

Mumbai Mirror

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Under cover of Covid, unscrupulous builders go on a spree

15 illegal buildings erected in L ward in just two weeks



Some of the new illegal constructions at Masrani lane in Kurla West

Officials tell Mirror the structures are like 'holiday constructions', which normally come up during extended weekends, but this time took advantage of the BMC's preoccupation with the pandemic

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With the BMC's resources almost entirely devoted to fighting the Covid-19 pandemic, unscrupulous builders have seized the opportunity and erected at least 15 illegal buildings in L ward in the past fortnight, BMC officials told Mirror. L ward includes Chunabhatti, Sakinaka, Kurla, Chembivali, Tunga and parts of Powai. Most of the illegal buildings, which are two-storey structures, have come up

in Chunabhatti's Qureshi Nagar and Kasaiwada, and at Pipe Road in Kurla West.

Manish Valanju, assistant commissioner, L ward, said these types of illegal buildings were constructed by small-time contractors and were known as "holiday constructions" as they were generally erected during extended weekends. This time, however, it was the pandemic that gave builders the cover they needed. Valanju told Mirror that most of the construction probably happened at night. "They mainly use iron angle channels and siporex blocks, which are lighter but bigger than red bricks.

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State warns of shortage, JJ, St George refuse to use 81 ventilators

The state is facing an acute shortage of ventilators—Health Minister Rajesh Tope has said 500 more are needed for Covid-19 patients—but JJ Hospital and St George's Hospital have refused to use 81 made-in-India machines donated in total to them last month.

The ventilators, made by AgVa Healthcare in Delhi, cost around Rs 2.5 lakh each, making them one of the cheapest in the world. But the Directorate of Medical Education and Research has said they are not suited for Covid-19 patients. The manufacturer disputed this claim, saying its ventilators are fully functional and are suited for all ICU patients, including those affected by Covid-19.



Bhiwandi's only govt hospital for Covid patients in a shambles

A day after Mumbai Mirror reported on Bhiwandi's struggling healthcare infrastructure, disturbing images and video of the premises of the only government hospital treating Covid-19 patients have come to light, along with complaints that the city has few doctors left to treat people.



Fee stand-off pits teachers, parents against each other

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The standoff between schools and parents over payment of fee is snowballing into a major crisis with at least one school already being forced to reverse its decision to prevent students who have not paid from attending online lessons.

While parents are quoting lost jobs, losses in business and salary cuts to demand waivers or discounts, the schools are pointing to their fixed costs and obligation to pay teachers to seek payment of fee by all students.

And though the government did issue an advisory during the lockdown asking schools to not force parents to pay, it is now increasingly weighing its words realising a blanket waiver of fee, even deep discounts, could jeopardise the future of thousands of teachers.

According to Shivnath Darade, general secretary, Shikshak Parishad, a teachers' organisation, Mumbai has over a thousand primary and secondary private unaided schools employing over 50,000 teachers.

On Tuesday, School Education Minister Varsha Gaikwad asked both sides to be accommodating. "Taking action against one side is not the solution," she said and asked PTAs (parents, teachers association) to hold talks.

But there are no easy solutions available.

Kandivali parent Meghaa Pithwa has connected with multiple groups to mobilise parents to demand reduction in fees. **CONTINUED ON P 8»**

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PAGE THAT that's glad to see India part of UN Security Council



RAJU SHELAR

A Chinese conundrum

THE Indian cricket board and cricketers are largely an apolitical bunch, so keeping mum on the Galwan valley conflict is hardly notable. But this doesn't mean they have been untouched by the anti-China mood sweeping the nation. While condolences have been duly offered on the loss of jawans' lives, the cricket body is especially worried that a Chinese company is the title sponsor of the IPL. Of course, any comment against

Chinese companies would land them in contractual trouble, but that isn't all. They can hardly afford to lose the deal and look for a replacement at the time of a global economic crisis. Moreover, BCCI bosses Sourav Ganguly and Jay Shah could well be worried as most of their sponsors are either Chinese companies or are backed by Chinese investors.



Sourav Ganguly



Jay Shah

THANKS FOR YOUR SUPPORT Late actor Sushant Singh Rajput's friend Rhea Chakraborty leaves Bandra police station after recording her statement on Thursday night.



@SanSip

Breaking: TV sets.

Cheery state of mind

TELEVISION industry veteran and former honcho at Viacom, Raj Nayak announced a media and entertainment content company last year. A year prior to this, Nayak announced he was resigning from Viacom, after heading various television networks (like Star and NDTV) for 25 years. Nayak, we hear, is about to launch a brand new service that measures the happiness quotient of products and their employees. During industry shutdown days, the man who once launched 'Bigg Boss' in India, is also hosting an online chat show with an assortment of celebrities and speakers, such as Leander Paes and life coach Jill Majeski.



Raj Nayak

Fashion star

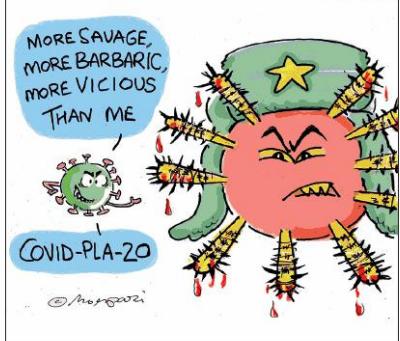
DESIGNER Jenjum Gadi's life is a movie script in itself. Small-town boy from Arunachal Pradesh winning a scholarship to a fashion school, interning with Rohit Bal, and hobnobbing at fashion weeks in New Delhi and Mumbai. Now we hear the Delhi-based designer has landed himself a role in a film. 'Axone', pronounced 'Akhuni', was released last week and discusses the discrimination those from north-east India face in Delhi. The film stars Sayani Gupta and sees Jenjum play a small role. "The title refers to a fermented soya that we use in several dishes. It lets out a strong smell that really bothers the neighbours who aren't familiar with it," Jenjum tells your diarist. "I like how the film uses food as a basis for discrimination."



Jenjum Gadi

CORNED

Morparia



Blending cultures



Varunika Saraf
Amina Ahmed

THIS exhibition that opens today at the Heidelberg Kunstverein in Germany has got us really excited. It's one of the first few physical exhibitions (as opposed to online shows) since the lockdown. Three uber talented women artists – Nadira Husain, laureate of the WERK-STOFF Award, along with Varunika Saraf and Amina Ahmed – are presenting their work together in Germany. The show is titled 'Confluence/ Sangam'. Daughter of an Indian father and a French mother, Husain draws from her own life experiences. Islamic art and the history of the Indian subcontinent meet pop-cultural references in her works. Hyderabad-based Saraf, who uses the miniature painting technique, captures the recent protest movements in India, while US-based Ahmed uses geometric forms and patterns to speak about the different cultures that have shaped her life and practice. Quite a confluence indeed.

Tailpiece

A well-known female actor had just bought herself two apartments in the suburbs. Just before the lockdown, the talented girl hosted a house-warming party and invited some of her close friends. One of them is a popular producer, known to be quite the entertainer with his witty one-liners. He teased the heroine all evening, not sparing any nasties when he said that while he was happy with her investments, the said suburb was hardly the posh address she deserved.

State warns of shortage, but JJ, St George refuse 81 ventilators

Cost only ₹2.5 lakh each; DMER says machines not up to scratch, company says demo proved otherwise

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The state is facing an acute shortage of ventilators—Health Minister Rajesh Tope has said 500 more are needed for Covid-19 patients—but JJ Hospital and St George's Hospital have refused to use 81 made-in-India machines donated in total to them last month.

St George's Hospital has, in fact, returned all 39 ventilators it received from Rotary Club of Bombay. JJ Hospital got 42 machines from the Americanes India Foundation (AIF), a donation that was organised by Mumbai City Guardian Minister Aslam Shaikh.

At its most lethal, the SARS-COV-2 virus attacks the lungs, making ventilators—which pump breathable air into a patient—critical for hospitals.

The donated ventilators, made by Delhi-based AgVa Healthcare, cost around Rs 2.5 lakh each, making them one of the cheapest in the world. Other conventional machines go for more than Rs 10 lakh a piece. Since the AgVa weighs just 3.5 kg and its power consumption is low, less critical Covid-19



The ventilators were delivered to the hospitals last month

patients can be moved back to their homes.

Dr TP Lahane, who heads the Directorate of Medical Education and Research, said AgVa's ventilators, however, are not suited for Covid-19 patients—a claim that the manufacturer has disputed—and that the hospitals had never asked for them in the first place. "Before donating these ventilators it was communicated to the guardian minister that these ventilators can't be used for Covid-19 patients, as their oxygen level can go up

to only 40 per cent. Covid-19 patients require 100 per cent oxygenation."

He said at best, these ventilators can be used during transporting patients. "But no one has made a request for this as well. We have asked the guardian minister to use these ventilators somewhere else. We only stored the ventilators since the request for donation came from him."

AgVa asserted that its ventilators are fully functional and are suited for all ICU patients, including those affected by Covid-19. An official repre-

senting the company said before handover, doctors of St George's Hospital were given a demonstration on May 26 and that its machines had worked efficiently, even on a patient. "We would like to refute any claim that there is any technical fault in the ventilator. These ventilators have been a workhorse in many hospitals across the country."

Dr Dilip Pawar, who facilitated the AIF's donation to JJ Hospital, said similar ventilators have been given to Wadia Hospital in Parel and there has been no complaint. "We were told that that there were issues with oxygen supply and that the hospital wants an upgraded version. But we have not got anything in writing so far. If it doesn't want them, we can take the ventilators back," he said.

AgVa said it can ship the upgraded versions to the hospitals, but that they must use the ones supplied to them till the new stocks arrive.

Shaikh said that he would check the status of the ventilators.

AIF and the Rotary Club didn't respond to queries, nor did Dr Sanjay Mukherjee, principal secretary of medical education, who is in-charge of all medical colleges in the state.

Burglar's Chembur house burgled

The vacant Chembur house of a suspected burglar who was granted bail earlier this month after testing positive for Covid-19 was burgled on Tuesday. The family claimed valuables worth Rs 4.5 lakh, including Rs 2.5 lakh in cash, were missing.

Seven people were recently arrested for allegedly robbing an electronic shop in Kurla. Five of them tested positive for Covid-19, said a Nehrur Nagar police official. They were granted bail and sent to an isolation centre. Their families were sent to different quarantine centres on June 7.

While in quarantine in Deonar, one of the families found out from a neighbour that their house had been broken into. The Tilak Nagar police have registered a complaint.

