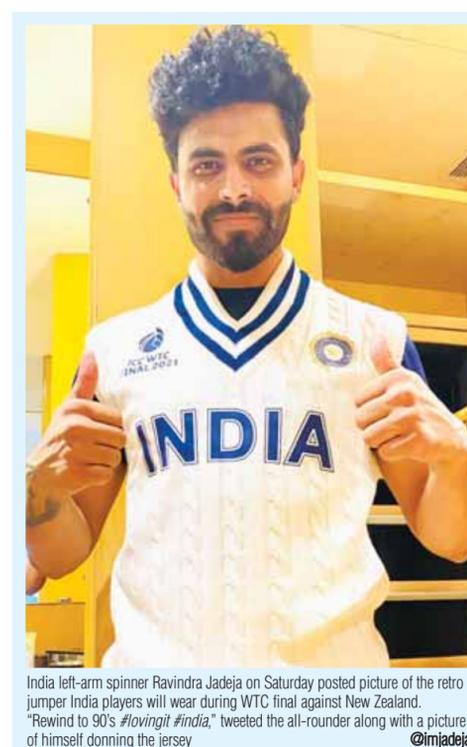
In the UK, players' activity will be allowed in a gradually increasing manner after each round of negative testing, moving from exercise in isolation to small group and then larger squad activity, whilst always remaining within the bio-secure venue.

The New Zealand team will move from the ECB bio-secure environment into the WTC Final bubble on June 15 and will be subject to regular testing prior to and post arrival in Southampton.

NZ travel to London for Eng Tests



Southampton: After acclimatising to the conditions in Southampton which will host the WTC final against India next month, the New Zealand team travels to London for the two-match series against England. The Blackcaps are scheduled to play England in two Tests, in London and Birmingham, starting June 2, following which they will face India in the WTC final from June 18-22 at the Rose Bowl. "The New Zealand team travels to London today," the New Zealand Cricket (NZC) wrote on its official Twitter handle on Saturday. As part of their preparation for the WTC final, the Kiwis played a three-day team intra-squad game here. PTI



India left-arm spinner Ravindra Jadeja on Saturday posted picture of the retro jumper India players will wear during WTC final against New Zealand. "Rewind to 90s #livingit #India," tweeted the all-rounder along with a picture of himself donning the jersey @imjadeja

Poms at home with Dukes balls, will beat India: Vaughan

SIANS ■ LONDON

England will beat India in five-Test series in August-September since they are more comfortable with Dukes balls which are used in the country for Test cricket, said Michael Vaughan.

The former England skipper, who led his team to their first Ashes series win in two decades in 2005, added that Joe Root and Virat Kohli are going to be the top-scorers in the Test series while Jasprit Bumrah and Chris Woakes will be the top wicket-takers.

"England will win. Every time England have gone to India, they have been hammered. And every time, India have come to England, the opposite has happened. England are a team at home that are very tough to beat with the Dukes ball," Vaughan said in an interview to *crictracker.com*.

"I'm going to go with Virat Kohli and Joe Root (as top run-



scorers), and Jasprit Bumrah and Chris Woakes (as top wicket-takers)," he added.

The 46-year-old, who is now a commentator picked New Zealand pace bowler all-rounder Kyle Jamieson and India wicketkeeper-batsman Rishabh Pant as men to watch out for in the World Test Championship (WTC) final.

"First is Kyle Jamieson as he's had a magnificent start to his Test career. Next is Rishabh Pant as he is the star of the world game. He has been incredible over the last few months, especially against Australia and England," said Vaughan in the interview.

Oz need a finisher like Dhoni, Pandya: Punter

PTI ■ SYDNEY

Former captain Ricky Ponting feels Australia lacks a finisher in the mould of former India skipper Mahendra Singh Dhoni or all-rounder Hardik Pandya despite the abundance of experienced players ahead of the upcoming T20 World Cup.

Ponting also feels that unearthing a reliable middle or lower-order batsman who can keep wickets could kill two birds with one stone.

"The spot they (Australia) have always been worried about is that finishing role. It's a very specialist position to be able to go in with three of four overs to go, with 50 runs needed and be able to do it," Ponting was quoted as saying in *cricnet.com.au*.

"Dhoni has been in that one spot his whole career and no wonder he's so good at it. Hardik Pandya and Kieron Pollard are similar — these guys continually win games of cricket for their country and in the IPL, they're used to going

in batting at those spots," he added.

Ponting, who coached Delhi Capitals in the IPL, said one of the reasons for Australia not having a good finisher is that all of the best batsmen of the country bat in top four in Big Bash League.

"So you've actually got no one that's consistently batting in that area. That's what we've got to find," said the 46-year-old legendary batsman.

"Is it going to be (Glenn) Maxwell and Mitchell Marsh that are going to finish the games, is it going to be (Marcus) Stoinis? I think that's the area that they're more worried about."

Stoinis has had success batting lower down the order under Ponting's

guidance at the Delhi Capitals.

"I saw Stoinis at Delhi last year, he's opened the last few years of BBL and done a great job for the Melbourne Stars, but I needed someone that could finish games for us and he won two or three games off his own bat."

"So, it's there — but they will get better at it the more they do it. How they find a way for these guys to do it more, I'm not sure," said Ponting, who is currently in quarantine in a Sydney hotel after returning from the suspended IPL.

And of equal concern, said the

former captain, is identifying the best option for wicket-keeper, and suggested that the uncapped Josh Inglis could be in the mix, despite missing out on preliminary squad for the upcoming tours of the Caribbean and Bangladesh.

"The keeper-batsman is probably the slot they'd be losing the most sleep over right now...who is going to be standing behind the stumps with the gloves on?"

"They have tried a few blokes — (Matthew) Wade has been there, (Josh) Philippe has just played as a batter, Alex Carey has been in and out and tried in a few different batting spots."

"Josh Inglis' name could be thrown into the ring as well — I really liked what I saw from him batting in the middle order in last summer's BBL." Ponting added: "He (Inglis) plays spin really well and you think about where the World Cup is going to be (in India or the UAE), he could be a name that could come up (for selection)."

Equalling Cook record will be 'mind-blowing', says Anderson

London: James Anderson has said the prospect of equalling the England record for Test appearances held by Alastair Cook is "mind-blowing".

If Anderson is selected for next week's series opener against New Zealand at Lord's, he will draw level with former captain Cook's mark of 161 Tests.

And should Anderson achieve his aim of playing in all seven Tests against New Zealand and India this season, he will be behind just a trio of batsmen — India's Sachin Tendulkar (200 Tests) and the Australia duo of Ricky Ponting and Steve Waugh (both 168) — in the all-time list.

"It does make me feel proud," Anderson told reporters. "I never imagined in a million years I'd get to this point."

"Certainly for a bowler to play this amount of games is... I don't know what the word is... but it's a bit mind-blowing to me because I don't feel like I've played that many games." AFP

Start winning games rather than complaining: de Silva to SL players

PTI ■ COLOMBO

Former Sri Lanka captain Aravinda de Silva has asked the national team cricketers to "start winning games rather than complaining" as he defended the proposed annual players' contracts prepared by the committee under him.

De Silva said the players' rejection of the central contracts was "unfair", because the Board is offering more for winning series against top-ranked opposition.

"It is very unfair that our players say that they are not agreeable to this scheme. The most important fact is they should get into the middle and play positive cricket and start winning games for the country rather than complaining."

"This positive approach will encourage us to consider offering them more benefits, like some of the other countries in our region," de Silva was quot-



SL Test captain Dimuth Karunaratne as saying by *Daily News*.

Last week, the Sri Lanka Cricket (SLC) said that 24 of the leading players had been offered contracts under four categories and they had been given a deadline until June 3 to sign on dotted lines.

Sri Lanka's leading cricketers led by Test captain Dimuth Karunaratne along with host of senior players refused to sign the central contracts which they believe is far less compared to other countries.

De Silva said the Cricket

Committee, which he heads, has been very fair to the players as the new system will infuse additional benefits than before as it is a performance-based scheme.

"We discussed this matter in depth before we presented it to the players. Unlike in the past, we have increased the benefits three-fold (300%) than what it was but purely on the team's performance."

"It has to be a collective effort by the whole team. If they win a Test series, we pay them \$150,000 which was earlier limited to \$50,000," said the 55-year-old who scored 6361 runs from 93 Tests between 1984 and 2002.

Explaining further, he said: "Winning a limited overs series we have offered them \$75,000, which was earlier limited to \$25,000."

"We also introduced a slab for the T20 format, which also runs up to a maximum of \$50,000, which earlier didn't have any rewards at all."

Nadal, Djoker eye Grand Slam history

14th title in Paris will take Rafa one ahead of Federer's record of 20 majors; No 1 Novak will hope to become the first player in more than five decades to win all four majors on multiple occasions

AFP ■ PARIS

French Open (Day 1)
Live from 2:30pm IST
STAR SPORTS NETWORK

Rafael Nadal and Novak Djokovic will set their sights on more Grand Slam history at the French Open as Roland Garros embraces a new but eerily empty era of night-time tennis.

A 14th title in Paris for Nadal would take him to a record-setting 21st major, surpassing the mark he shares with Roger Federer who has already written off his hopes of adding to his lone success in the French capital back in 2009.

Djokovic, the champion in 2016, can move to 19 Grand Slam titles with victory.

That would make the world number one the first man in over half a century to win all four majors on multiple occasions.

Only one of the sport's Big Three will make the June 13 final after the draw placed top seed Djokovic, third seed Nadal and eighth-seeded Federer in the same half of the draw.

That means Djokovic is scheduled to face Federer in the quarter-finals before a potential semi-final blockbuster with Nadal.

"I see it as completely normal. I'm not worried about it. I have a lot of work in front of me to play a potential match versus Djokovic," said Nadal, who has already won clay court titles this season in Barcelona and Rome.

At last year's delayed Roland Garros, Nadal swept past Djokovic in straight sets in the final.

It was Nadal's 100th win at the tournament against just two losses since his 2005 title-winning debut.

Nadal, who defeated Djokovic in the Rome final, starts his campaign against Alexei Popyrin of Australia, the world number 62.

Giving Djokovic hope, however, is the knowledge that he was responsible for one of Nadal's losses in Paris, in the 2015 quarter-finals.

He is also a four-time runner-up although three of those defeats in the championship match came against the Spaniard.

Only two men have previously managed to win all four of the Slams on more than one occasion — Roy Emerson and Rod Laver of Australia.

Laver's achievement came back in 1969.

Djokovic tackles 66th-ranked Tennyis Sandgren of the United States in his first round match while Federer, playing the tournament for the first time since 2019, begins against a qualifier.

Federer, with his 40th birthday fast approaching, remains the sentimental favourite but his priority will be an assault on Wimbledon where he has been champion eight times.