VINAY DALVI

Robber targets two ATMs in Navi Mumbai

The Navi Mumbai police are looking for a man who attempted to rob two ATMs in Taloja and Kalamboli on Wednesday.

The second ATM targeted is in the Kalamboli police headquarters.

At both places, he was caught on camera trying to smash the machines. The police said he only managed to break the screens and some other parts.

Two separate cases have been registered at Taloja and Kalamboli police stations.

VALLABHOZARKAR

MARUTI SUZUKI

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Lack of manpower, medical waste everywhere

Bhiwandi's only govt hospital for Covid patients in a shambles

Images and video of hospital shot by a relative of a patient throw light on the state of affairs at IGM Hospital

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A day after Mumbai Mirror reported on Bhiwandi's struggling healthcare infrastructure, disturbing images and video of the premises of the only government hospital treating Covid-19 patients have come to light. The revelations come as the authorities place the city under a 15-day lockdown to arrest the spread of the pandemic.

The video of the lower floor of the Indira Gandhi Memorial (IGM) Hospital premises was recorded by a patient who lost a family member to Covid-19. The photos show used PPE kits and medical waste strewn outside the hospital building.

Mirror had previously reported that doctors in Kalwa's Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Hospital were falling ill despite wearing protective gear. The disposal of medical waste outside IGM could pose severe health risks.

IGM dean Dr Anil Thorat stated that the waste had been cleared, but the disposal vehicle had not arrived the previous day. A hospital source confirmed that the video showed the back entrance of the hospital, which leads to the isolation ward, and said that the hospital was unable to treat patients due to a lack of resources and manpower. "I have four doctors who have to treat patients in three shifts. My doctors are doing 16 hours of duty. How can we continue to function like this? I have written to the commissioner but have not received any reply," he said. A source at the hospital told Mirror that the doc-



(Above) Discarded protective equipment lying outside the hospital premises, which was cleared later on Thursday

tor on night duty was still working well into the afternoon.

Mirror spoke to Jaywant Dhule, chief medical officer, and Milind Palsule, public relations officer, Bhiwandi-Nizampur City Municipal Corporation, who stated that the hospital was run by the state government and that the BNCMC was not responsible for the condition it was in. The civic body had cited a lack of social distancing among citizens and the rising coronavirus cases while imposing the lockdown, which went into effect from Thursday.

Dr Thorat said that once the civic body had taken over the hospital as a dedicated Covid centre, it was their responsibility to provide enough manpower to run it. "The corporation last assigned the hospital three doctors over a month ago. Only one of them is still working with us," he added. Municipal commissioner Pravin Ashtikar remained unavailable for comment.

MLA Rais Shaikh told Mirror that state Health Minister Rajesh Tope was in touch with the

municipal commissioner. "According to the government's orders, the municipal commissioner is the nodal officer in charge of all Covid-related activities in the municipality region. The minister has already given Rs 7 crore to the corporation and blanket permission to the commissioner to withdraw money from the district collector's emergency fund to provide staff," Shaikh said.

Thirty-six new positive cases were recorded on June 17, bringing the total positive cases to 687, according to statistics released by the corporation. While 192 patients have recovered so far, 484 people have been quarantined in the civic body's isolation facilities.

Mirror had previously reported that the IGM hospital is the only government hospital in Bhiwandi for patients who test positive and that a hundred beds were insufficient to treat the rising number of cases. The mayor of Bhiwandi has requested the Thane district collector for the means to set up a 350-bed field hospital in a 60,000 square foot privately owned facility given to the BNCMC.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Using these, it is easy to construct a building in no time," he said.

Valanju said a one-BHK flat in such a building could easily sell for Rs 30 lakh. "They build one-room-kitchen and one-bhk flats and sell them for Rs 30 lakh. Many people are happy to buy such flats, especially if they are close to Kurla railway station," he added.

Valanju said the civic body has already started demolishing the illegal buildings, and that the 15 that were erected in June would be demolished by next week. Some illegal buildings have also been constructed at VB Nagar and Kasaiwada in Kurla, and one near Madina market at Khairani Road, Sakinaka. Sagar Karpe, assistant

executive engineer, building and factories department, said the civic body has already demolished seven illegal structures at Village Hall Road and Gaurishankar Road in Kurla, and in parts of Saki Naka.

"Such constructions are dangerous as they are not built for stability. Those who construct such buildings do so just so that they can enclose the area and take over the plot illegally," Karpe added.

Explaining how the BMC takes up the demolition of such illegal structures, he said, "The complaint drops at our dispatch section or they call us and we send a junior engineer and a mukadam to inspect the site. We issue one type of notice for ongoing constructions; if the structure has been completed, a different

notice is issued under the Mumbai Municipal Corporation Act. Despite knowing the structure is illegal, we issue a notice because they keep their materials, such as cement bags, inside. As per the protocol, we cannot touch these before a panchayat is done. It is a 24-hour notice and we demolish the illegal building after that," he said.

Chunabhatti is no stranger to illegal construction. Mirror had reported last November that the BMC had begun demolishing 50 'holiday construction' buildings in Qureshi Nagar and Kasaiwada. Most had become multi-storeyed over weekends last year and were sold to gullible buyers. Around 2,500 families were expected to be displaced by December-end.

But perhaps it is the case that Mr Gandhi is a democrat and believes that a variety of views,



DUSHYANT

LAW AND JUDICIARY

Holding a brief for the argumentative Indian

Write to him at mirrorfeedback@timesgroup.com

Who really is Mr Rahul Gandhi?

The Bharatiya Janata Party mounted, and continues to run, possibly the largest and nastiest vilification campaign in world history against Indian National Congress leader Rahul Gandhi. His words twisted, his videos clipped, gazillion falsehoods spread about him.

Yet, many people haven't fallen for it. His critics say 'look he keeps going abroad'. In my opinion, it doesn't rankle people as much as some believe it does. But even these people - I am one of them - are unable to make any head or tail of who he really is. Those willing to analyse him fairly, including those who have met him, will say 'he's a really nice guy, quite intelligent'. They will point to his stated commitment to plural values and his frequent calling out of right-wing forces. So, nice guy, intelligent, says the right things about the vision laid out in the Preamble to the Constitution of India.

That is where it ends. I believe in a lot of principles but I haven't dedicated my life to protecting said principles or values. What has Rahul Gandhi done and what is he doing for the values he professes allegiance to? What is the nature of his commitment besides what he says? Mr Gandhi admirably spoke out against the draconian change in J&K's legal status. What after that? Love vs Hate was one of the major planks that he fought the 2019 Lok Sabha election campaign on. But he was nowhere to be seen after Tabrez Ansari's lynching in Jharkhand less than one month after the election results were declared. He was also absent when students and others protesting the Citizenship Amendment Law were being brutally beaten. Many Congress leaders came out, joined protests, spoke up, he did not.

How is it that he keeps close to himself people who say the opposite of what he believes? Randeep Surjewala, a person who flaunted Mr Gandhi's 'janey wearing' and said that the Congress 'always' wanted the Ram Mandir, is not just in an important position in the party but also in Mr Gandhi's inner circle. Ditto for Manish Tewari, who joined the chorus of bigotry not only against a certain minority group affected by coronavirus but insinuated that 'mainstream Muslims' were falling short in their condemnation.

But perhaps it is the case that Mr Gandhi is a democrat and believes that a variety of views,

no matter how utterly vile, must be accommodated. Why then was Sanjay Jha, a prominent party spokesperson, dropped soon after he expressed criticism about the state of affairs in the party?

The 'he is not President anymore argument' only works with people who don't know that he is indeed the President whenever he wants to be.

But let's say that all these contradictions or failings in his ideological commitment have happened because of the demands of realpolitik. Let us now turn to realpolitik. Ajay Kumar Lallu, the Congress party's Uttar Pradesh state president was recently quoted as saying that the only path that works in politics is that of 'Sanharsh, Samvaad and Sampark' (struggle, communication and contact). In a private setting, ask Congress workers across the length and breadth of India 'what is the nature of relationship between you and Mr Gandhi?'. Ask any office bearer in any state. They will only and only express dismay and anguish. They will point to his disinterest in the demands of a political life.

Question his inner circle about his failures at realpolitik and they will say, 'listen, he is not here to win or lose elections, he is way above all that'. He wants to transform India's society and the manner in which India's politics is done and that will take time. On this, first, at what point did he decide that he wasn't interested in elections? Was it before he was projected as the face of INC's electoral campaign or after the loss in 2019 General Elections?

Surely, he isn't a revolutionary activist when he falters with realpolitik and an orthodox politician when he falters with ideology? And if he is indeed above electoral politics, and that is fair enough, what is he doing in the Congress party? Why does he campaign in assembly elections?

But more on the social revolution - what is this transformative path which is unlike that followed by Mandela, Gandhi, Nehru, Kanshi Ram and many others? Has Mr Gandhi taken it upon himself to not only reinvent the wheel but also the engine and brakes and what not? And if yes, is he aware that the cost of this attempt at re-invention will be paid by millions of vulnerable people in India? Will history see this time as one marked by two opposing forces, one out to persecute the vulnerable by commission and one by omission?

Palghar woman who tested positive goes missing

Man booked for violating quarantine; another for not reporting symptoms

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Palghar police registered cases against two people who went missing from their homes after testing positive for Covid-19. The police have also booked a man from Dahanu for not reporting his Covid-19 symptoms to the health authorities. This led to the spread of the infection to 11 other people.

One of the two people who went missing was a woman with a mental illness. The

woman is a resident of Tulip in Nasolapara. "The woman is mentally unstable and efforts are on to trace her," an official said. "She has been booked under relevant sections of the Indian Penal Code and Disaster Management Act 2005."

The other person who went missing was a resident of Vasai. According to the Walive police, the man lived in a containment zone. Health officials had asked him to home quarantine after he had tested positive for Covid-19. On Tuesday evening, when local police

officials visited the residence of the patient they found him missing. "The said person returned home a day later and is now under quarantine," said a police officer.

On Tuesday, Dahanu police registered a case against a resident of Narpad who failed to inform health authorities that he was experiencing Covid-19 symptoms. "As per the preliminary information, at least 11 people got infected because of this person. All the affected people have been quarantined," a police official said.

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'MMRDA paid 40% extra for Covid hospital'

BJP MLA alleges phase I of the facility at BKC was built without inviting tenders; MMRDA says rules were followed

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The Mumbai Metropolitan Region Development Authority (MMRDA) completed phase II of the Covid-19 hospital in Bandra-Kurla Complex (BKC) in record time on Tuesday, but its 1,080-bed phase I hospital has come under the scanner for overpricing and irregularities.