CHASING PACK

"I'm not so sure in the last 50 years of the French Open, somebody just rocks up at nearly 40 years old, being out for a year and a half, and wins everything straight," said Federer after losing his only clay court match this year in Geneva last week.

Of the chasing pack, two-time runner-up Dominic Thiem is low on form and confidence.

A run to the Madrid semi-finals was followed by a straight sets defeat to Cameron Norrie in his Lyon opener.

World number two Daniil Medvedev has yet to win a match at Roland Garros in four attempts.

In Rome, he fell at the first hurdle and half-jokingly pleaded with the referee to disqualify him such is his dislike for clay.

World number five Stefanos Tsitsipas is the most likely man to



13 time French Open champion Rafael Nadal poses for photo with a statue of Spanish artist Jordi Diez representing Rafael Nadal at the Roland Garros stadium in Paris



Roger Federer takes part in practice session ahead of the start of French Open at Roland Garros stadium in Paris

upset the odds of Nadal or Djokovic again taking the title.

The 22-year-old Greek won the prestigious Monte Carlo clay court title in April, had match point before losing the Barcelona final to Nadal and then lifted the Lyon trophy.

He has beaten Nadal on clay in Madrid in 2019 and stretched Djokovic to five sets in the 2020 French Open semi-finals.

This year's Roland Garros will be the second taking place under the shadow of the coronavirus.

Just over 5,000 fans a day will be allowed on site until June 9 when that figure rises to 13,000.

For the first time this year, there will be nine evening sessions at the tournament.

However, a Covid-19 curfew from 9pm means that eight of those sessions will be played inside an empty Court Philippe Chatrier.



Novak Djokovic kisses the trophy after he beats Alex Molcan in the final match of the Belgrade Open tournament in Belgrade on Saturday

Novak cruises to title in Belgrade

AFP ■ BELGRADE

Novak Djokovic completed a successful warm-up for the French Open when he beat Slovakian Alex Molcan 6-4, 6-3, on Saturday in the final of the ATP clay tournament in Belgrade.

This was the second event in the city in just over a month but where the Serbia Open in April was played in an empty stadium, fans were allowed for this tournament.

"It's been a while since I last played here in front of a crowd," said Djokovic, a Belgrade native who lost in the semi-final in the Serbia Open, a tournament he last won in 2011.

"To hold a trophy here after 10 years is really special and it couldn't be better ahead of Roland

Garros," he said. "I am playing well, feeling good and I have spent quality time with my family."

It was the second title this season for the 34-year-old world number one, the winner of the Australian Open in February, and the 83rd of his career.

The 23-year-old Molcan was trying to become the fifth first-time ATP tournament winner this season. Before Belgrade he had not won a match on the ATP tour this year.

"I didn't play badly, but I was playing against Djokovic. I'm feeling good and tired," he said.

"I made my first ATP Tour final from qualification. I played good tennis here and I was fighting. Today, I tried as well, but it wasn't enough."

Mary aims for sixer of Golds

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The six-time world champion Mary Kom and defending champion Amit Panghal are among the seven Indian pugilists who will play in the finals at the 2021 ASBC Asian Boxing Championships in Dubai.

While the seasoned campaigner Mary Kom alongside Pooja Rani (75kg), Anupama (+81kg) and Lalbuatsahi (64kg) will play their respective final bouts on Sunday, Panghal, Shiva Thapa (64kg) and Sanjeet (91kg) will be in action on Monday.

At the on-going prestigious Championships, which is jointly hosted by the Boxing Federation of India (BFI) and UAE Boxing Federation, Indian contingent have already ensured their best-ever show by securing unprecedented 15 medals and bettered previous highest of 13 medals (2 Gold, 4 Silver and 7 Bronze) achieved during the 2019 edition.

Aiming for the sixth Gold



will face a stiff challenge from the two-time world champion medal in just seven appearances, the veteran Mary Kom

Kazakh boxer Nazym Kyzabaiy in the 51kg final.

Another Olympic-bound Pooja Rani, who received a walk-over in the semi-finals, will fight against an in-form Mavluda Movlonova of Uzbekistan, who ended the challenge of London Olympics medallist Marina Volnova in the last-4 stage.

On the other hand, Lalbuatsahi and Anupama will also face strong Kazakh boxers in their respective finals.

In the men's section, Panghal will look to defend his title when he will be up against the Rio Olympics and world champion Uzbek pugilist Zoirov Shakhobidin of Uzbekistan in the Gold medal match on Monday.

Assam boxer Thapa, who has been impressive and the joint most successful male boxer in the Championships with five consecutive medals, will be challenged by the Asian Games silver medallist Mongolia's Baatarsukh Chinzorig.

Second seeded Sanjeet will fight against the Rio Olympics Silver medallist Vassily Levit, who is chasing his fourth Gold medal of the Asian Championships.

The International Boxing Association (AIBA) has allocated \$4,00,000 prize money for this Championships. The Gold medallists of men's and women's categories will be awarded with \$10,000 while both the silver and bronze medal winners will take home \$5,000 and 2,500 respectively.

Eight Indian pugilists Simranjit Kaur (60kg), Vikas Krishan (69kg), Lovlina Borgohain (69kg), Jaimine (57kg), Sakshi Chaudhary (64kg), Monika (48kg), Saweety (81kg) and Varinder Singh (60kg) secured Bronze medals with their semi-final finish at the event which has witnessed the presence of 150 boxers from 17 countries including strong boxing nations such as India, Uzbekistan, Philippines and Kazakhstan.

Bajrang to travel Russia for training

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India's top wrestler Bajrang Punia will not compete in the upcoming Ranking Series event in Poland, saying more than the ranking points he desperately needs mat-training with strong sparring partners ahead of the Tokyo Olympics since the 65kg category is loaded with top performers.

The 27-year-old said the pandemic has adversely impacted his training schedule because neither he could travel abroad nor anyone could be invited to India for practice.

While India's other Olympic-bound wrestlers will travel to Poland, Bajrang will go to Russia with his coach Georgian Shako Bentineidis.

The June 8-13 event in Warsaw is the last ranking series event before the Olympics. The Indian team will stay in Warsaw for a training camp also after the tournament.

"Before Olympics, I need more training. The last 18 months have been tough. There were neither competitions nor training camps outside. It

became a huge challenge to get sparring partners. Staying fit was also a challenge," Bajrang said.

"In my category there are 10-12 wrestlers and each of them is capable of beating anyone. There is no one wrestler who is favourite in 65kg. I can't prepare for one particular rival, what if I don't get him in the draw."

"So I need to focus on my training, so I have planned this Russia trip. I am awaiting my visa. There will be lot of strong wrestlers there in Russia, including world and olympic champions."

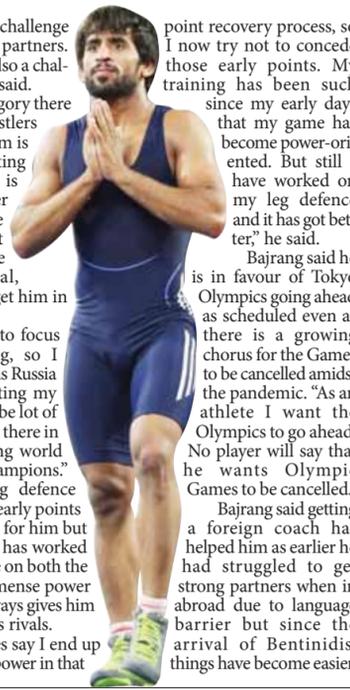
A weak leg defence and conceding early points has been a bane for him but Bajrang said he has worked hard to improve on both the counts. His immense power and stamina always gives him an edge over his rivals.

"My coaches say I end up wasting a lot of power in that

point recovery process, so I now try not to concede those early points. My training has been such since my early days that my game has become power-oriented. But still I have worked on my leg defence and it has got better," he said.

Bajrang said he is in favour of Tokyo Olympics going ahead as scheduled even as there is a growing chorus for the Games to be cancelled amidst the pandemic. "As an athlete I want the Olympics to go ahead. No player will say that he wants Olympic Games to be cancelled."

Bajrang said getting a foreign coach has helped him as earlier he had struggled to get strong partners when in abroad due to language barrier but since the arrival of Bentineidis, things have become easier.



AFI installs special strength-building machine for javelin throwers

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Athletics Federation of India (AFI) has installed a special strength-building German machine for the use of the country's elite javelin throwers like Olympic-bound Neeraj Chopra and Shivpal Singh at the NIS-Patiala.

The machine, named Kraft Training Gerat or KTG (German for Strength Training Device), will assist the javelin throwers in developing their strength and speed. It will also allow them to throw along an ideal trajectory with little risk of injury.

Two such machines, which were assembled in China (but of German technology), were installed on Friday for the use of the likes of Chopra and Shivpal with less than two months to go for Tokyo Olympics.

"India became the world's third nation after Germany and China to secure special machines to assist its javelin throwers develop their strength and speed," the AFI said in a release.

"From early 2020, the AFI has been making a continuous effort to procure the equipment from China, but the outbreak of the (Covid-19) pandemic delayed the process," it added.

The AFI said this kind of machine is being used by Germany's 2017 World Championships Gold medallist Johannes Vetter (personal best 97.76m) who is in tremendous form currently with a monster throw of 94.20m earlier this month.

"The device sled weighs 3.8kg and can be loaded with as much as 10kg for a maximum weight of 13.8k. The sled is thrown for maximum velocity, measured between two preset points, and captured after each throw," the AFI said.

AFI President Adille Sumariwalla said, "These machines are imported with great difficulties due to the pandemic. We wanted German technology and machines but the German company refused to give us these machines."

"We then found a Chinese company who was ready to sell these to us. I am happy that finally our athletes will be able to get the best training using this," he added.

National chief coach Radhakrishnan Nair said, "This allows athletes to develop throwing strength that is very javelin specific and believes that the machines will surely benefit India's javelin throwers."

"They will soon start training on these machines under the supervision of German coaches Uwe Hohn and biomechanics expert Dr Klaus Bartonietz."



Napoli hire Spalletti

AFP ■ ROME

Former Roma and Inter Milan boss Luciano Spalletti was on Saturday named as Napoli's new coach.

"Welcome Luciano, together we will do a great job," the Serie A club's president Aurelio De Laurentiis posted on Twitter.

He succeeds Gennaro Gattuso, who left after failing to qualify Napoli for the Champions League for a second straight season.

Spalletti, 62, returns to the dugout for the first time since leaving Inter in 2019 after securing Champions League football for the Milan side in his two seasons at the San Siro.

He won two Italian Cups and a SuperCup with Roma, and two Russian league titles and a cup win in his time at Zenit Saint-Petersburg.

Bees end 74-year wait for promotion to PL

Brentford beat Swansea 2-0 in Championship play-off final

AFP ■ LONDON

Brentford were promoted to the Premier League for the first time in 74 years on Saturday as they beat Swansea 2-0 in a Championship play-off final worth around £180 million (\$255 million) to the winners.

Thomas Frank's side completed their fairy tale rise thanks to first-half goals from Ivan Toney and Emiliano Marcondes at Wembley.

Swansea's Jay Fulton was sent off midway through the second half to put the result beyond doubt in what is widely regarded as football's single most lucrative game, mainly because of the broadcast revenues that Premier League clubs receive.



After decades stuck in lower league obscurity, unfashionable Brentford will be one of the smallest clubs ever to play in the top tier.

In just their second season at the new Brentford Community Stadium, the Bees will welcome the likes of Manchester City, Manchester United and Liverpool to west London.

The riches earned from the victory will be transformative for Brentford, who have finally erased the painful memories of their wretched play-off past.

Beaten by Fulham in last season's Championship final, Brentford had failed to earn promotion in all nine of their play-off appearances before this term.

No team had lost more play-off finals than Brentford's four, but Frank had insisted the bad omens would count for nothing.

"The Bees boss was proved right as he became the first Danish coach to win a Football League promotion. "I don't know if I can describe it. It's been such a long journey," Frank said before his players gate-crashed the interview to throw him into the air in celebration.

"This group of players is incredible. Everyone has played a major part," Frank added, once he was back on his feet.

"The feeling was calm and relaxed and ready to be ruthless."

"Right now I want to get drunk and then worry about the Premier League tomorrow!"

Brentford's rise has captured the imagination of neutrals after they spent 59 out of 60 seasons in the third or fourth tiers before reaching the Championship in 2014.

‘Staying safe need of the hour’



How tough has it been for you during the last one year?

In April 2021, my shows that were booked started getting cancelled one by one. Then things came to a head. Mid-April I read a Twitter SOS asking for help. And I thought what was the point of so many followers if I was not in a position to help those in need. The tweet that I got, I forwarded the same and that's when I started getting more SOS messages. There were so many that it was impossible for me to reply to all. That's when I created a sep-

arate ID and asked my fans and friends to please help. We then created a team in every city to help those in need. This helped to streamline things. Also, the situation is much better today than what it was in April. But the good part is that we were able to help quite a few people.

What is keeping you busy?

I am just staying safe and keeping indoors. This last one year has been full of stress and tension. Last year, in March was probably the last time that I had my show without any worry. Then things picked up a little after six months — I did a few shows. The New Year brought hope and I felt things were looking up. Then the second wave hit us and we are even in a worse situation today as compared to how things were in May 2020. It has been a nightmare as a stand-up comedian but there's a silver lining. Things are good around where we live; that's the only positive that there is to this for now.

How did you get involved with the social cause?

Like I said, I got an SOS message on Twitter — that started it all. My day starts with talking to volunteers in each city to see what more can be done to help people in need. Then, if I have time and I feel the inclination, I sit down to write or try to make videos; there is so much negativity around us today. There is need to keep our

Talktime

APPURV GUPTA

Aka Guptaji has been busy answering SOS messages and helping those in need. The comedian speaks with Shalini Saksena about how this initiative started, how he got into stand-up and why he doesn't want to now plan for the future

For now, the important thing is to keep safe. If there is one thing that this present pandemic has taught us is that there is no point in planning ahead. You never know when things will turn for the worse again

spirits high. Then again I go back to reading messages. This is what I have been doing for the last 30-40 days.

What are the challenges you have been facing in trying to help people?

The main challenge these days is to verify information. There is so much fake information that is circulating over the Internet that is tough to verify each and every one of them. But we do our best to verify each one but sometimes it is just not possible due to the sheer number of queries we get. One has to be sure that the information being sent to the person who needs it is genuine; one can't lose a single second — each life is precious. Then, there is the gap between demand and supply.

Do you think that stage shows are thing of the past?

Definitely, stage shows won't be happening for the next few months. Maybe after six-eight months when a large population has been vaccinated, there is a chance to hold such shows. Otherwise it will take a year or 18 months for things to get back to being like it used to be in 2018-19.

From an engineer to stand up comedian, how has the journey been?

I enrolled for engineering in 2008 and soon realised it's not my cup of tea. That's when I started exploring other avenues and I ended up doing stand-up. It was a new concept back then and I was skeptical whether it would work for me. I gave myself two years. and decided if it didn't

work I would do my MBA. Luckily everything fell in place. A video went viral in 2013 and there was no looking back. I was doing 12-14 shows; sometimes I would end up doing two shows back to back. It was an exciting phase; kind of a roller coaster ride.

Why is it that most stand up comedian are engineers?

Because many people realise its not they want to explore options. It is important to follow one's passion. Most of the engineers are either stand-ups, musicians, writers, authors, and even actors. Pursuing engineering gives you an opportunity to think what you want to really do in life.

Why did you not continue with Mudde ki Baat?

I started doing *Mudde Ki Baat* in 2015 and it was a great concept. But the idea was probably ahead of its time. *India ke liye woh thoda jaldi thha*. I think *abhi karta toh sahi hota*. Maybe I will start it again.

What are the plans for this year?

For now, the important thing is to keep safe; that's the need of the hour. Follow the protocol — wear a mask and maintain social distancing. If there is one thing that the present pandemic has taught us is that there is no point in planning ahead. You never know when things will turn for the worse again. However, I am working on a couple of things that people will get to listen in next few months.

All about pure air

From wearing masks, to a liquid-based anti-pollution product that aims to reduce the PM levels to a device that reduces COVID viral load to 99.9% in the air and surfaces, the present pandemic made our lives artificial, says SHALINI SAKSENA

Since the COVID-19 hit the world last year, our lives have never been the way it was before the pandemic took over the world. While doctors have been advising people to wear masks, maintain social distancing, there have been many companies and that have been conducting research and coming up with innovative devices that can make it a bit more easier to live a life without fear.

Last year, as well people were apprehensive when there was talk of the lockdown opening. Today, the situation is even more scary given that the virus is air borne. From anti-viral fabric as a protective gear to antibacterial sprays to prevent spread of infection to liquid-based anti-pollution product aims to reduce the PM levels up to 65 per cent in seven days, innovators are leaving no stone unturned to ensure safety and protection for all. The latest to join the innovative list is Wolf Air Mask.

According to Boniface Gasper, director and chief scientific officer of Allabout Innovations the device neutralises SAR-COV2 virus to 99.9 per cent. "It is an air sterilisation device that works on the plasma air sterilisation technology. The present pandemic has made it mandatory that we wear a mask at all times and sanitise our hands regularly to prevent the infection from spreading. We have to maintain social distancing as well. This device, besides following the protocol mentioned, will go a step ahead. It works in a different manner. Since the virus is now airborne, inside closed environment, the dangers are even more especially where ACs work the chance is that the virus in aerosol form will linger up to four to five hours. There was no way to neutralise that aerosoled virus. In order to address this, the Centre announced that there was need to research on this. This is where we stepped in," Gasper says.

After a lot of research and discussions, the company decided to use the negative ion methodology. In other words, it is a needle point plasma negative ion generator, country's



first ion-based airmask that provides 99.9 per cent real-time protection from all kinds of bacteria and viruses, airborne mold corona or influenza viruses, allergens, bacteria, pollens and dust in an enclosed space.

Gasper tells you that the negative ions is nothing but what most of us have studied in Class X and the three stages of matter — solid, liquid and gas. Then there is the fourth stage which is plasma.

The device itself works on a simple technology. The negative ions discharged by the it bind with the virus surface and transform into highly oxidising OH radicals, drawing out the Hydrogen from the spike protein. The protein is then degraded, and OH radical returns as water into the atmosphere neutralising the virus or any other microbe in the environment effectively. "It is a plug-in device. Once you plug it in, it starts doing its work. It works 24x7 in an occupied space. If there are no people in that

What it does

- The device can produce 100% negative ions efficiently to an area of 1000 sq ft and 10,000 cu ft and produces no positive ions or ozone that is harmful in nature
- It is tested against Sars Cov2 Virus. It was tested at Rajiv Gandhi Centre for Biotechnology
- The device has been tested against other viruses and MS2 bacteria as well
- Provides 360-degree protection and a 24x7 shield to everything in its vicinity
- It neutralises microscopic particles and microbes including bacteria, viruses, dust and pollen faster to provide clean and sterilised air that one can breathe without any fear

space, the device can be switched off and switched on when the first person arrives. Primarily, the device has been created to work in places like hospitals that require the air to be neutralised of the virus; that is our priority, to make sure that the hospitals and healthcare workers are safe. The product is available in the market and is priced at ₹29,500 including GST for 1,000 sq feet area. But it can be installed at home as well. There is a rise in demand for this device and we have already prototyped a device for 250 sq feet and a personalised airmask, a device that one can carry with oneself," Gasper tells you. This personalised device, he says, can be put on a table top to neutralise the aerosol and the person will not be infected.

The product has undergone more than 10 studies with the device where the efficacy of the device has been 99.9 per cent on microbes. "The device has also been tested against bacteriophage, it is in fact a virus similar to

Coronavirus' structure; here also we have seen success. Then we tested the device on SAR-COV2 with the ICMR recommendation at Rajiv Gandhi Centre for Biotechnology in Trivandrum, Kerala. The research methodology used to carry out such tests is that a certain number of viruses are kept under specified quarantine area. There is a controlled mechanism to measure. Then there is a research mechanism as well. We create two such facilities. One where the machine is working, and the other where there is no such device. We then measure the number of viruses in the facility through RT-PCR. This is then analyse which gene is not present. If the gene is absent, the device works for that," Gasper explains.

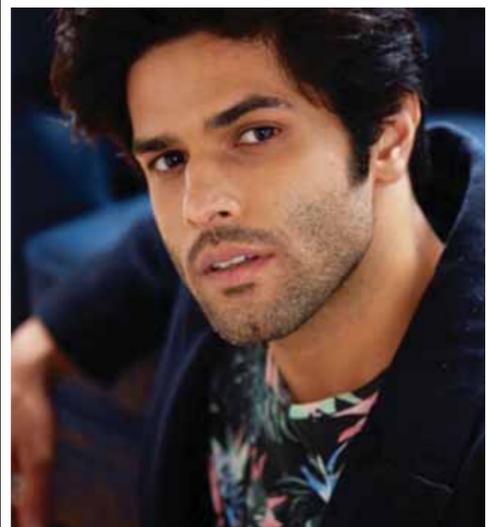
Unfortunately, since in India, there is no facility to conduct it on a 1,000 sq feet lab with Coronavirus but it can be cross validated with other ambient microbes. However, it has been proven that the device works on the Coronavirus in an much smaller area and if it is working on this area small scale, it will work on a much larger space as well.

"This means that wherever this device is placed, it will neutralise the virus and the air will be sterilised. The world is already using such a device — Denmark and Dubai are a few countries to name where they are using it. However, it doesn't mean that one can do away with the protocol of wearing masks, using sanitiser, maintain social distancing. We are hoping that this device will also become another thing that will be added to the protocol. However, one has to understand that that his device is different from air purifiers that many people use regularly in their home," Gasper tells you.