In a letter to Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray, BJP MLA Ameet Satam alleged that the MMRDA gave out contracts for the construction of the Rs 20-crore makeshift hospital at around 40 per cent more than the market prices and without inviting tenders. He has demanded an independent inquiry.

The MMRDA on its part claimed that it had followed all procedures and had sought quotations from multiple firms before issuing work orders. MMRDA officials said that the procurement was

done under the emergency clause of the disaster management protocol and did not require tendering.

In his complaint, Satam has attached price quotations from firms for construction of a similar hospital project, and claimed that he has received quotes much lesser than what the MMRDA has paid to its contractors.

For instance, according to documents shared by the MMRDA with Satam, the agency paid Rs 9.4 crore to a company called Ms Jess Idea Pvt Ltd for constructing the main hangar for a period of three months. This structure houses the entire hospital for the patients measuring around 9,400 sq mt, the doctors' facility of around 2,375 sq mt and the toilet area of around 2,100 sq mt.

Satam in his complaint said that the same hangar could be constructed for just Rs 5.67 crore in the same time. Satam has produced a quotation from a firm called RMB Event Management Company for Rs

5.67 crore for the same structure, and maintenance for three months. This means a price difference of Rs 3.77 crore or 40 per cent. The hospital is housed in a waterproof "German tent" (a hangar-like structure), 235 m in length and 40 m in width.

The MMRDA bought all its beds and mattresses from Ms Nilkamal Limited and spent Rs 3,835 per bed, Rs 1,888 per mattress. The MMRDA ordered 1,000 beds and mattresses spending almost Rs 60 lakh on beds, mattresses pillows, and saline stands.

Satam in his complaint said that he could procure the same beds at just Rs 3,481 each and the mattresses at Rs 384 which is around 20 per cent cheaper.

According to Satam, the MMRDA paid Rs 350 more

per bed and Rs 384 more per mattress.

MMRDA Commissioner RA Rajeev said that there were no irregularities in the project at all. "We have kept 37 files ready for any kind of audit or scrutiny. We had formed a robust committee of experts for all the purchases. There was total transparency, and no procedures were violated in any way. Now, in hindsight anyone can quote lower prices but when we built the hospital, there was a lockdown in place."

He said the prices might have come down now but the hospital was built in record time, and it was a matter of pride for the MMRDA that its feat was being compared to the hospital that was built in Wuhan in a record time, Rajeev said.



Phase 1 of MMRDA's hospital at BKC cost Rs 20 cr

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Date: 19th June 2020

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Rs 1,888 per mattress	Rs 1,504 per mattress	Rs 384 per mattress (20%)
Bedsheets and pillow covers		
MMRDA's price Rs 304	Satam's price Rs 183	Price difference Rs 121 (39%)
Blankets		
MMRDA's price Rs 199	Satam's price Rs 105	Price difference Rs 94 (47%)



Auction of Jet Airways BKC office piques buyers' interest

A private bank, a real estate fund, and a global asset management firm are in the race, say sources

Satish.Nandaonkar@timesgroup.com

TWEETS @MumbaiMirror

Despite the impact of Covid-19 on the real estate sector, the approaching auction of the Jet Airways office located in the Godrej BKC building in Bandra Kurla Complex has been stirring interest. Several corporate companies, a leading private bank, a prominent real estate fund and a global asset management firm have made enquiries for possible bids, sources said.

The third and fourth floor office mortgaged to HDFC Ltd is scheduled to be e-auctioned on June 26 as part of the corporate insolvency resolution process underway before the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT). According to a public notice issued by the NCLT-appointed resolution professional Ashish Chhawchharia, the approximately 1,69,983 sq ft saleable area on the third and fourth floor of the building will be put on the auction block.



An inspection of the property has been scheduled for today

The reserve price has been finalised at Rs 490 crore, and prospective bidder will have to pay an earnest money deposit of Rs 25 crore along with the bid document or before June 24. An inspection of the property has been scheduled on Friday between 11 am and 1 pm.

Karan Singh Sodi, regional managing director, JLL India said, "The Jet Airways floors should generate a good level of interest even in these uncertain times as the base price is issued is way below the recently concluded sale transactions for Grade A assets in BKC. The reserve price is approximately 25 per

cent below the average prevailing prices for Grade A assets".

The reserve price translates to a value of Rs 28,900 per sq ft, while the last big transaction in Godrej BKC was closed at Rs 36,000 per sq ft. Market sources said Grade A assets like Godrej BKC have been witnessing a healthy increase in rentals from 16 per cent to 21 per cent in the last 12 months.

"This exponential jump was driven by three fundamental factors. Firstly, no new Grade A supply has come to the BKC micro market. The Grade A vacancy percentage has reduced from two digits in 2018 to below 7 per cent in the last two quarters. Lastly, there has been a steady demand from occupiers especially in the BKC micro market," Sodi said.

Godrej BKC, developed by Godrej Properties Ltd on land owned by Jet Airways, has witnessed rents increase from Rs 235 to 240 per square foot (psf) in the last quarter of 2018 to Rs 270-275 psf level in recent months. A similar increase has been seen in rents in other Grade A buildings including One BKC, First International Finance Centre and Makar Maxity in the last 12 months.

JLL had concluded the sale of the IDBI Bank building of approximately 3 lakh sq ft to Securities Exchange Board of India for over Rs 900 crore at Rs 30,000 per sq ft as well as the Citigroup Centre that fetched over Rs 400 crore at capital value of Rs 36,500 per sq ft.

Customs ordered to hand over cancer survivor's feeding tubes in 24 hours

Petitioner says a customs official withheld the consignment on grounds he was unaware of

In a relief to a cancer survivor, the Bombay High Court has directed the Customs authorities to hand over the feeding tubes imported by him from the United States to the survivor's lawyer or a representative within 24 hours.

A division bench of Justice SJ Kathawala and NR Borkar, on Thursday, directed completion of formalities forthwith - courier company DHL Express India to submit the bill of entry to the commissioner of customs, airport special cargo commissionate and petitioner Samir Patel's lawyers to submit a form for customs duty exemption certificate.

The High Court has directed that the customs authorities hand over the "parcel containing 'Osmolite Nutrio N-Food for tube feeding patient', to the advocates for the petitioner and/or their representative within 24 hours". In case, there are any other formalities, they can be completed even after the parcel is handed over, the court said.

The court was hearing a petition filed by an Overseas Citizen of India (OCI) cardholder, Samir Patel, which said he was diagnosed with oral cancer in December 2016, after which he had to undergo remedial surgical operations because of which his intake of food was possible only through a feeding tube. It adds that he has to import the tubes from the US as they are not available in India.

According to the petition, the assistant commissioner of customs at the Air Cargo Complex at Sahar, Andheri, had withheld the latest consignment of feeding tubes on grounds he was unaware of.

The petitioner pleaded that he would soon run out of his existing stock of feeding tubes. The bench has now kept the case for a hearing on June 22 so that the customs authorities can inform about compliance of the order. MMB

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SECOND OPINION

Ringside Reflections on Health Care

Write to him at mirrorfeedback@timesgroup.com

Health Economics for Dummies

I chose to study medicine because I didn't like numbers, figures and graphs. Like many of you I am an ignoramus at complex economic theories. However, last week I chanced upon an old paper, written in 1963 by an economist called Kenneth Arrow from Stanford. Many regard him as one of the earliest health economists. He later went on to share the 1972 Nobel Prize in Economic Science with British economist John Hicks for work on "general equilibrium" in market economies, describing the interplay between consumers and producers. This remarkable paper is called "Uncertainty and the welfare economics of medical care". But why did this long, tedious and old paper draw my attention now?

Before we dive into Arrow's work, let's address what is 'market' medicine. Simplistically, it's a system where health care is run on market principles like investment, returns, profits, competition, monopoly and auto correction. In its pure form, prices for services are set freely between patients and health care providers and the forces of supply and demand are free from intervention by a government or other authority. Arrow's paper pointed out that certain characteristics of the 'medical market' make it distinctly different from markets for other goods. And therefore makes health care fertile ground for 'market failure'.

One important feature of this market described by Arrow is 'Uncertainty'. A disease can strike suddenly without any warning. Arrow describes that there is 'uncertainty' about the onset of disease, quality of diagnosis and efficacy of therapy. Also uncertain are the extent of costs, consequences of illness, including impairment of personal integrity of those affected, and the loss of decision-making capacity and income opportunities.

The other key concept elucidated by Arrow is 'Information asymmetry'. This basically refers to the huge gap of knowledge between the health care provider (doctor) and the consumer (patient). The information asymmetry has only grown in its severity since Arrow's time. While it is true that a similar asymmetry exists when buying other goods in healthcare, for the consumer this can be a question of life and death. Thus there is severe 'vulnerability' of the consumer. Making the asymmetry even more potentially dangerous.

Though not part of Arrow's paper, the asymmetry of information leads to another key concept from health economics called 'supplier induced demand'. This is described as the amount of demand that exists beyond what would have occurred in a market in which patients are fully informed. In healthcare, a physician acts as an agent on behalf of the patient, guiding them

to make the best possible decisions. Asymmetry of information can also be influenced by the physician's experiences, expertise, and professional ethics. A breakdown in this relationship happens when a physician encourages a patient to consume more care than is required for their problem, like ordering tests that the physician knows are not needed to make a diagnosis, or treatments that will have minimal or no benefit.

Finally, Arrow refers to the idea of 'moral hazard' in healthcare funding, specifically insurance. Moral hazard refers to a tendency to change behaviour when the cost of that behaviour is borne by others. It is a tricky construct in healthcare. Health insurance does give perverse incentives to both the consumer and the provider to spend more. Thus, insured patients tend to have more tests and procedures. But it saves patients from out-of-pocket payments.

So have economists and thinkers suggested alternatives to avoid 'market failure'? One idea is universal health coverage, which is based on health insurance, either individual or collective. Some recent schemes in India, including Ayushman Bharat or Obamacare in the US are based on this. Though these schemes are heavily regulated, they do suffer from the moral hazard challenge.

The model which is perhaps the biggest leap towards equal access and effective care for all is universal healthcare run by the state, which is either tax funded or by a mix of tax and private sources. The healthy pay for the sick with the hope that they will be looked after when they are on the other side. Under the Sustainable Development Goals, United Nations member states have agreed to work toward universal healthcare by 2030.

My apologies to economists for oversimplifying complex concepts. However, there cannot be a starker and more urgent testimony to Arrow's conception of market failure than the Covid epidemic. Everyday news about what's happening to critically ill Covid patients raises several questions that will haunt us. Who are these heartless people who let people die moving from hospital to hospital looking for a bed? This maybe because a Covid patient walking in to a hospital's casualty is seen in market terms as yet another customer.