In the air purifier, the air gets filtered through the hyperfilter. "There is protocol to clean this as well since these particles are biohazard. Here, the aerosols generated can be transmitted to the people sitting in the room. With Airmask, it negates the effect and sterilises the air; in other works it is a live sterilisation process," Gasper says.

'I'm waiting for right mainstream project

MRINAL DUTT, who grabbed eyeballs with TV series *Private Investigator*, speaks with SHALINI SAKSENA about his latest project, *His Story*, how he came on board and upcoming projects



What is His Story about?

It is a beautiful show about relationships. It is love, it's about longing, it's about despair, it's about acceptance and unacceptance. If I had to sum it up — it is a beautiful tale about love.

How did you come on board for the project?

The makers of this show approached me for this show. The story was already in place. They were gung-ho and enthusiastic about it the project. On a brief call over the phone they told me about the show. When I heard the story I was interested and asked them for a narration. Besides a few questions, I really like the way the story was written and the set up of how it would unfold. I said yes and took it on; the whole concept interested me.

What is the USP of the show?

There are a few on them. First, it is beautifully written. Second, it has a wonderful team. This is what makes the show and is the heart of it. The team pushes the show ahead. The content is wonderful; it talks about same sex love and representing the same in the most wonderful and delicate manner. I don't think that there has been any show that has approached this subject with such delicacy.

You play a homosexual here. How tough was it play the character?

It was not really very difficult. I just wanted to know how the show has been written, made and treated. I wanted to know if there were any graphic scenes just for the heck of it. It has none of that. I wanted it to be responsible and sensitive portrayal about two men in love. When you say yes to a project, you start living it from that day on. You start preparing yourself for the role and the character. I played it like I would approach any other role that I have done in the past. To have Satyadeep (Mishra) play it with me was great. It went off rather smoothly.

You did 55km/sec. What was the film about?

The film is about an apocalyptic world. In the midst of all, is the story of a reclusive an who is watching things falling apart. I play Suraj who finds love in all the mayhem around.

How did you get into acting?

I have been performing since my school days. In college, I started doing street plays. I worked in theatre in Delhi. I came to Mumbai, auditioned for a part and got it. It has been a gradual progression into acting since then.

Does it bother you that you haven't had the typical mainstream film till now?

Maybe it did at one point but not now. I am happy that I am getting to play different and good roles. I now have the liberty to pick and choose my projects and wait for the right one.

How tough is it to choose right projects for a newcomer?

It is tough in the beginning but slowly it gets better. At the start, getting a call for the audition is a task. From knowing a casting director to getting an audition to getting rejected to getting the roles, this takes time.

What next?

This show is out and so is *Hello Mini*. The next project is on Voot. I am very excited about it. It has been shot abroad. I can't say more about it. Two short films have also released. Post opening of lockdown, I will get to working on a new web series.

WEEKLY NATTER

MIKA'S NEW SINGLE TITLED KRK KUTTA?



Singer Mika Singh says he will make a new single titled *KRK Kutta*, claiming the song is meant to be a befitting reply to actor-turned-critic Kamaal R Khan, or KRK, in the context of the latter's ongoing tussle with Bollywood star Salman Khan.

A statement issued by Salman's lawyers recently said that he was filing a defamation suit against KRK for alleging that the star engages in fraudulent activity and launders funds through his NGO, Being Human. Mika's announcement comes at a time when KRK has declared that he refuses to apologise to anybody.

"I think KRK would be happy about the song. He seeks popularity and I am going to make him super popular. I am going to give him a befitting reply through my song. The song is titled *KRK Kutta* (KRK the dog). The music will be composed by Toshi Sabri," he added, speaking to the media.

A HORRIBLE KISS



Actress Emily Blunt has Adescribed her first kiss as a horror show, because she was left needing to wipe her mouth when the kiss was over.

Blunt shared that she was playing spin the bottle with friends when the bottle landed on Ashley, whom she said was a tall and handsome boy with a 90s curtained hairstyle that she and her friends found attractive.

"I spun the bottle, it landed on Ashley, and I thought, 'Oh my God, this is it'. Now, I had heard about the concept of French kissing but I thought: 'Why would that be pleasurable or nice?' And it wasn't," Blunt recalled during an appearance on 'Jimmy Kimmel Live!', according to a report in *femalefirst.co.uk*. She added: "I was just horrified by the whole thing. I just remember surreptitiously wiping my mouth afterwards. It was horrible."

WHAT'S PRATIK'S GO TO FOOD?

Actor Pratik Gandhi likes to experiment with his palette but *ghar ka khana* is his go-to food.

"Most of the time *ghar ka khana* (homemade food) is my go-to food, but I keep experimenting. I like food. I like exploring different and new cuisines," Pratik said.

The actor, who rose to fame with his portrayal of Harshad Mehta in the popular series *Scam 1992: The Harshad Mehta Story*, is currently busy shooting for the upcoming horror comedy *Atithi Bhooto Bhava*.

He opened up on his food choices on *Star Vs Food*, where he was seen trying his hand at whipping up cold-roasted globe artichokes and portobello mushrooms. The show airs on Discovery+.



A lot of times we don't pay enough attention to people with a positive attitude because we assume they are naive or stupid or unschooled
— Amy Adams



FROM THE INSIDE

Rise of India's civil society

While the central government failed to deliver, local bodies took it upon themselves to support the public

2



Durga: Sakti personified

It is only when we put in all acts together, both individually and collectively, that we can be at our best

4



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A ROMANTIC INTERLUDE IN THE HIMALAYAS

In a rare sighting, HIRANMAY KARLEKAR has a chance to observe king cobras romancing intimately on a wide retaining wall of a house below his in the village of Bohrakot, near Ramgarh in Uttarakhand. A first-person account



King Cobras in Love: (clockwise from top left) Female king cobra raising its head looking at a cat hiding in the bush; Female approaching the male; The two lie coiled together; and Romancing, but not mating. All pictures subject to copyright. All rights reserved.

Excitement rippled through Bohrakot village in Ramgarh in Uttarakhand's Nainital district on May 14 as the word spread that a local young man had seen a king cobra. The stir was hardly surprising. King cobras are found in many parts of India — ranging from the Western and Eastern Ghat ranges in the south to Uttarakhand and Uttar Pradesh in the north, and Bihar, Odisha, West Bengal in the east, and most north-eastern states. They are, however, extremely shy and stay away from humans, which is why they are not a common sight. Their photographs one sees are mostly from research centres and conservation areas. Those from the open are uncommon.

King cobras are not the most venomous snakes; nor are they the longest. They are, however, the longest venomous snakes, growing mostly between three to four metres in length. In some cases, mainly in Thailand, one has found specimens over five metres long. The longest ever king cobra found measured 5.85 metres. If injected in a person's bloodstream, their venom can kill in 20 to 30 minutes. Thailand produces an antidote to it; none is available in India. Fortunately, contrary to popular belief, they are generally not aggressive and tend to avoid confrontation of any kind.

As it so happened, the sighting in Bohrakot was on the very wide retaining wall of a house just downhill of ours, which had remained unoccupied for several years. A small crowd of cell-phone photographers and one serious wielder of a camera with a zoom lens, gathered to watch on the next day when two king cobras, a male and a female, were seen sunning themselves at the same place. Sensing the crowd's presence, they disappeared in one of the deep crevices in the wall, which they seemed to have made their temporary home. Realising that I could get the chance of a lifetime, I got my camera ready, as my wife, Malavika, contacted Jignasu Dolia, a noted herpetologist we know well.

Jignasu, who specialises in studying king cobras, is currently working on two projects. One of them, under a grant from Britain's

Rufford Foundation (his second one from them), relates to the distribution and nesting ecology of king cobras and the threats facing them. The other one is about human-snake conflict mitigation principally in Uttarakhand's Terai area and the Nainital Forest Division. It has been undertaken under the Government of India's National Mission on Himalayan Studies. Its principal investigator is Tejaswini Patil, Chief Conservator of Forests, Kumaon. Jignasu has also been training Uttarakhand's forest department personnel on proper methods of snake rescue and spreading awareness about the ways of snakes in the region for over a decade.

Jignasu arrived on May 15 with his camera and an assortment of other equipment. As he was surveying the scene, he ran into a neighbour who said that it was his land, and that he wanted the snakes removed because his children, who came to play into the area, could be in danger, as could be his domestic animals. His concern was understandable but his demand echoed the commonplace approach of most people towards snakes based on the blanket belief that all of them were venomous, aggressive and best removed from one's premises. The fact is, most snakes are not venomous and, as said earlier, king cobras are usually not aggressive. In fact, they inject venom in their bites only when they consider necessary. The rest are "dry bites" which do no more than cause pain and, even before resorting to these, they often raise their heads, spreading out their hoods, and rising erect from the ground, which can be up to a height of one-third of their lengths, to frighten their perceived enemies off.

Jignasu thought that the best way to deal with the situation was to involve Uttarakhand's forest department. He got in touch with Tejaswini Patil, as well as Sanjiv Chaturvedi, Chief Conservator of Forests, Research, Uttarakhand. Known for their uprightness and competence, both sprang into action. A forest department contingent arrived on May 17. It was explained to the neighbour that the king cobra was India's national reptile. It was a pro-



KING COBRAS ARE NOT THE MOST VENOMOUS SNAKES; NOR ARE THEY THE LONGEST. THEY ARE, HOWEVER, THE LONGEST VENOMOUS SNAKES, GROWING MOSTLY BETWEEN THREE TO FOUR METRES IN LENGTH. IF INJECTED IN A PERSON'S BLOODSTREAM, THEIR VENOM CAN KILL IN 20 TO 30 MINUTES. THAILAND PRODUCES AN ANTIDOTE TO IT; NONE IS AVAILABLE IN INDIA. FORTUNATELY, CONTRARY TO POPULAR BELIEF, THEY ARE GENERALLY NOT AGGRESSIVE AND TEND TO AVOID CONFRONTATION OF ANY KIND



tested species included in Schedule II (Part II) of the Wildlife (Protection) Act of India, 1972. Its illegal capture and killing were non-bailable offenses punishable with imprisonment and/or fine.

His recalcitrance vanished. The forest department got into the act setting up a CCTV system with three cameras and a monitor screen to keep a watch not only on the two king cobras but also trap on the recorder anyone coming to harm them or otherwise. As for Malavika and I, we could watch them on the surface of the wall from our property. I had a field day with my camera, which I had fitted with a 55-300 mm zoom. While I clicked many shots of their being together as well as alone, the prize harvest was the ones showing them romancing intimately, which, I was told, was a very, very rare sight. We, however, did not see them mating.

Jignasu saw them leaving on the 22nd morning. Later, I saw them leaving on the CCTV's monitor screen and wondered whether they mated without our seeing it. And, as is normally the case, had they gone their own respective ways thereafter? He to his individual existence, and she to build a nest and lay eggs in a deep forest? Female king cobras are the only snakes that build their nests overground and guard them against predators. They either leave a few weeks after building them or stay around for two months or more, leaving just a few days before the eggs hatch. In neither case do they leave the nests even to eat.

Or had they left because of stalking by a local cat which, darting from a nearby bush, struck the male once with one of its paws, and retreated instantaneously as the female raised her head threateningly? Or were they disturbed by the arrival of workers to live in a nearby servants' quarters?

There is no knowing. Whatever the cause, they have left behind memories of two incidents that reflect much about their species. First, they never killed the cat, which either of them could easily have done. There was plenty of time for that as the cat, after the encounter on the retaining wall's top, hung around in the

bushes for around 15 minutes, weighing its options. Second, the loving tenderness they displayed towards each other before parting, was deeply moving, with the most touching act being that of the male placing his head on her body gently and with obvious emotion. He clearly did not want her to go, and, when she did, raised his head and watched her journey, before slowly following in the same direction.

I was worried — not only for them but their species. The International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) has put the latter on its "vulnerable" list for the many threats their survival faces. Forests, in which they live, are shrinking because of invading human settlements, and infrastructure like roads — which disturb and cut across their territories — they bring in their wake. Instances of snakes and hatchlings, that have been run over and killed, are growing. Besides, the increasing number of dams are causing deforestation, as is illegal felling of trees for timber. Climate change contributes by altering the weather of their habitats and conducting to the growing number of forest fires, which destroy their territories, and, perhaps kill them as well.

It is an increasingly hostile world that faces snakes and all non-human living beings, thanks to the activities of *Homo sapiens*, the worst of all predators, who themselves face extinction because of their ruthless exploitation of nature — including plants, animals, and the earth's surface — and the generation and use of energy that pollutes the atmosphere.

Meanwhile, I will miss the romancing two who left. I wish I could give the snake call that Mowgli did in Rudyard Kipling's Jungle Book and say, like him, "We be of one blood, ye and I." Alas, life does not take after fiction. So, good bye, royal reptiles! May peace and happiness travel with you.

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THE RISE OF CIVIL SOCIETY IN WAR AGAINST A VIRUS

While the central government failed to deliver, local bodies took it upon themselves to support the public. New indigenous technologies for recovery were funded by private companies & handed over to these bodies to manage



MINIYA CHATTERJI

A t a five minute walk from the banks of the Nile river in Cairo, at Tahrir Square, a leaderless movement had broken out a decade ago. I was living in Cairo at that time and had joined with my placard 'Indians for Egyptians' the thousands of people first congregating at Tahrir, and then in cities across the country to ask for a governance system that distributed resources equally to all strata of the society. It was a revolution, in January 2011, more for jobs for all than for democracy. In a country that had refrained from the very mention of the regime even in their homes, citizens of Egypt now came out, day after day, on the streets, asking for jobs for the poorest, equal opportunity, a free and fair democracy. They then demanded that Egypt's President must step down.

MISSIONARIES & MERCENARIES

Today in India, the Indian government has failed and committed citizens have stepped up to prevent the nation from slipping into an even deeper abyss than it has already. All across the country, thousands of individuals, corporates, and non-governmental organisations have come together to help. Many are doing so to genuinely offer all the help they can. Their motivation is humanitarian. On the other hand, there are not for profits that are demanding commissions for relief projects, companies that are profiting from inflated prices of medical equipment, and individuals doing nothing but claiming political mileage out of others' work. There is a missionary and a mercenary side to India's civil society stepping up where the State has vanished. On the extreme end of the spectrum are indeed scams such as businessman Navneet Kalra's alleged hoarding of involving dubious quality and a growing black market. As the Indian economy shrinks the mercenaries will increase in number, indeed making it more challenging for the missionaries to procure partnerships and material to persist. The battle against Covid in India (and the world) is far from over and during this time we will continue to see mercenaries and thankfully also missionaries.



EASY CONNECTIVITY

There has been another astonishing trend. Rapidly people across India are sharing information and learning from each other. There are thousands of Covid relief whatsapp groups that have quickly connected people to collaborate for treatments, resources, scientific evidence, and other needs such as mental health. There are lists on excel for verified resource persons and their phone numbers. As corporate funds for Covid relief are fast getting exhausted this year, crowdfunding platforms such as Milaap and Ketto have emerged to the rescue. The platforms are now flooded with information about various Covid relief initiatives that need funds. School and university alumni groups have transformed into Covid task forces. Indeed newspapers, television, and news on the internet have provided ways for ordinary people to keep up with the new findings of this deadly virus. The rapid mobilisation of people across the country has been greatly aided by the ease of transmission of information. It reminds me once again of the spring

of 2011 when citizens across a set of countries in the Middle East were acting in similar ways to initiate negotiations with their governments for political change. They learnt from each other via the fast flow of information facilitated by telecommunication and media. They shared a new understanding on how power should be organised and how national wealth should be used for the good of the public, putting forth a new political arrangement that spread, quickly across international borders.

POOR POLICY DECISIONS

Finally, there has been a trend of unhelpfully poor policy decisions to support the people's uprising against Covid in India. The gravest and earliest glitch was in mobilising people's energy towards a lockdown as mindless and deadly as the virus itself. Pockets of the country's population that were not even remotely affected by the virus were shut down, whereas they could have continued. Nonprofits have long been a part of India's development journey, and were especially helping millions in

THE PROBLEM WITH LEADERLESS SOCIAL MOVEMENTS IS THAT IT PROVIDES NO STRONG ALTERNATIVE TO THE STATUS QUO

India during the early months of the pandemic. Yet in December 2020 the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act, 2020, shut down their contributions by restricting subcontracting, forcing NGOs to open their FCRA account only at the State Bank of India Parliament Street branch, and a host of other irrational and uncertainly untimely changes. Administrators underestimate the pandemic and miscalculated the availability of hospital beds — last year I had offered free of cost temporary Covid recovery facilities to State governments amongst which a few accepted while some smugly gave me details about sufficient state health infrastructure. Even the communication about the virus was incredibly convoluted and ineffective, leaving Indians confused about what they really need to do to stay safe. Universities were told that it was okay to reopen, leading to Covid massacres on campus. Politicians across parties prioritised votes over people's safety and gathered large crowds. Our education system is such that it doesn't teach us to think for ourselves. We did not apply our

minds and instead obeyed what we were being told to do — getting in to lock downs and then exiting them even when the number of cases around us were surging — until the time people took it upon themselves to ensure their and others' survival. It reminds me of the frustration of the ordinary citizens of Egypt 10 years ago when they too were tired of their government and took matters in their hand.

INDIA INC. GETS EXHAUSTED

India's CSR expenditure for FY20 stood at ₹17,885 crore, already down from ₹18,655 crore the previous year. Then further, as what might be a direct economic consequence of the pandemic, 19.65% of Indian companies who were profitable in Q4 of FY 20 reported losses in Q1 of FY 21. CSR constitutes 28 percent of India's total philanthropic giving, but is expected to further decline by 5% this year, according to the India Philanthropy Report 2021. During the pandemic, corporations at large have had their own share of worries about keeping their employees safe, managing with reduced workforce due to employees catching the virus, ramping up the digital transition of their organisations, besides those who also dealt with squeezed revenues. Yet corporates contributed with funds and resources to fight the pandemic in India, which by the end of FY2021 seemed exhausted and dwindling. Large corporations are also stuck in the dilemma of toeing the government's cues of inaction and poor policies, or being innovative towards fighting the pandemic.

THE RISE OF HYPER-LOCAL PUBLIC PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS

While the central government failed to deliver, several local municipal corporations and panchayats took it upon themselves to support the public. New indigenous technologies for Covid recovery were funded by small and large private companies and handed over to these local government bodies to manage. My own company Sustain Labs led a consortium of university, private sector, and local government partners to establish 15 Covid care hospitals so far across India, for which partnering

with local MLAs for infrastructure and hospital management was essential. The efficacy of local government bodies has varied across districts. For example in Delhi, one of the key reasons for the mismanagement of the pandemic has been that the roll out of Covid relief is largely being done by the yes-men of administrators who are out to please the latter. The administrators, on the other hand, take decisions based on the information provided to them which largely consists of only 'good news' which is often even fabricated. An example of good practice is MLA Amin Patel in Mumbai's run down Amin Patel who physically visits the community and directly keeps in touch with all partners involved in helping the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation fight Covid. The most successful partnerships between these hyper-local government bodies are therefore those where the key decision makers are administering the Covid relief work on the ground and there is a high degree of trust between the decision makers and the private partners involved.

These are some of the reasons that have led to the spectacular rise of India's civil society to fight the pandemic. While the world is indeed also at war against the same virus — as UN Secretary-General António Guterres rightly declared yesterday — the uprising in India is truly unique as it is leaderless. The Indian government is absent in our fight. India's political opposition has not been able to rise to the occasion either and has thus once again proved its weakness. There is no other organisation or person giving direction to our citizens' movement of self-help. Will people power lend to rage against the government, as it did in Egypt a decade ago? The problem with leaderless social movements is that it provides no strong alternative to the status quo.

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Heated debate in the Lok Sabha

Negotiations on the Indus Waters Treaty with Pakistan stirred high emotions yet Nehru pulled it off, writes **UTTAM KUMAR SINHA** in his new book *Indus Basin Uninterrupted...* An edited excerpt:

Parliament was in session until 9 September 1960 and the Indus Waters Treaty was signed on 19 September 1960. The Lok Sabha, the lower house, was not in full knowledge of the provisions of the treaty or whether it was ratified. It was not clear whether the government had consulted the leaders of the recognized all-India parties as to how the treaty would affect India. The opposition felt strongly that India had yielded to Pakistan's terms at the cost of its own interests. In a motion for adjournment in the Lok Sabha on 16 November 1960, Narayan Gore, the leader of the PSP, questioned Nehru's statement a couple of days previously that the IWT had been ratified. Correspondingly, a young parliamentarian, representing Balrampur constituency, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, sought clarification on the issue and raised a 'question of privilege'. Making his submission without entering into an argument, Nehru responded: "This was ratified, I think, on the 24th of September. On the 8th October, the Pakistan Government was informed that we have ratified it. It is one thing to ratify a thing; and it is another thing to have the formalities of it, the exchange of what are called the 'Instruments of Ratification'. That is a technicality."