Sometimes theoretical formulations help to come to terms with harsh reality. That's where Arrow's paper helped me and may help you too. Will it spur us towards alternatives? That needs a different exploration, but understanding the beast is often the first step to changing its behaviour. To begin with, we may have to stop being dummies.

The writer is a surgeon who, when not wielding a scalpel, wields a pen

KDMC reports highest increase in daily cases

212 people test positive for the virus, taking total active cases to 1,473

| Kamal Mishra
@timesgroup.com

TWEETS @KMMIRROR

With 212 people testing positive for coronavirus on Thursday, the Kalyan and Dombivali civic body reported its highest single-day spike in cases. On June 12, the Kalyan-Dombivali Municipal Corporation (KDMC) reported 185 cases in a single day.

The corporation said two people have succumbed to the infection in the last 24 hours taking the toll to 68. The latest victims are two men, aged 81 and 68, from Dombivali and Kalyan East.

Eight of the 212 people who tested positive for the virus on Thursday are below the age of 15, including a 4-year-old girl and a six-year-old boy, authorities said. Thirty-three of the 212 people are above the age of 60.

The KDMC added that 1,238 people have recovered from the infection so far and that they have been discharged from the hospitals they were undergoing treatment at. 1,473 people are undergoing treatment for the virus in several hospitals across the city.

Referring to the rise in the number of cases on Thursday, an official said, "most of them got the virus from their relatives or friends,



KDMC commissioner Vijay Suryavanshi discusses measures to reduce cases with community leaders

who are asymptomatic patients."

In Kalyan, the new cases have been reported from areas including Beturkar Pada, Wayle Nagar, Nana Pawshe Chowk, Ghas Bazar, Tise Gaon, Khadakpada, Zimmi Baug, Karnik Road, Santoshi Mata Road, Rambaug Lane 4, Hanuman Nagar and Dudhnaka.

The new cases in Dombivali have emerged from areas including MIDC, Ganesh Nagar, Azade Gaon, Thakurwadi, Kopar Cross Road, Savarkar Road, Pendse Nagar, Ghanshyam Gupte Road, Mhatre Nagar, Shastru Nagar, Vishun Nagar and Khambalpada among the other areas.

The corporation said two people have succumbed to the infection in the last 24 hours taking the toll to 68. The latest victims are two men, aged 81 and 68, from Dombivali and Kalyan East.

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Incinerators damaged by plastic body bags

5 of 15 electric incinerators run by the BMC are not working, leading to long queues for those seeking to cremate relatives

| Yogesh.Naik@timesgroup.com

TWEETS @yogeshMIRROR

A third of Mumbai's electric incinerators in various crematoriums are not functioning, which has resulted in huge queues for those seeking to cremate their relatives.

The BMC has 15 electric incinerators, of which only 10 are functioning. The BMC and private trusts also have 11 piped gas incinerators, of which two are non-functional. P Velarasu, additional commissioner of BMC (projects) said the usage of crematoriums has increased by three to four times and BMC is trying to ramp up facilities.

The plastic bags in which bodies of those who died of Covid-19 are wrapped have also led to this situation. Suresh Kakani, additional commissioner in charge of health, said, "Many of these incinerators get damaged as bodies are wrapped in plastic bags (as per protocol) and the melting plastic damages the incinerators." As per the protocol laid down for Covid-19-related deaths, all bodies in BMC have to be wrapped in plastic bags and the same is to be incinerated in electric furnace only.

Each body takes nearly two hours to burn completely and thereafter the furnace has to be kept shut for half an hour. But the load on the working ones is too high. On any normal day, 20 to 30 bodies are incinerated at electric furnace only.



Both electric furnaces in Vikhroli's Tagore Nagar crematorium are damaged

tric and PNG furnaces and now this has gone up to 70 to 80.

As per a chart submitted by BMC, the electric furnace at Reay Road crematorium is completely shut. The water scrubber tanks and coils are damaged and need urgent replacement. The Chandanwadi crematorium in Marine Lines has two furnaces and one is closed. It is one of the most used ones in South Mumbai. In Chembur's Charai crematorium, both the electric furnaces are not working and only the PNG one is working. Both the electric furnaces in Vikhroli's Tagore Nagar crematorium are not working. The PNG furnaces at Banganga and Mulund are also not

working.

Former BJP MP Kirit Somaiya said, "Gas crematoriums are more vulnerable to troubles due to melting plastic. Now Mumbai residents are compelled to use traditional wooden pyres as gas and electric crematoriums are not maintained properly. It is shameful for state government and BMC as they were not prepared with this eventuality."

Bereaved families now have to deal with crowded crematoriums too. A Mulund resident said, "My uncle died because of Covid-19 and we could not cremate him in Mulund, there was a huge rush in Bhandup and Ghatkopar. Finally, we had to go to Shivaji Park."

Fee stand-off pits teachers, parents against each other

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Pithwa, mother of two school-going children, ran the Brain Bridge Academy in Charkop, which created educational programmes. The academy shut down during the lockdown and her husband, who works in the entertainment industry, has been handed a substantial pay cut. "The school management is insisting on payment of fee. All they are offering is a 5 per cent discount if we pay the full year's fee in one go. On Tuesday, they sent an emotional message asking us to respect teachers. 'Why will we not respect teachers? Of course, we do. But the school too must be considerate,' Pithwa said.

The dominant refrain among parents is that since classes are online, schools are saving on maintenance overheads. They are also arguing that since students, at least in the short term, will not be using computer labs, libraries and play grounds, why should they pay for them.

Schools argue that teachers' salaries account for nearly 80 per cent of their costs and thus non-payment of fee by students will directly impact teachers'

salaries. Not that schools are waiting before slashing teachers' salaries or sacking them. A teacher in Ulhasnagar said her salary has been reduced by Rs. 9,000 and some of her colleagues have seen their salaries reduced by up to Rs 15,000. "Some of the new recruits earn as little as Rs 5,000. The technical staff and teachers for extra-curricular activities have been effectively wiped out," the teacher said.

This newspaper reported on May 23 that the Narayan e-Techno group, which runs eight branches in Mumbai and Thane, had sent teachers of co-curricular activities, administrative staff and contractual blue-collar staff on unpaid leave from May 1 citing lack of resources.

The lockdown has also impacted operators of school bus services. The School Bus Owners' Association last month appealed to Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray to allow collection of school bus fees as operators were not able to pay wages to thousands of bus drivers, cleaners and attendants.

"It's a catch-22 situation. What can the government do?" asked Avinash Jadhav, managing trustee of Oxford International School, Kandivali. The

school recently got flak for removing students from WhatsApp groups for online learning following non-payment of previous year's fees. They reversed the action after intervention of education officials.

Jadhav said his school has taken a loan to meet the salary expenses. "Salaries account for 80 per cent of our expenses. It's a humanitarian crisis and we are all in the same boat. We need a consensus. Those who can pay should pay," he said.

Schools say parents were seeking unreasonably high discounts. They also pointed out that even those who have not been impacted by lockdown are resisting paying school fee. "Are you telling me 75 per cent parents have no money? In which other areas have discounts been offered? Has the GST been slashed? Has the income tax been reduced? And at some point, jobs will come back, and businesses will restart. But parents want discounts for the whole year. This clamour is unreasonable," said the principal of a Malad school. Also, he asked, if anyone has heard of parents haggling over payment to private tuition classes.



TRUPTI AMRITWAR VAITLA

BY INVITATION

Write to her at mirrorfeedback@timesgroup.com

As BEST one can

The Brihanmumbai Electricity Supply and Transport of BEST as it is best called, has always rescued Mumbai residents come rain, come shine. And it has stayed true to its reputation during the coronavirus pandemic, too. With the country under a strict lockdown and most public transport services completely shut, BEST buses were the only alternative for more than 80 per cent non-government staff engaged in essential services.

Now, as the city that is always on the run gears up for the new normal replete with social-distancing norms, BEST needs to play to its full advantage.

With restrictions on crowd-carrying capacity, the biggest challenge for trains and the Metro in a city like Mumbai would be managing high density. But in BEST buses, the crowd can be easily managed by the bus conductor. While normally buses seat around 40 people, the new rules allow only 50 per cent capacity. This is a manageable scale. This makes buses the better public transport alternative for adhering to social distancing.

We all know the Covid-19 situation will last a few months, if not years. So, how can we leverage this opportunity and make BEST more efficient and accessible?

Capacity Today, only 2,200 BEST buses are plying. And this number is not adequate considering our current need, especially due to social distancing. We need to urgently double the number by mobilising at least 2,000 of the over 5,000 school buses currently sitting idle. To reduce the lead time to scale up, their drivers and conductors can be roped in, too.

Affordability Currently, BEST tickets are available for Re 1/km, which is in the same price slab as that of the suburban trains. If the government provides more attractive passes, then BEST, which is already an affordable transport, will certainly attract more commuters.

Priority Lanes BEST buses have been providing feeder services to and from railway stations. But during lockdown, in the absence of local trains, BEST had to even



provide long-distance service from Virar, Nallasopara, Badalapur, Kalyan, Panvel. This was feasible because there were fewer private vehicles on the road and larger road space was available for buses to maintain adequate speed.

Thus, to strengthen the BEST bus service as an important and safer public transport for both feeder and long-distance routes, it is necessary to create bus priority lanes on all main arteries to increase their efficiency, speed, frequency and predictability. Although private offices are currently allowed to work only at 10 per cent capacity, it will not be too long before they start working at a higher strength and private vehicles will again start choking roads. **Odd-even scheme** As corporates have tried and tested working from home, they are now also experimenting with flexible timings, which will help reduce crowding and peak hour load, and the transport efficiency of the city can be increased further. To optimise it even more, the odd/even scheme for all private vehicles can also be considered.

Marketing The BEST also needs to effectively advertise its new routes on TV, radio, print and digital media to disseminate information to commuters.

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The writer is an architect and urban designer, and heads the Mumbai Environmental and Social Network



Delhi violence: HC asks police to file status report on Safoora Zargar's bail plea in UAPA case

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20 SOLDIERS KILLED BY CHINESE TROOPS

'BOYCOTT CHINA' GAINS TRACTION

Indian Army quashes reports of soldiers being held captive by the Chinese side; talks remain inconclusive

#NEW DELHI

The clamour to boycott China-made products grew in the country following the killing of 20 Indian Army personnel by Chinese troops in a violent face-off in Ladakh's Galwan Valley, with two Union ministers on Thursday urging people not to buy Chinese products.