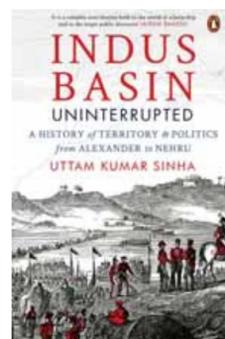
Vajpayee, whom Nehru had predicted would one day become the country's prime minister, responded with pointed urgency, "May I submit that the ratification of the treaty is not complete until the exchange of Instruments takes place." Peeved, but not disregarding parliamentary methods, Nehru replied, "... the exchange of instruments is a technicality to which the honourable member, perhaps, has not paid attention." Sitting in the House and perturbed over the lack of meaningful debate, the renowned Odia writer Surendra Mahanty of the Ganatantra Parishad sharply observed that the treaty "... is agitating the minds of the people and the government must come forward with this motion." What began as a procedural issue opened up to a long debate a few weeks later on 30 November 1960 that not only sought various clarifications of the details of the treaty but also prised open old wounds and revisited the history of the India-Pakistan water dispute. The pulse-beat on the treaty signed by Nehru was not healthy. Several mainstream newspapers had castigated the government for giving in to Pakistan, making "... concessions after concessions..." as the negotiations progressed and even "... yielding to Pakistan's wishes..."



Bhagirath, published by the Ministry of Irrigation and Power, in its editorial captioned 'A memorable agreement', noted with no triumph, "This attitude of steady negotiations have lasted over more than a decade and called for considerable patience and sacrifice on the part of India and involved a heavy gift of money and water supply from our rivers for a further period of 10 years with both of which India could well do for herself in this crucial period of the growth of our economy." In Rajasthan, a strong Congress belt, the mood of the state over the treaty, which it always viewed with trepidation, was hardly encouraging. Harish Mathur, a Congressman representing Pali, unflinchingly said on the floor of the House, "The

progress and the developmental programmes will be retarded and it is all to the advantage of Pakistan." A number of parliamentarians were of the view that, had India conceded to the needs of Pakistan in 1948 as a 'human consideration', the treaty would have possibly not been required and would have also saved tonnes of paperwork and notes, and many a blush. Was then the treaty a sheer giveaway? Would it have been better for India to have conceded in 1948, when Pakistan's demand was limited, rather than to have become so generous in the negotiations leading up to the treaty? As things developed, Pakistan's demand became bigger and bolder. "I wish," said Mathur, "Our Government takes note of the feeling in this country.

It is not that our over-generosity should be at the cost of our own people and at the cost of the development of this country." Nehru's government had a lot of explaining to do on a treaty that seemed to back-track from its earlier position. In preparation for a meeting between the Indus negotiators in Rome in 1958, Nehru had expressed, "I am not at all happy about the way our discussions with the Bank are proceeding in regard to this matter. Step by step, we are dragged in a direction unfavourable to us." A few months earlier, the newly appointed irrigation and power minister, S.K. Patil, an undisputed leader of Mumbai who was regarded as Sardar Patel's man in Maharashtra, had stated firmly over the prolonged



Indus negotiations that "... India will not wait indefinitely for a settlement, ignoring the needs of her people..." and that not a drop of water will be given to Pakistan beyond 1962. A feeling had emerged that India had agreed to terms that were acting against its own advice and at the cost of its own people. It was calculated that India would lose about 5 million acre-feet of water from the Chenab, resulting in a perpetual loss to the country to the extent of about Rs 70-80 crore per year. The Lok Sabha was keen to understand the advantage or, as many felt, the disadvantage of the treaty. Ashok Mehta, who liked to challenge Nehru on issues of decentralization and nationalism and was later invited by Nehru to

assume the deputy chairmanship of the planning commission for which he (Mehta) was expelled from the PSP, summed up India's position, "This is a peculiar arrangement wherein the other side's obligations are not brought into the focus at all and unilaterally we come forward to make significant concessions." Right from the time of the Nehru-Liaquat Agreement in 1950, India, it was felt, often undermined its interest for the larger cause of peace with Pakistan. The Nehru-Noon Agreement of 1958 to end disputes along the Indo-East Pakistan border areas, resulted in an exchange of enclaves and a part of Berubari went to Pakistan, apparently without the West Bengal assembly being consulted. West Bengal was up in arms and the Supreme Court, in a unanimous judgment, held that Article 253 was not sufficient when it came to the question of cessation of national territory. While it was the privilege of the executive to come to international agreements which Nehru exercised, within the democratic framework, it was equally incumbent to consider the opinion and the sentiments of the country and the House. Nehru was chastised repeatedly for placating Pakistan. The issue prompted Arun Guha, a Congress

representative from West Bengal, to ask, "...Has Pakistan responded in any friendly manner?" Nehru was not averse to participating in the discussions on foreign policy or economic planning. In fact, he was more than up to it, viewing it as a test and a demonstration of his ability and power unlike his unequivocal stand on social reforms which he candidly confessed to not being knowledgeable about. Nehru had faced the heat of the Parliament over the Tibetan crisis in 1959 with many opposition leaders, including those of the PSP and Jan Sangh, except the Communist Party of India, demanding that the government review its policies of India-China friendship. The spate of adjournment motions on Chinese aggression on Tibet had rattled Nehru as he defended his government's decision to accept Chinese suzerainty over Tibet as a rational choice. The debate on the Indus treaty offered similar intensity and presented some very uncomfortable facts for the government to respond to. Excerpted with permission from *Indus Basin Uninterrupted: A History of Territory and Politics from Alexander to Nehru*, by Uttam Kumar Sinha, Penguin Random House, ₹799

Constitution, CAG and monolithism — II

Suppose, from financial year 2024-25 to financial year 2033-34, the number of audit reports for both States and Centre per year varies between 240 and 280. What these trends indicate? These indicate first, conventional, collective capability of the entire institution of CAG, given its manpower/other resources, assessed risk parameters, etc, to produce these many reports. Second, it would indicate the trend duly approved by more than one CAG during 2024-25 to 2033-34. This trend then acts as an important guide for any new CAG. It acts as a yardstick.

Further suppose a CAG has five-year tenure effective from January 1, 2034 to December 31, 2037. Well aware of his constitutional position, he puts aside all conventions and precedence dexterously established during earlier CAGs' periods, forgets that audit reports are outcome of collective toil of the thousands of employees, and takes any one or a mixture of following three decisions:

Decision 1:
"Well, my tenure is for four years, I will observe the working of the departments for four years and since form, content and time of submission of audit reports is to be decided by me, I will sign reports for two years or four years as the case may be in one go. No press conferences please."

Decision 2:
"For 2034-2035, audit findings put forth before me does not merit inclusion in the audit reports. These are weak and I don't agree with the risk parameters placed before me. Hence please follow these at field office level; no need for inclusion in the audit reports. No press conferences please."

Audit findings for succeeding years might meet the same fate.

Decision 3:
"I will produce, time to time basis stand-alone audit reports, backed by massive press conferences and media coverage. Please go ahead."
These might look very far-

etched but are possibilities and very well feasible as per existing regulations. One variant of these decisions can involve inordinate delays in finalisation of audit reports because a CAG has to reach the level of his satisfaction before he approves reports. Towards that purpose, he seeks clarification by raising a number of observations/queries but reaching the threshold level still continues to be elusive. Any CAG can take these decisions and there may be no need to doubt these. But the most crucial issue is ownership of the final decision before he demits office. If any CAG, in his wisdom, arrives at decision 1 or 2 or 3 above or combination of different variants of these resulting in significantly delayed/reduced number of audit reports, he should leave a detailed reasoned note/order at his level justifying his decision so that posterity can judge and appreciate that justification in times to come. It will be discernable to anyone, including his successors and common citizens, the aam aadmi, if the justification asserts itself. A CAG enjoys the same status as a sitting judge of the honorable Supreme Court. In that light, reasoned orders on his part duly signed by him become all the more necessary as far as his constitutional duties regarding reports are concerned. Any CAG has to be accountable for his tenure vis-à-vis his constitutional duties, for, as already clarified, none else can substitute for him for these duties.

A few important related issues do emerge. If a CAG takes these decisions, obviously not expected number of reports or timely reports as compared to preceding years will be available to Parliament/State Legislatures and through these to Public Accounts Committee (PAC) or Committee on Public Undertakings (COPU). If much reduced number of reports/much delayed reports go to PAC/COPU, how they will ensure the tasks assigned to them in relation to audit



reports; how they they act to ensure executive's responsibility to the legislature? No reports or significantly reduced number of reports vis-à-vis earlier periods will have effect on the functioning of committees. What is the possible solution?

Public perception as regards this august institution's fall is not healthy. To enhance public perception, the institution of CAG should be headed by a multi-member body (Board of Audit or give it any name) comprising minimum three members just like Election Commission of India. Once upon a time, there was one Chief Election Commissioner. Now it has three members. It is normally believed that in any system a multi-body board goes a long way to ensure blunting of activities involving what psychologists call, "Hypokinesia" or its reverse "Hyperkinesia".

Let us look at one more reality. Anyone comparing activities, volumes, complexities and patterns of expenditure and receipts of Union/State

Governments, say in 2019-2020 as compared to what these were, let us say, in 1950-51, may notice phenomenal and multiple increase in these at Union and States' levels.

Increasing complexities in decision-making processes in Governments add yet another dimension. Similarly for the institution of CAG, a comparison between number of audit reports submitted to the President/Governors say in 1951 and again say in 2016 will intensify the justification for a three member Board of Audit in place of a single CAG. Increased workload in terms of audit reports at the level of CAG over the last seven decades, coupled with workload ensuing from his responsibility towards audit of various international organisations like UNO, FAO, WHO, IPU, etc, during last three decades certainly makes a strong case for a Board of Audit.

In November 2017, RB Sinha, a distinguished and experienced officer of IA&AS who superannuated as Director General, Audit, from CAG

office, wrote articles titled "Challenges and Opportunities" in three parts published in this newspaper. These very thought provoking articles give deep insight into working of the office of CAG. In part III of the article, this was what he opined:

"The CAG should also be made more accountable by making it subject to external audit, periodical peer review and oversight by an independent audit committee. In an age of transparency and accountability, when the top court collegium has agreed to make public its minutes regarding appointments, promotion and transfer of Supreme/High Court Judges, it is not understood as to why should the CAG not publish its annual audit plan and then report their achievement and the reasons for failure of planned audits, if any... Complete trail of the processing draft reports/paragraphs should be maintained until the final report of the PAC on the relevant audit reports/paragraphs is issued."

Equally importantly, Sinha penned in part II of the article, "The work of audit of accounts of the Union and of States is actually done by the officers and staff of the IA&AD. However, no statutory recognition has been given to the work of IA&AD in India as against National Audit Office of the UK, Government Accountability office of the US, Australian National Audit Office of Australia."

I echo RB Sinha's views completely. His question "It is not understood as to why...?" is indeed a puzzling question. The answer lies in knocking at and dissecting the monolithic nature and character of the institution. The hour has come for the clock to strike.