In a hardening of stance, sources said the government has decided to ask state-owned Bharat Sanchar Nigam Ltd (BSNL) not to use Chinese telecom gear in its 4G upgradation, which is being supported as part of the company's revival package, while traders' body CAIT appealed to celebrities, including Bollywood actors, to stop endorsing products of Chinese brands as a mark of respect for the slain Indian soldiers.

Twenty Indian Army personnel, including a colonel, were killed in a fierce clash with Chinese troops in the Galwan Valley in eastern Ladakh on Monday night, the biggest military confrontation between India and China in over five decades. Union minister Ram Vilas Paswan appealed to people to boycott products from China while his colleague Ramdas Athawale said all restaurants and hotels that sell Chinese food in India should be closed down.

Union Minister Nitin Gadkari said India should no longer depend on China and instead focus on research and innovation to ramp up domestic manufacturing.

The Confederation of All India Traders (CAIT), in an open letter, has appealed to Aamir Khan, Deepika Padukone, Katrina Kaif, Virat Kohli and others to stop endorsing Chinese products.

Day 2 of talks: Still no headway

The high-level talks between India and China lasted for more than six hours on Thursday but remained inconclusive, sources said.

Sources also said that all Indian Army personnel who were involved in Galwan valley violent face-off on June 15-16 are accounted for and no



A SOLDIER LAID TO REST Thousands joined Colonel Santosh Babu's wife and four-year-old son as they performed his last rites in Telangana on Thursday

soldier is missing in action.

Indian intercepts have revealed that the Chinese side suffered 43 casualties including dead and seriously injured in the violent clash. The commanding officer of the Chinese unit is among those killed, sources confirmed to ANI.

India has also asked China to confine its activities to its side of the LAC, and trashed as "exaggerated" and "untenable" the Chinese Army's claim of sovereignty over Galwan Valley.

India is strongly committed to ensuring the country's sovereignty and territorial integrity though it is committed to finding resolution of the differences through dialogue. External Affairs Ministry Spokesperson Anurag Srivastava said at a media briefing.

"Given its responsible approach to border management, India is very clear that all its activities are always within the Indian side of the Line of Actual Control (LAC). We expect the Chinese side to also confine its activities to its side of the LAC," Srivastava said.

Earlier, in a separate statement he rejected Chinese army's claim of sovereignty over the Galwan Valley saying such "exaggerated" and "untenable" claims are contrary to the understanding reached during a high-level military dialogue on June 6.

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Wednesday had told his Chinese counterpart that what happened in Galwan was a "pre-mediated and planned activity".

AGENCIES

Rlys to cancel contract with Chinese firm

The Railways has decided to terminate a contract worth Rs 471 crore awarded to Beijing National Railway Research and Design Institute of Signal and Communication Group in 2016 due to "poor progress" in the signalling and telecommunication work on the Kanpur-Mughalsarai section.

They were supposed to complete the work by 2019, but only 20 per cent of the work has been completed so far, the Railways said.

Though the move comes amid calls to boycott China in the aftermath of the Ladakh faceoff, officials maintained that it was the firm's poor performance and inability to deliver the project on time that led to the decision.

CHINESE FEUD

India should boycott all products that are made in China. Chinese food and all restaurants and hotels that sell Chinese food in India should be closed down

—Ramdas Athawale



India elected to UN Security Council with overwhelming majority

184 of the 192 votes were in favour; India the only candidate from Asia-Pacific

Sweta Dutta
 @timesgroup.com

#NEW DELHI

India on Wednesday consolidated its position on the global platform by garnering 184 of 192 votes to become a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council for the term 2021-2022. While India was elected unopposed as the sole candidate for the Asia-Pacific seat, Mexico, Norway, Ireland and Canada won from their respective regions.

India's eighth term on the 15-member Council begins on January 1, 2021 for a period of two years. The Ministry of External Affairs thanked the government of Afghanistan that had withdrawn its candidature in favour of India in 2013 for the sole position from Asia-Pacific.

Several countries including permanent members of the Council – Russia, United States, United Kingdom and France – congratulated India on being elected with a thumping

majority. While a country is expected to poll two-third votes, that is 128 votes, India managed an almost unanimous victory. Asked about the countries that might not have voted for India, Secretary (West), Ministry of External Affairs said he 'would rather focus on those who voted for us.'

"This shows the goodwill that India enjoys in the UN and the confidence that the international community has reposed in India's capability to contribute to the work of the Council... We look forward to being a voice for all those who are not represented in the Council. We will act as a voice of reason and moderation and a firm believer in respect for international law and peaceful settlement of disputes," Swarup told reporters on Thursday.

Swarup said that India's work in the Council will be guided by Prime Minister Narendra Modi's call for a 'Reformed Multilateralism' and dynamic 5-S vision for foreign policy,

namely – Samman (Respect), Samvad (Dialogue), Sahyog (Cooperation), and Shanti (Peace); to create conditions for universal Samridhi (Prosperity). "Through this approach, we seek to move toward a 'New Orientation for a Reformed Multilateral System', - in short, NORMS."

Though India was poised to win the elections on an uncontested seat, the government had begun lobbying well in advance at various diplomatic levels.

Previously, India served as a non-permanent member of the Council for the years 1950-1951, 1967-1968, 1972-1973, 1977-1978, 1984-1985, 1991-1992 and 2011-2012.

"Deeply grateful for the overwhelming support shown by the global community for India's membership of the UN Security Council. India will work with all member countries to promote global peace, security, resilience and equity," PM Modi tweeted soon after the election.

Nepal's Parliament clears new map bill

Upper house votes unanimously to incorporate 3 Indian areas: Lipulekh, Kalapani, Limpiyadhura

#KATHMANDU

Nepal's Parliament on Thursday amended its Constitution to update its new political map, which incorporated three strategically important Indian areas, despite Delhi's strong protest.

All 57 members of the National Assembly voted in favour of the bill.

President Bidya Devi Bhandari later "authenticated the bill stepping on the Article 274(10) of the Constitution... The process of implementation of the new map is officially completed," said *The Himalayan Times*.

The map will be used on all official documents, including the coat of arms.

India has already termed as "untenable" the "artificial enlargement" of the territorial claims by Nepal after its lower house on June 13 unanimously approved the new map featuring Lipulekh, Kalapani and Limpiyadhura areas, which India maintains belong to it.

Nepalese PM KP Sharma Oli has been asserting that Lipulekh, Kalapani and Limpiyadhura belong to his country and vowed to "reclaim" them from

This artificial enlargement of claims is not based on historical fact or evidence and is untenable

—Anurag Srivastava, ministry of external affairs spokesperson on June 13



India. The country released its revised map last month, laying claim over the strategically important areas, more than six months after India published a new map in November 2019.

The India-Nepal bilateral ties came under strain after Defence Minister Rajnath Singh inaugurated an 80-km road connecting the Lipulekh pass with Dharchula in Uttarakhand on May 8. Nepal claimed the road passed through its territory. India has rejected this claim.

PTI

Fitch lowers India's outlook to negative

The international agency had last reduced nation's rating from stable in 2012

#NEWDELHI

Fitch Ratings on Thursday lowered India's outlook to negative from stable for the first time in eight years, saying the coronavirus pandemic had significantly weakened the country's growth outlook for the year and exposed the challenges associated with a high public-debt burden.

The international rating agency, however, retained India's rating at 'BB-', which is the lowest investment grade and a notch above junk, and said that there are considerable risks to growth.

Fitch expects economic activity to contract by 9.5 per cent in the fiscal year ending March 2021 (FY21) from the strict lockdown measures imposed since March 25, before rebounding by 9.5 per cent in 2021-22.

The coronavirus pandemic has significantly weakened India's growth outlook for this year and exposed the challenges associated with a high public-debt burden. The rebound will mainly be driven by a low-base effect," it said, while revising the outlook on India's long-term foreign-currency issuer default rating (IDR) to negative from stable.

Fitch had last in 2012 cut India's outlook to negative, from stable. In 2013, the agency had again upped the outlook to stable.

It projected general government debt to jump to 84.5 percent of the gross domestic product (GDP) in FY21 from an estimated 71 percent of GDP in FY20.



Fitch expects India's economic activity to contract by 5% in FY21 due to strict lockdown measures imposed since March 25, before rebounding in 2021-22

Fitch said the geopolitical risk related to longstanding border issues with India's neighbours was heightened again by recently intensified tensions with China.

Relations with Pakistan are, moreover, negatively affected by the repeal of the special status for Kashmir and recent changes to the status of illegal immigrants based on their religion.

"A stronger focus by the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) on its Hindu-nationalist agenda since the government's re-election in May 2019 risks becoming a distraction for economic reform implementation and could further raise social tensions," Fitch added.

The rating agency said the government has announced structural reforms as part of its response to the pandemic to strengthen GDP growth over the medium term, which, if successful, could improve India's fiscal position.

The reforms to improve the efficiency of agricultural supply chains could help reduce food prices and swings in inflation, while intention to privatise state-owned enterprises (SOE) could prove to be transformative, it added.

Fitch, however, said its growth forecasts are subject to considerable risks due to the continued acceleration in the number of new COVID-19 cases as the lockdown is eased gradually.

"It remains to be seen whether India can return to sustained growth rates of 6 to 7 percent as we previously estimated, depending on the lasting impact of the pandemic, particularly in the financial sector," Fitch said.

Fitch's rating action comes after another rating agency Moody's earlier this month downgraded India's sovereign rating by a notch to lowest investment grade of 'BAA2' for the first time in 22 years. PTI

Six elephants dead in C'garh within 10 days

#RAIGARH

A wild elephant was found dead at a village in Chhattisgarh's Raigarh district on Thursday, an official said.

This is the sixth death of an elephant in the state in the last 10 days.

On Thursday morning, the carcass of a tusker was spotted behind a house in Behramar village under Chhail forest range of Raigarh, Divisional Forest Officer, Dharanajagarh division, Pranya Pandey said.

Forest personnel rushed to the spot after being alerted by the villager behind whose house the carcass was found, she said. The cause of death will be known after the postmortem, Pandey said adding an investigation is underway.

On Tuesday, an elephant died after coming in contact with a live electric wire at a farm in a village of Dharanajagarh forest division of Raigarh. Five people, including three staff members of the state power company, were later arrested in connection with the death.

In another incident on Tuesday, an elephant calf died after being stuck in a marshland in Dhamatari district.

Last week, carcasses of two elephants were recovered from the Patalpur forest range of Surajpur district on June 9 and 10, while another jumbo was found dead in its neighbouring Balrampur district on June 11. PTI

PM launches auction of 41 coal blocks for commercial mining

Move is part of govt's 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' measures for economic recovery

#NEWDELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday launched the auction process for 41 coal blocks for commercial mining, a move that opens India's coal sector for private players, and termed it a major step in the direction of India achieving self-reliance.

Launching the auction of mines for commercial mining, that is expected to garner Rs 33,000 crore of capital investment in the country over next five to seven years, the PM will win the coronavirus war and turn this crisis into an opportunity, and the pandemic will make India self-reliant.

The launch of the auction process not only marks the beginning of unlocking of the country's coal sector from the "lockdown of decades", but aims at making India the largest exporter of coal, he said.

Presently, despite being the world's fourth largest producer, he said India is the second largest importer of the dry-fuel. "Allowing private sector in commercial coal mining is unlocking resources of a nation with the world's fourth-largest reserves," he pointed out.



Modi addresses the e-auction event for coal mines via video conferencing

Major scams had taken place in coal action earlier, but the system has been made "transparent" now, PM said lambasting past policies of keeping the sector closed.

The PM said that this auction process will result in major revenues states and create employment besides developing the far-flung areas.

The commencement of auction process of these blocks, part of the series of announcements made under

SC refuses to allow Rath Yatra in Puri due to coronavirus

Lord Jagannath won't forgive us if we allow it, says top court as it directs Odisha to avoid the 10-day festival

#NEWDELHI

The Supreme Court Thursday stayed this year's Puri Rath Yatra, which is attended by lakhs of people from across the world and was to start from June 23, due to the COVID-19 pandemic and said "Lord Jagannath won't forgive us if we allow it".

A bench of Chief Justice S A Bobde and Justices Dinesh Maheshwaran and A S Bopanna said that in the interest of public health and safety of citizens, this year's Rath Yatra at Puri in Odisha can't be allowed.

"Lord Jagannath won't forgive us if we allow this year's Rath Yatra to go on," CJ Bobde said, adding that such a huge gathering can't take place during the pandemic.

The bench asked the Odisha government not to allow the yatra or pilgrimage procession and the related activities anywhere in the state to avoid the spread of COVID-19.

While the Rath Yatra festival, held over 10-12 days with lakhs of people participating, was scheduled for June 23, the 'Bahuda Jatra' (return car festival) was fixed for July 1.

Three heavily-built wooden chariots of Lord Jagannath, Lord Balabhadra and Devi Subhadra are traditionally pulled by thousands of devotees over a distance of three kilometres twice during the nine-day festival of the Trinity at Puri.

A counsel appearing for an intervenor said the Odisha government has issued a notification that there shall be no public gathering till June 30. However,

India's Covid-19 fatality rate up from 2.8 to 3.3%

In the last two days, India's COVID-19 fatality rate has risen from 2.8 to 3.3 per cent now. A record single-day jump of 12,881 COVID-19 cases took India's tally to 3,66,946 on Thursday, while the death toll climbed to 2,257 with 334 new fatalities. From June 1 till

18, the country saw a surge of 176,411 coronavirus infections. The country had recorded a massive spike of 2,003 deaths on Wednesday following a data reconciliation exercise carried out by states which brought to the fore large number of fatalities previously reported and not attributed to the disease. The number of active cases as on Thursday stands at 1,60,384, while 1,94,324 people have recovered and one patient has migrated.

the bench said that it is staying the festival starting from June 23. The top court's order came on a PIL filed by the Odisha-based NGO seeking cancellation or postponement of this year's Rath Yatra.

The top court noted in its order that it is not disputed that the number of people, likely to gather for the annual Rath Yatra scheduled to be held from June 23, 2020, is going to be about 10 to 12 lakhs and the festivities normally continue for a period of 10 to 12 days. PTI

Cong to move no-confidence motion against BJP in Manipur

#IMPHAL

In a fast-paced political development in Manipur following the resignation of nine members of the BJP-led coalition, including four ministers, Congress legislative party leader O Ibohi Singh said his party is trying to form a government and will soon move a no-confidence motion against the N Biren Singh dispensation.

Addressing a press conference late Wednesday, Ibohi Singh said three BJP MLAs who resigned from the assembly and the party have joined the Congress. The four ministers claimed they quit because the government was not treating them and their party well.

Ibohi Singh, a former chief minister, said his party will move a no-confidence motion against the state government and he will approach Speaker Yumnam Khemchand Singh to convene a special session of the assembly at the earliest.

The rest who withdrew support are an MLA from Trinamool Congress and one Independent.

The total strength against the chief minister is now 29 — 20 from Congress, 4 from NPP, 3 from BJP (who quit on Wednesday), one from TMC and an Independent.

PTI



HEALTH TIP: Guavas are an excellent source of dietary fibre and benefit the digestive system



Lychees contain healthy minerals such as potassium and copper and help protect against heart diseases



ASK THE SEXPERT

DR MAHINDER WATSA

1 I am a 19-year-old woman and I have been sexually active with my boyfriend. We use a condom every time we have sex and we've never had any accidents. But last month, my period was delayed by about 10 days. Is there a reason to be worried? Should I get a pregnancy test to confirm? Since you have got your period, it does not seem likely that you are pregnant. A delay could be stress related.

2 I am a 25-year-old woman and I enjoy masturbation a lot. I generally do it in the bathroom after my roommate goes to sleep. But recently, she woke up and walked in on me while I was masturbating. It was an awkward exchange and I got up instantly. Before I could explain myself, she comforted me, saying it was a natural thing to do. She even offered to help me masturbate, which I enjoyed immensely. I want to know if there are any precautions one must take when one is being digitally penetrated, apart from having short nails and clean hands.

Yes, hygiene is most important but before any other advice, continuing to enjoy your roommate's help in masturbating can lead to unnecessary complications. Please keep this in mind.

3 I am 19 years old and my penis is two-inches-long. I want to know till what age does the penis grow and are there natural ways to increase the size of the penis. I've learnt that if one masturbates daily, it helps in increasing the size of the penis over time. Is this true?

The penis grows till adolescence. In your case the penis won't grow anymore as you are already 19. Massage and masturbation may increase the fat but not the length. There are no natural ways to increase the length of the penis.

SEND YOUR QUERIES TO
 Ask the Sexpert, Mumbai Mirror,
 Times Of India Building, Dr D N Road,
 Mumbai 400001 or email at:
drwatsa@timesgroup.com.
 Contact Dr Watsa, send an email to
mewatsa@hotmail.com

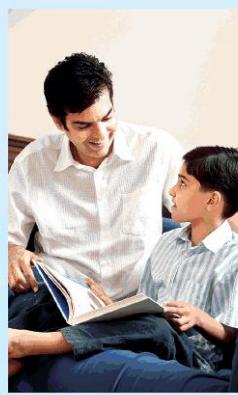
Always on the edge?

In a new book, leading child psychiatrist Dr Amit Sen tells Amrita Tripathi why some children are prone to attention, emotional and social issues

Which are the most common stressors when it comes to child and adolescent mental health?

Dr Amit Sen: I think in India, one stressor that runs across all of childhood and adolescence is academics — education or the way education is viewed in our country. Schooling starts very early and a lot of our kids are not ready neuro-developmentally to engage with it in the way they are expected to by schools, by teachers, parents.

A lot of these kids spend large amounts of their time trying to learn things, which perhaps they're not ready for; at the expense of play time, building bonds, relationships, just being free and having fun. The pressure and expectations keep rising as kids go from Nursery, KG to primary school. The pressure starts very early, and even when a three-year-old is not able to do what they are expected to by a teacher, alarm bells start ringing. Parents start worrying, and usually start by disciplining or scolding the child. At the end of it, they might really begin to worry about the future of their children and take them to specialists and so on. The system is to blame. In our country, we start with academic learning way too early, and a large part of expectations is driven by rote-learning. There is hardly any flexibility and we see this right across primary school; as they get into secondary, middle and senior school, the expectations get higher. The manifestations of that pressure are not seen so much in primary school, though sometimes they are. We do sometimes see children for anxiety and behaviour disturbances only due to academic pressure in primary school. But more often than not, they keep piling up and it's like a dam



I often find that parents believe once children have become teenagers, they have grown up and don't need parental supervision anymore

bursting when they reach adolescence. That's when you begin to see depression and anxiety and a range of other issues, like substance misuse, so-called oppositional defiant disordered behaviours. So it's a relentless and eroding, oppressive system that we put our children through.

What are the things you wish all parents would know when it comes to this age group?

Dr Amit Sen: One of the things I often find parents do is that they believe once children have become teenagers, they have grown up and don't need parental supervision anymore. For instance, when we do a parenting workshop in junior school, there's an impressive turnout, but when we do it in senior or middle school hardly any parents turn up. It's like they've given up on their kids or they don't think it's important anymore, this whole business of parenting, building relationships, guiding them through their teenage years as they grow into adults. And that is one of the most vulnerable periods, and I don't think parents give it that importance. They don't invest in it. And sometimes because kids show some independence and some

rebellion perhaps, and don't want parents to get into their personal or social spaces, they back off.

Again, if you look at the trajectory of parents and their careers, for instance, when children become teenagers, they're in their mid-40s or close to 50 perhaps, and that's also the time when their careers

are taking off, you know, there are big decisions to be made for the family, their own parents are getting older and so on. So for various reasons, I think they tend to disengage from young teenaged children, and that can often lead these kids astray, for want of a better word. Because there are so many opportunities now, it's not just the neighbourhood, it's the big wide social media world, that can be so exploitative.

What are some of the common issues that are present in a younger age group?

Dr Amit Sen: If you look at the younger population, the reason they come to us are for two predominant things: one could be because they are not performing academically, from an early age. They're not learning their letters and numbers and so on, and the school is flagging it up, and parents get worried and come to us. This population will fall in the spectrum of neurodevelopmental disorders — including autism, ADHD, learning disabilities — and we see a lot of that. Invariably, when kids have neurodevelopmental difficulties, they also tend to have emotional and social difficulties, because they're not able to adapt to social situations and schools, or live up to the expectations of schools and parents, and therefore the interplay and interaction between the child's wiring and the environment is often fraught with a lot of stress and anxiety, so they end up having emotional and behavioural difficulties, almost invariably — which is why they come to us in the first place. The core issue is neurodevelopmental there. This is the majority of kids we see in the younger age group.