The Indian Constitution is said to be dynamic in nature. Multiple amendments confirm it. A three-member Board of Audit will act as its own internal control: members will balance and curb possible aberrations. It will go a long way in enforcing more rationality, more transparency and accountability within the

organisation, including CAG office. Robustness of this great organisation has got to be raised to further heights. Timely reports based on facts contained in files/documents of departments properly analysed with logically arrived at conclusions after considering the auditee's views serve dual objective: these highlight positive achievements of various departments, and second, these suggest corrective measures for improvement in deficient areas of functioning. In short, timely audit reports contribute to good governance. Institution of CAG has to make sure that the nation is not deprived of such reports.

The perception ensuing from the print/online media reports can be salvaged by a down to earth dynamic CAG who takes his officers along. A lot depends on the present as well as future incumbents. Hopefully, the institution will see overall growth, including timely audit reports that apart from the stakeholders, people in general, having paid taxes, will tend to read and satisfy themselves if public funds are used efficiently and for intended purposes. Towards discharging that responsibility, the entire institution will be one with any CAG.

(KK Srivastava, an officer of Indian Audit & Accounts Service of 1983 batch, superannuated as Additional Deputy Comptroller & Auditor General in July 2020. He is a poet, writer and columnist. Author of three volumes of poetry, his poems have been translated into Hindi (Andhere Se Nikli Kavitaayan-VANI PRAKASHAN (2017) and his book "Shadows of the Real" into Russian by veteran Russian poet Adolf Shvedchikov. His fourth book "Soliloquy of a Small-Town Uncivil Servant", a literary non-fiction published in March 2019 by Rupa Publications, New Delhi, has been receiving international acclaim in literary field. His fifth book: a book of essays is expected shortly. Views expressed here are his personal views)

To enhance public perception, the institution of CAG should be headed by a multi-member body (Board of Audit or give it any name) comprising minimum three members just like the Election Commission of India. A three-member Board of Audit will act as its own internal control: members will balance and curb possible aberrations. It will go a long way in enforcing more rationality, more transparency and accountability within the organisation, including CAG office



KK SRIVASTAVA

PERSPECTIVE

Philippines new victim of China's sovereign ambition

For China, the SCS is peaceful and the nations, including the Philippines, are living there in complete harmony. The reason behind such bizarre thinking of the Beijing monarch is that all the smaller neighbours in the SCS are resigning themselves to a new normal, heavily pushed by the former's muscle power and money in all these years

China's violent forays into the South China Sea (SCS) are turning out to be threats to the neighbouring nations. China's constant provocation towards the Philippines has forced the latter to embrace the US security umbrella. Nearly a swarm of 220-armed Chinese fishing vessels entered the Whitsun Reef in the SCS. This particular zone falls rightly within the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) and continental shelf of the sovereign territory of the Philippines.

It is not about withdrawing China's "maritime militia" from the EEZ's of the Philippines in the SCS for now. The moot point is why the Xi regime is militarising the international navigational lines? China must respect the freedom of navigation across the SCS by the neighbouring nations and the rest of the world.

However, Filipino President Rodrigo Duterte has refused to be drawn into the big power competition in the SCS. He urged the global leaders to refrain from pursuing their interests at the expense of smaller countries. Duterte said that the world appeared to be hurtling back to the era of heightened big power competition that adds another layer of complexity to long-standing security issues in the region. Further he highlighted that his country is not blind to the geopolitics of diversification and decoupling. However, the Philippines does not see the

need to take sides in the ongoing geo-economic competition among big powers.

It is worth noting the background of the SCS conflict at this moment. This will offer a window of opportunity to understand the original cause behind the clash between China and Philippines and other claimants in the region. The maritime dispute with Philippines has its roots lying in China's controversial nine-dash line claim. Indeed, its official appearance was noticed for the first time in a map Beijing submitted to the UN in the year 2009. This map appears to encapsulate major part of the contested SCS. But the SCS concerns competing maritime and territorial claims. At the centre of the conflict, four groups of geographical features are contested, which are the Pratas Islands, the Paracel Islands, the Macclesfield Bank and Scarborough Shoal and the Spratly Islands. The most controversial one is the Spratly Islands claimed in their entirety by China, Taiwan and Vietnam, and in part by the Philippines, Malaysia and Brunei.

In March 2013, the Philippines brought a case against China over its grand claims and activities in the SCS. The case was heard by the arbitral tribunal under the United Nations Conventions for the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). The final verdict that came in July 2016 was a major victory for

the Philippines against China in regard to resource rights. The Hague-based tribunal overwhelmingly backed the Philippines and ruled that the rocky outcrops claimed by China, some of which are exposed only at low tides, can't be used as the basis of territorial claims. It said some of the waters were within the EEZ of the Philippines because those areas are not overlapped any possible entitlement of China. The tribunal found that China had violated the Philippines' sovereign rights in those waters by interfering with its fishing and petroleum exploration and by constructing artificial islands. But then President Xi claimed that China's territorial sovereignty and marine rights in the seas would not be affected by the ruling. He insisted China was still committed to resolving disputes with its neighbours. Thus China outrightly rejected the ruling given by the international tribunal.

Currently, the Philippines and China have called for Bilateral Consultation Mechanism (BCM) to ease tension in the SCS. Both the countries have met for the sixth round of talks on the latest incursions of Chinese vessels into Philippines' territory. During the virtual meet, they cited the importance of dialogue in "easing tensions and understanding each country's position and intentions in the area" and "addressing differ-

ences in an atmosphere of openness and cordiality to pave the way for practical cooperation and initiatives". But how the bilateral dialogues will push back China from the Philippines' territory is a big question. Will Beijing abide by the guidelines of such talks? Do they matter to the rogues in the power corridors of China? First of all, the opacity in Chinese public policy making is an old game since the establishment of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in October 1949. Nevertheless, starting from Chairman Mao Zedong till the coming of current President Xi, China has always suffered from its old dream of making an empire in modern Asia.

The way China is behaving in the SCS is weakening the international law in the sea. It's a blatant violation of the UNCLOS. It is also known as the Law of the Sea Treaty or Law of the Sea Convention. Simply it is an international treaty that clearly establishes a regulatory framework and guidelines for using the seas and oceans. Its aim is to ensure the use and conserve marine resources and also to preserve and protect all living organisms in the sea. Further, the UNCLOS highlights the rules of the high seas for the purpose of international navigation and establishes the rights and responsibilities of nations in the protection of the marine environment. On November 16,

1982, the UNCLOS was signed at the Montego Bay, Jamaica, as a result of the UN Conference on the Law of the Sea. However, the law came into force only in 1994. But way back in 1973, such proposals for international sea laws surfaced at the UN. And today, more than 160 nations across the world recognise these global sea laws, and China violating the same is no less than an outrageous act.

In March, the US warned China against what the Philippines and Taiwan see increasingly aggressive moves towards them from Beijing. Washington clearly reminded Beijing of the former's obligations to its partners in the Pacific. The State Department clearly said: "An armed attack against the Philippines' armed forces, public vessels or aircrafts in the Pacific, including in the South China Sea, will trigger our obligations under the US-Philippines Mutual Defence Treaty."

Further the report of the State Department highlighted that America is aware of the concerns of the Philippines regarding continued massing of the PRC maritime militia near the Whitsun Reef. More than 200 Chinese boats were first spotted near the Whitsun Reef in March, nearly 320 kilometres west of Palawan Island in the contested SCS. However, these islands wherein Chinese vessels entered belonged to the SEZs of Philippines.

Despite repeated appeals from Manila, Beijing refused to withdraw its vessels from the area.

This month, the US is gearing up for war with China in the Indo-Pacific. President Joe Biden has authorised more weapons to army bases in Australia. The continued Chinese aggression in the South China Sea and around the world has forced the top Biden policy makers to prepare for the worst. And this is pushing the US-Australian military alliances coming ever closer in recent times.

Finally, what one can conclude today is that international pressure on China has not at all been consistent in all these years. As a result, the periods of neglect towards China's aggression corresponded with more and more Chinese incursions in the recent times. For now, and in the coming days, Beijing is fast losing its reputation because of its massive plan to occupy the entire SCS. Certainly, Xi regime appears willing to sacrifice its reputation, but only at the cost of strategic and military gains. The recent incursion of Chinese military into Indian territory at Eastern Ladakh is a fit example. China is not wary of such salami-slicing tactics so as to expand its border claims. What China is playing in the SCS over the years is an old game by the big bosses of the Communist Party of the country over the years. The main

problem with Xi and his team is that they all calculate that they can influence outcomes in the global power calculus through coercion and the economic realm by inducements. For China, the SCS is peaceful and the nations, including the Philippines, are living there in complete harmony. The reason behind such bizarre thinking of the Beijing monarch is that all the smaller neighbours in the SCS are resigning themselves to a new normal, heavily pushed by the former's muscle power and money in all these years.

China must not treat the Philippines as a small and weak nation. All are equal sovereign nations in the eyes of international law. They all have the equal right to defend their sovereign territories the way China does. The Xi regime must respect international law and should not create any hurdle in international sea communication lines in the SCS. China can't act like a "grand vizier" ruling over smaller nations (Philippines) like slaves.

(Dr Makhan Saikia has taught political science and international relations for over a decade in institutions of national and international repute after specialisation in globalisation and governance from Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai. He is the chief editor of the Journal of Global Studies, an international research journal)



MAKHAN SAIKIA



FOCUS ON THE JOURNEY, NOT THE DESTINATION. JOY IS FOUND NOT IN FINISHING AN ACTIVITY BUT IN DOING IT — GREG ANDERSON



YOUR WEEK AHEAD

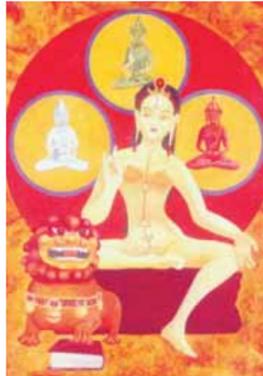
MADHU KOTIYA



ARIES March 21-April 19

You are healthy, smart and shine this week. You prefer to stay active and are constantly attempting to make things happen. You know how to utilise your skills to create a world you want. Your skill in smooth-talking and adaptability to any situation is heightened, making things easy for you. On the work front, if you find stagnation and feel there is no chance of growth, then switch your job, this is the right time. Just work on your resume and send it to other companies. You are a creative and logical person, you would be an asset to any company — just realise your potential. On the relationship front, you will enjoy an entertaining and rewarding week. You will spend quality time with your loved ones.

Lucky number 12
Lucky colour Peach
Lucky day Tuesday



LEO July 23-Aug 22

This week a water-borne disease may cause trouble. You are a sensitive person; keep yourself safe from any kind of infection. Company of diseased person could alarm for you. Alcohol, unsafe water, injuries should be avoided. If you feel physically low take timely action. It is not advisable to ignore your health. On the career front, a recent period of confusion could be the reason for your current conflict. You feel indecisive and under-confident. You need to come out of illusion and false intuitions. There may have been misdoings, but they will eventually be revealed. There are internal conflicts that need to be resolved soon. On the personal front, you will feel optimistic, upbeat, and hopeful about your relationships.