Extracted from Young Mental Health. Published by Simon & Schuster India



INTERVIEW



RONNIE SCREWVALA, PRODUCER

'Don't see theatres opening till October'

Ronnie Screwvala, who has 12 films in pipeline, predicts cinema halls won't run to full capacity till there's a vaccine; says industry looking at tough 18 months ahead

Himesh.Mankad
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TWEETS @HimeshMirror

Do you think the appetite for films will change in the post-Covid era, with a clear demarcation between the big screen and small screen cinema?

I think it's all about the storytelling and not screen size. At the moment, we're battling the virus and 18 months away from the post-Covid era. For the next year or year-and-a-half, people will be wary of risking their health for a cinematic experience. But films will not go away and neither will theatres. It's a strong window, but things will change and we will have to work 10 times harder on the creative content, storytelling and scale to bring the audience into the cinema halls again.

Does that mean smaller films will find it difficult to get screens?

No, if you have a gem of a story, it's a big film already. People go to theatres because they don't want to wait eight weeks. It has never been cinema v/s OTT as each one augments a market and grows.

When do you expect cinema halls to open and a constant flow of big releases?

Mumbai and Delhi, which account for 65 per cent of the box-office, are the worst-hit cities right now. Until they open up, nobody will want a release in only

Pune, Nagpur and Kampur. Makers of big films will wait to see if people are coming back to the cinemas. I don't see some of them arriving this year. I don't see theatres opening till October and even when they do, they won't run to full capacity until the vaccine arrives. Entertainment will be the last priority for people.

Next year, one will feel the pinch because there will be a drought of releases as few new films will roll for the next six-seven months, so there won't be any more fights for the weekends. There aren't too many films in the waiting, and you will see the gap over the next 18 months.

Do you think this is the right time to renegotiate on ticket rates, VPF (Virtual Print Fee) and other issues with theatre owners?

I have strong views on this, that's why I got into the Competition Commission. Unfortunately, there is no unanimity.

You have backed films like Rang De Basanti, Khoobsurat, Tejas, A Wednesday and Aamir which were way ahead of their time. What gave you

Next year, one will feel the pinch because there will be a drought of releases as few new films will roll for the next six-seven months



A still from Uri: The Surgical Strike

the courage and conviction?

Rang De Basanti was one of the first films we made, it could have been before its time, but it was not. Jodha Akbar was an expensive film, but again it broke the mould. People thought Aamir, A Wednesday and Khoobsurat were small, but they worked big time. Anurag Basu narrated just 40 lines of the Barfi! script to me, look how the film turned out to be. Of all our films, only Swades was before its time, but it was a gem of a film.

Next up: The Immortal Ashwathama with Vicky Kaushal, a fantasy trilogy based on the Mahabharata. Tell us about that...

The way forward for the millennial audience is not in retelling history but in the way it is told. You need to romanticise history, let imagination take flight and put it in the context of the future. Our problem is that we don't think big. I am sick and tired of everyone saying this film earned Rs 100-Rs 200 crore over the last 10 years. They should now cross Rs 500 crore, otherwise there's no reason to make films.

Bahubali showed us the potential of our market. It was a scaled-up film, but at heart, it had a strong story.

The Immortal Ashwathama will reunite you with Uri: The Surgical Strike director Aditya Dhar and lead Vicky Kaushal. Any pressure?

We will have a blast. Aditya has

such clarity of vision and Vicky is a stupendous, versatile actor. And I have the ability to look at things three years from now. The film is in prep now and will roll next year.

You also team up with Kangana Ranaut on Tejas, set against the backdrop of the Indian Air Force.

We wanted to make a film on the army so Uri happened. Tejas is not a sequel to Uri, because that was a true story and this isn't. But it is on the same lines and on the same scale.



Of all our films, only Swades was before its time, but it was a gem of a film

Will Taapsee Pannu's sports drama, Rashmi Rocket, lose money due to the delay in production?

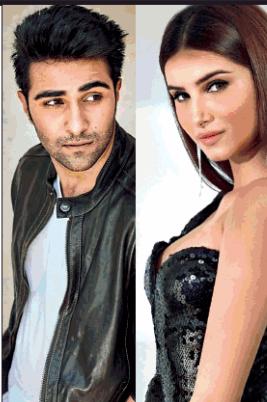
Prep cost is never a waste, we will be more ready when we start. Safety is the priority now.

Abhishek Chaubey is writing the biopic on hockey legend Dhyan Chand...

(Cuts in) We have 12 films in planning right now, we'll discuss them at the right time.

Any change in your outlook as a producer in the post-Covid era?

I will be more aggressive now.



Tara, Aadar's puppy love

Mumbai Mirror Bureau
mirrorfeedback@timesgroup.com

TWEETS @MumbaiMirror

Whoever said diamonds are a woman's best friend, sure didn't know about dogs. And Tara Sutaria will vouch for this. With rules of the lockdown relaxed since the last few weeks, the actress brought home an adorable five-month-old Beagle over the weekend and couldn't stop fussing over the puppy.

While twin sister Pia welcomed the pooch home, announcing, "I love you way too much already," actor-beau Aadar Jain took on the christening duties and named the little furby Bailey. Happy with his pick, Tara blew him emoji kisses, asserting,

"Whoever named her knows what he's doing." The actress who, when asked about their relationship, had said, "Well, we really enjoy each other's company," now has yet another reason to bond with him, apart from their shared love for food.

Aadar's sister-in-law Anissa Malhotra, who married his brother, Armaan, in February, went "Yayyyyyy" on the post and Tara immediately replied, "Cannot wait for you to meet her." Guess introducing a new member to the clan could be a good reason for a reunion of the Kapoor and Jain khandans after the star-studded wedding.

Unwind

03) THINGS TO DO TODAY

01 Whip up a Japanese meal

Cooking enthusiasts, take note. There is more to Japanese cuisine than sushi. Learn how to cook an authentic and easy Japanese one-bowl meal at this virtual workshop. Conducted by Rakhee Vaswani, you will learn to cook three elements — Chicken Katsu, Katsu and sticky rice. Surprise your loved ones with a bowl of tasty Japanese meal. 3 pm. Entry: Rs 1,200. Visit: www.insider.in



02 Pick between two comedy shows



THIRTY SOMETHING

While age might just be a number, sometimes it can be tricky to handle as well. At *Thirty Something*, comics who are

30 and older share their life experiences — the good, bad and ugly of turning one step closer to middle age. The show will feature comics

Jeeya Sethi, Pratyasha Rana, Leroy Mathew, Trupti Khamkar and Pavitra Shetty. 9 pm. Entry: Rs 250. Visit: www.bookmyshow.com

CHUDAIL KE CHUTKULE

The popular saying goes: 'Laughter is the best medicine'. It might not help in curing the world in the literal sense, but it does spread positivity and helps to ease our stress a bit. Enter the ladies of *Chudail Ke Chutkule*, a comedy series being held online, where women comics take on weekly news and trending topics. Expect a lot of hilarity and 'unsolicited opinions' from them, which is sure to make you



chuckle. The show is hosted by popular comics Sumukhi Suresh and Sumaira Shaikh, and they will be joined by fellow comedians

urbhi Bagga and Aishwarya Mohanraj for tonight's edition. 9 pm. Entry: Rs 299. Visit: www.insider.in

03 Listen to heartwarming tales

June is celebrated as 'Pride Month'. And to celebrate love in all forms, House of Stories is organising an event focusing on LGBTQIA+ along

with some poetry and music to lift up your mood during these testing times. The proceeds from this virtual event will be distributed among the performers and to Sahodari Foundation, an organisation which works with transgender people.

7 pm. Entry: Rs 299. Visit: www.insider.in



To feature an event on this page, send the details and photographs to **Vijayeta Basu** on mirrorfeatures@timesgroup.com

The inside view

A new BBC documentary looks at how *Mumbai Mirror* and *Courier Journal* are reporting the Covid outbreak

NINA ROBINSON



A new BBC documentary, set to air this Sunday, will be focusing on two newsrooms — *Mumbai Mirror* and *Courier Journal* in Louisville, Kentucky, USA — and how they are covering the pandemic. In *The Weekend Documentary: Reporting Covid-19*, BBC World Service's Nina Robinson talks to Indian and American journalists and editors to break down how Covid-19 has impacted people in their cities as well as how stories are being reported and executed, despite the risk of catching the virus and the travel constraints due to the lockdown.

The newsrooms will also share how they are bringing out their

editions from home as they break stories about the biggest health care crisis of recent times, which has hit the underprivileged and sections of the minorities the hardest and left emergency systems exposed.

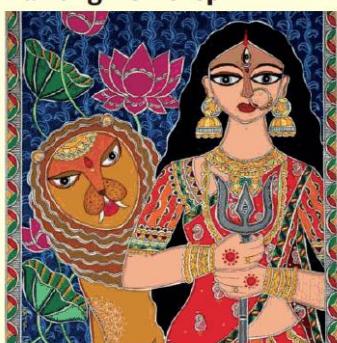
ALSO: This isn't the first time BBC has featured *Mumbai Mirror*. Last year, Nina Robinson, along with Rumella Dasgupta, presented a 'fly-on-the-wall' radio documentary on how the newspaper covered the 2019 general elections, which is also available on their website. The documentary will air on June 21, 7.30 am on www.bbeworldservice.com. It will be available on the website after it airs for later viewing.

CHECK OUT

WHERE: Tata Theatre, NCPA

Madhubani Painting Workshop

Madhubani art is a folk art that originates from the Mithila region of Bihar, which incorporates many symbols from Indian mythology. While it was traditionally done on mud walls and floors of huts, it is now practised on cloth, handmade paper and canvas. At this online workshop, folk artist Soma Chakraborty will teach you how to create Bharni Madhubani painting. The requirements for this class are A4 sheet, pencil, eraser, ruler, black fine tip pen, acrylic/poster colours and paint brushes. June 20 and 21, 11 am to 1 pm. Entry: Rs 1,200. Visit: www.insider.in



COMICS | Ferd'nand



Frank and earnest by bob thaves



Bizarro by Dan Piraro



Jumpstart



Pearls before swine by Stephan Pastis



Redeye by Mel Casson



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SIGN POST | Shirley Bose



If it's your birthday today

An important relationship needs constant nurturing, plus emotional and verbal tenderness to keep it strong and mutually satisfying. There may be a short holiday towards the end of the year. Singles enter the marriage dasha. Continue being focused on career/business to maintain however slight, a forward movement. Travel for work/business begins after December. Try to eat only home cooked meals as far as possible.



Capricorn



Pursue your dreams. You may be surprised where they lead you finally over time. Be appreciative about how you don't get stressed when you've spent more than budgeted for. Colours: watermelon/beige.