Lucky number 15
Lucky colour Sky Blue
Lucky day Thursday



SAGITTARIUS Nov 22-Dec 21

This week you will experience new energy, stamina and good health. You are a very positive and grounded person. Put your energy in creative pursuits. This is the time when you can put your best. On the career front, some old acquaintances may prove beneficial for your professional life. If you are looking for a job, old connections, associations will bring a smile on your face. Recommendation and favour will work well for you, giving you an upper hand. Open your eyes, be alert, and remember lost opportunities are never regained. On the personal front, relationships may be troubling, and you will feel frustrated. The unhealthy mind of your near and dear ones may hurt your feelings.

Lucky number 18
Lucky colour Silver
Lucky day Wednesday



TAURUS April 20-May 20

You need a thorough health check-up. Stress may be overpowering you and cause health problems. Be sure to pay attention to diet, exercise, and sleep. Keep a positive attitude. You may need some time alone. You will find depth and wisdom in solitude. On the career front, you have excellent energy to accomplish tedious work. Financially you feel secure. Money will come from one than other sources. You may consider investing in property. A new project could be assigned to you making you busier and benefit you financially. The week is not very good in terms of a relationship. Troubles may arise in existing relationships. You may tend to find faults in each other. Trust and faith are missing. Work on this aspect.

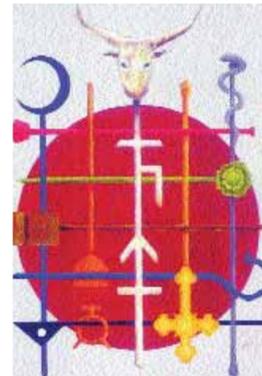
Lucky number 14
Lucky colour Green
Lucky day Thursday



VIRGO Aug 23-Sep 22

This week you will perform right action at any given moment. You feel you are the master of your destiny. You have a shining personality and are likely embark on a new path. By being in tune with the environment and with others, you never go wrong with the judgment. Professionally, there is a good chance of realising your potentials and opportunities. There is a need to be attentive and alert. For some of you, a feeling of stagnation, dissatisfaction is taking a toll. Your career is on the stake. There is a need to socialise, and to reconnect with people. Connections and conversations sometimes prove rewarding. On the personal front, there is a new love interest possible. The existing relations will bloom.

Lucky number 19
Lucky colour White
Lucky day Tuesday



CAPRICORN Dec 22-Jan 19

This week health looks promising. This is a great time to try a new health care approach, especially preventative care. Exercise, eating well, and good sleep are all obvious approaches that you can revisit. Don't hesitate to try a new healer or to seek a second opinion, if needed. On the career front, additional duties and responsibilities may bring work pressure. If in such a situation, don't hesitate to ask for help or delegate workload. This way your efficiency will increase and the outcome will be decent. On the personal front, you will enjoy unconditional love and affection, this week. There is purity in relationships. Those looking for love, soulmate in their life this is the time to embrace the opportunity with open arms.

Lucky number 8
Lucky colour Magenta
Lucky day Friday



GEMINI May 21-June 20

This week your determination and will power are very strong. It will help you to face health challenges, and put you in the right direction for a disciplined life. Alcohol, junk and spicy food should be avoided. Routine exercises, morning walk and planned diet create would wonders for you. Stick to it, and timely medical care will cure your existing ailments. Professionally, you will establish your strength. This is a rewarding week in terms of your profession and job. People will listen to you and respect your views. Those in a job may have the reason to feel proud after the accomplishment of an important project. On the personal front, you feel blessed, looked after and share cherishable moments with the loved ones.

Lucky number 20
Lucky colour Mauve
Lucky day Monday



LIBRA Sep 23-Oct 22

This week your passion for creative pursuits or hobbies will consume your time and energy. You spend your time fruitfully. You are inspired and productive in your pursuits. There is satisfaction and positive environment that surrounds you, helping you to enjoy the bliss of good health. On the career front, there is a wakeup call for you, to change yourself for the better, to get the realisation, to get over of the period of confusion or misunderstanding. Do not stress over them and stop thinking too much and start letting things simply be. Wait for the good times. On the personal front, you have to be presentable, witty, enthusiastic and ready to win the heart of your loved one. There could be challenges, accusations and your spouse may be demanding.

Lucky number 11
Lucky colour Beige
Lucky day Sunday



AQUARIUS Jan 20-Feb 18

This week your generosity, kindness, concern, and care for others would be appreciated. Health remains good, and you may devote time in looking after your ailing parents, relative or a friend. You are likely to follow meditation, yoga, Pranayam and other practices. You will feel relaxed, calm, and in tune with your body, mind, and soul. On the career front, expect a fairly good period. New avenues for money earning could be opened for you. A new job opportunity with better prospects will excite you, and those who are unemployed will be getting an opening for themselves too. Old connections and association will be helpful. On the personal front, prestige, glory, and status in the society shall enhance. Relatives will appreciate your endeavours.

Lucky number 2
Lucky colour Pink
Lucky day Sunday



CANCER June 21-July 22

This week you are filled with enthusiasm. You may experience a change in perspective. Negativity replaces optimism. New possibilities can be foreseen. This is a time to utilise your creative energies. At work, you will find success. Promotion or hike in status is likely which will make you confident. You are self-disciplined, energetic and will exerting dynamic control over life. You are a motivator, an inspiration to your colleagues. This is the time when your intelligence, wisdom and experience will pay you rich dividends. On the personal front, your dynamic personality exudes charm and impression on others. You are romantic. Love is in the air. You admire, appreciate your spouse with sweet words that will rejuvenate your relationship.

Lucky number 6
Lucky colour Purple
Lucky day Friday



SCORPIO Oct 23-Nov 21

This is a hectic week for you. Do not get physically violent; otherwise, you could hurt yourself. You are highly perceptive and intuitive. You need to control your emotions and ambitions. Avoid aggression and any kind of arguments with the people around you. On the professional front, there may be serious problems in your workplace. This doesn't have to be the end of the world or the end of your job but ignoring these problems will not make them go away. You have reached the point where you can now see what is best for you. Take some quiet time to decide what your next moves are. On the personal front, this is a very good week for you. Warmth and affection with the near and dear ones will increase.

Lucky number 13
Lucky colour Brown
Lucky day Saturday



PISCES Feb 19-March 20

This week you are emotional and may get worried over small issues. Physically you remain healthy, but mental tension and anxiety could make you sick. At times, you could get moody, temperamental, and unsocial. Spiritualism, meditation and other Yogic practices could be helpful in getting back your balance. On the work front, you have to put your best foot forward. Whether it is your energy, time or money investment, you have worked with full dedication and now waiting for the dividends. A good message which could enhance your career is on the cards. On the personal front, relationships are smooth and easy-going. People around you feel relaxed. Romance, love and new excitement are in the air.

Lucky number 7
Lucky colour Grey
Lucky day Saturday

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ASTROTURF
BHARAT BHUSHAN PADMADEO

Durga: Sakti personified

Sakti, when applicable on human beings, turn out to be a double-edged sword. The question now is: what makes *Sakti* strike divergent notes on different people — productive in case of some and self-defeating for others? This, despite the fact that *sakti* is available in equal proportion to all. Here comes into picture one's unique mind-trend, which varies from person-to-person. It is this uniqueness of a being, which responds to *sakti* varied ways according as each mind is inherently made out. How to ensure productive application of *Sakti*, overriding individualistic vulnerabilities, coming as they may with one's unique nature, you may ask? The answer evidently lies in having exposure to the *Sakti* concept, which the imagery of Mother Goddess Durga so aptly displays. Let us first begin with the name "Durga" itself. It means something available with great difficulties. What then is that force, personified as Durga, which cannot be accessed so easily? Here a look into the legend pertaining to the making of the Mother becomes imperative. As the allegory runs, the *Rakshas* (Demons/devil) drove away the *Devatas* (the righteous people) from *Devaloka*,

their place of abode. The *Devatas* then gathered and together called upon Lord Brahma, the God-personified for creation, and sought His help. Lord Brahma then led them all to Lord Vishnu, the God-personified assigned with the task to administer. Realising that enormous power is needed to counter the might of *Rakshasas*, Lord Vishnu in turn, led them all to Lord Shiva, the epitome of *Sakti*. Lord Shiva asked all the *Devatas* to share their individual *Tejas* (*Sakti* or radiance). Accordingly, all the *Devatas*, including Brahma, Vishnu, and Mahesh (another name for Shiva), pooled in their individual *Sakti*, which together turned into a huge fire. Out of that huge fire pool, came into being the all-powerful Mother Goddess Durga. The different *Devatas* offered their respective weapons for Mother's use. She then took on and humbled all the demons. But mind it: She does not do it single-handed. She is assisted by many other Goddesses in Her mission, all of them originating from the mainframe of Durga herself, who, after completing their respective tasks, reverted back to their source-frame. You may wonder: how comes the *Devatas*, the individually evolved beings,



so particular about their righteous conduct, had to face the humiliation of being driven away by evil-forces from their homeland? Evidently, either the *Devatas* were not strong enough to match the might of demons, or else, there had to be something wrong in them, which brought them to such a pass. One possibility is that being overtaken by egotistic sense of being superior ones; they mistook themselves to be unassailable. And then, they were so engrossed in their individualistic pursuits that they missed their alert on the impending danger. Passionately engrossed in their individualistic pursuits, they probably would not have cared to remain true to their collective obligations either. The inevitable had to happen. The implication is that a *Devata*, though placed on a high pedestal, by oneself would not suffice to ensure his well-being unless the collective existence is well secured. What comes out loud and clear from the story is that when the *Devatas* pooled in their individual energies, and put them together, turned into a mighty force. That very force is personified as Durga, which tamed the demons. It simply implies that it is only when we put in all acts together,

both individually and collectively, that we could be at our best. Second, life does not move to one's asking. We have to be well geared up to take on impending challenges if any, to ensure individualistic as well as collective well-being. Even otherwise, let us not forget that we have to necessarily contend with disparate people all around, quite good in number, some of them even acting weird. Our plane of living, therefore, remains a fertile ground for arousal of conflicting interests. We, therefore, need to be prepared to take on danger inherent in the existential order itself, looming large over our head all the time. So, no matter how virtuous a person individually is, unless he remains live to existential needs, life may turn into a nightmare, both individually and collectively. Therefore, the callings of life need to be attended holistically. Definitely, the *Devatas* would have been caught unawares during one of their unguarded moments, which led to their humiliating defeat at the hands of the evil-forces. The writer is an astrologer, vastu consultant and spiritual counsellor. Connect with him at Tel: 91-11-9818037273/9871037272 Email: bharatbhushanpadmadeo@gmail.com