Taurus



Clearing clutter regularly makes you feel lighter and more energetic. Be assertive but non-aggressive. Be appreciative about some new work that comes in without you actively seeking it. Colours: peach/grey.

Virgo



Gratefully release the outcome when you set a goal. It manifests quicker than. Be appreciative about how you manage to get your regular eight hours of sleep every night. Colours: brown/black.

Aquarius



Keep lines of communication open with someone you love to avoid misunderstandings. Be appreciative about how you can focus on situations which are directly under your control, maintaining a balance. Colours: aquamarine/cream.

Gemini



Being so busy feels good, but you'd wish there was more time for you too. Health is good. Be appreciative about how friends are interactive and loving. Colours: pink/black.

Libra



Acknowledging the difference people make in your life is a liberating experience. There is immense gratitude for help received. Be appreciative when someone close to you reveals emotional vulnerability. Colours: white/violet.

Pisces



Have faith that you are headed in the right direction in an ongoing relationship. Be appreciative about how delegated work gets done without you checking with the person repeatedly. Colours: black/grey.

Cancer



Be happy with information received. Sometimes too much information creates a problem. Do get enough sleep. Be appreciative about having such a wonderful spouse/partner you can depend on. Colours: green/grey.

Scorpio



Try to avoid obsessing about situations over which you have no control. A hurdle is overcome through sheer hard work. Be appreciative about supportive and loving people around you. Colours: teal/black.

Aries



Many added responsibilities need extra focused attention to complete them in time. Someone gives advice which is not applicable in your circumstances. Be appreciative about time spent with family. Colours: mauve/purple.

Leo



Avoid living in the past, especially since that situation is no longer important. Dealing with the boss is easier. Be appreciative about how honest someone is about a personal situation. Colours: brown/gold.

Sagittarius



Do count your blessings every day as a grateful heart attracts more positivity in life in most ways. Be appreciative about having completed a project much before the deadline. Colours: peach/red.

KIDZONE

Ayaan Kulkarni, 10 years, Kharhara, Navi Mumbai



Mumbai Mirror, Times of India Bldg, Dr D N Road, Mumbai - 1 or email us at kidzone@timesgroup.com

Please send hard copies of your artwork in A4 size only.

WHATZIT

Find the familiar phrase, saying or name in this arrangement of letters.

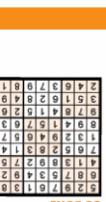
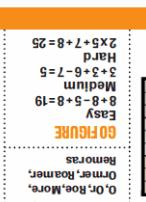
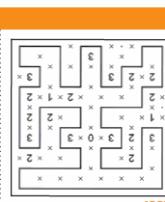


SOLUTION:



LINEMARO

Hey! Do you fancy grabbing a coffee with me? Because I really like you a latte!



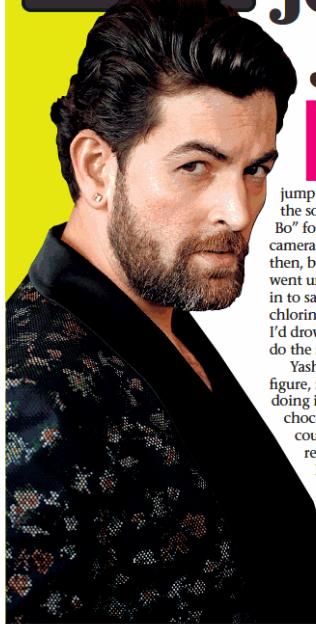
PILGRIM

gritlimp

Build Eye

Lambress

FIRST DAY FIRST SHOT



ACTOR NEIL NITIN MUKESH RECOUNTS HIS TIME AS A NEWBIE 'Asked to choose between Johnny Gaddaar and Jaane Tu... Ya Jaane Na'

I'm fortunate to have got two first shots in my career. As a child, I was cast as the young Rishi Kapoor in Yash Chopra's *Vijay*. I had to jump into the hotel pool during the song "Akkad Bakkad Bambe Bo" for my first turn in front of the camera. I didn't know swimming then, but I dove in excitedly and went under. Somebody had to jump in to save me. I swallowed a lot of chlorinated water and was terrified I'd drown. So, when I was called to do the shot again, I refused.

Yash uncle, who was like a father figure, managed to cajole me into doing it. He bought a box of chocolates and sat next to me, counting them. By the time he reached 100, I'd agreed.

Despite the scare, I loved being on the set and realised this was what I wanted to do when I grew up.

I was 21 when I left my job as an assistant director and enrolled for a year of

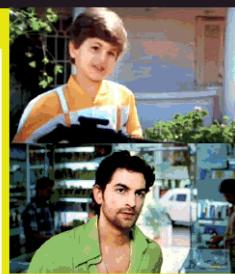
acting classes. At 23, I was knocking on the doors of every producer for work. They all agreed to meet me because of my last name, but held out no hope or promise. One day, I was at an event representing my father, who wasn't in the city, standing by the bar and feeling frustrated, when someone nudged me. He asked if I was Nitin Mukesh's son who was looking for work everywhere. I nodded, thinking here was another person who had come to lecture me, but it was Jhamu Sughand, who invited me to his office the next day.

I reached at 9 am sharp, and he offered me a choice between two films—*Jaane Tu... Ya Jaane Na* (*JTYJN*), which eventually got made with Imran Khan, and *Johnny Gaddaar*. I was on a flight to Delhi later that evening with my mother for my cousin's wedding. When I told her about the offer, she wanted me to opt for *JTYJN* because it was a love story. But I was inclined towards *Johnny Gaddaar*. She read the script to me on the flight and I

was hooked, but she was doubtful because I was just 24 and the film required me to kill five people onscreen. She insisted I read the *JTYJN* script, which I did on reaching Delhi. But my gut instinct told me to go to *Johnny Gaddaar* as it would give me a chance to explore a side to my personality that was drastically different from my upbringing, while *JTYJN* was actually me in real life.

When I went back to Jhamu sir's office, I asked him if I could do both films. He told me I'd have to choose between the two as he wanted to start both the films in the same year. I said "yes" to *Johnny Gaddaar* and he put me on a six-month prep with director Sriram Raghavan, telling me I had to work with him daily.

I met Sriram the same day. He sent me to the set of *Parineeta* where Anurag Kashyap took my audition in front of almost 100 people. Then, started the workshops. I didn't know if I was in the film until Sriram came knocking on my door the night before the shoot. He had a box of



Neil Nitin Mukesh in *Johnny Gaddaar*; as a child artiste in *Vijay* (top)

pedals with him and congratulated me. Till then, I had believed he thought of me as his assistant, but later, I realised it was his way of teaching me the craft.

My first shot required me to go to a chemist shop and ask for a bottle of chloroform. My excuse was that my cat was gravely ill and I needed the chloroform to put him to sleep. The scene comes at a point in the film when the plan has already been put into action. We were in Aram Nagar and the shot was okayed in one take. In fact, the whole shoot went by in a flash. It was my bad luck that Jhamuji suddenly passed away and the film was stuck for almost two years. A lot of people told us no one would go to see a long-delayed film. But we believed in it and once it released, well, the rest is history.

—As told to Akash Bhatnagar

MIRRORTLIGHTS

Clean bowled



While many folks associate rainy mornings with tea and fritters, Virat Kohli curled up with a book. "Couldn't be a better time to start reading something," he mused alongside a pic presumably clicked by actress-wife Anushka Sharma. Bunti Sajdeh pulled a fast one by asking

him to remove the watch since he didn't have anywhere to go, but the skipper shut him up. When David Warner pointed out the grey in his beard, he dismissed it as "wisdom, mate" and returned the compliment to AB de Villiers' "sophisticated". But when Harbhajan quipped, "Reading Grehshobha?", Virat didn't have a comeback. Howzzat!

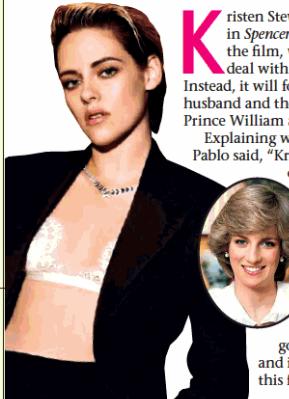
Genius is as genius does



Shraddha Kapoor had a difficult time coming to terms with Sushant Singh Rajput's death. On Thursday, she brought herself to put up a post reminiscing about

all the good times spent with the late actor. Sharing a picture of the book *The Secret Principles of Genius*, that he had gifted her alongwith a heartfelt handwritten note, she recounted how they spent moments filled with magical wonderment about the cosmos and philosophies. "He showed me the moon from his telescope and I was so speechless," she reminisced, adding that the actor was mesmerised by the simplest things and would muse about them in a genius way.

Kristen to play Diana in new film



Kristen Steward is set to play Princess Diana in *Spencer*. Director Pablo Larraín says that the film, which is set in early 1990s, won't deal with Princess Diana's tragic death.

Instead, it will focus on the relationship with her husband and the love she had for their children, Prince William and Prince Harry.

Explaining why he chose K-Stew for the part, Pablo said, "Kristen can be many things, and she can be very mysterious and fragile and ultimately very strong as well, which is what we need. The combination of these elements made me think of her." He added, "The way she responded to the script and how she is approaching the character, it's very beautiful to see. I think she's going to do something stunning and intriguing at the same time. She is this force of nature."

—Agencies

Kristen Wiig welcomes twins



Kristen Wiig, 46, has welcomed twins via surrogacy with her fiancé Avi Rothman, 42.

The *Wonder Woman* 1984 actress, who got engaged to Avi in August 2019 after three years of dating, had hinted at motherhood last month in an episode of *Saturday Night Live* with a tribute to her own mother.

"I don't know if I truly appreciated my mom the first 45 years of my life. But this year I'm feeling especially grateful for her love. I'm so thankful for all the things she's taught me, like preparing me to be a mom myself," Kristen had said.

—Agencies

MGK 'in love' with Megan



Machine Gun Kelly is serious about his new girlfriend Megan Fox and wants the world to know. The 30-year-old rapper wrote on social media that he is "in love" with the *Jennifer's Body* actress, who recently featured in his music video, "Bloody Valentine".

The note was posted while the two were enjoying a romantic dinner comprising Japanese takeout meals eaten in the outdoors at sunset. Though their

faces could not be seen, it was clear that their knees were touching as he had on ripped blue denims while the actress opted for shredded black jeans during the al fresco meal.

Incidentally, MGK and Megan's outing comes days after the latter's ex-husband Brian Austin Green was spotted with model-singer-songwriter Courtney Stodden over the weekend.

—Agencies

