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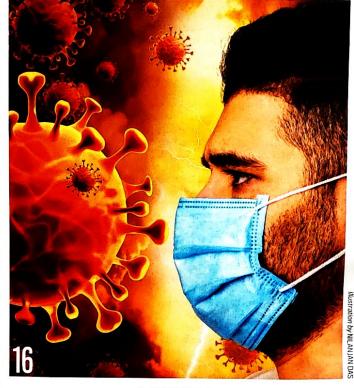
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COVER STORY

HOW TO HANDLE COVID 2.0

New strains, vaccine hesitancy and unfounded public optimism about the retreat of the pandemic have led to surging case numbers. India needs a new combat strategy

MAOISM

20 BASTAR MASSACRE

Lessons from past encounters India's security establishment failed to learn MUKHTAR ANSARI |

46 TIME UP FOR THE DON?

Ansari's transfer to a lail in UP is seen as a win for the Yogi government POLL PACKAGE

- Mamata's strategy BJP in West Bengal
- The missing Gandhis
- · Poll Diary

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DESHMUKH BRIBES SCANDAL

MUMBAI CONFIDENTIAL

By Kiran D. Tare

n April 5, Anil Deshmukh of the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) became the first home minister of Maharashtra to quit on charges of corruption. Deshmukh stepped down after the Bombay High Court ordered a preliminary inquiry by the CBI (Central Bureau of Investigation) into former Mumbai police commissioner Param Bir Singh's allegation that the home minister had given officers of the Mumbai Police a target of collecting

Rs 100 crore per month from some 1,750 bars and restaurants in the city.

The Bombay HC order came in response to a PIL (public interest litigation) filed by lawyer Javashree Patil. She had also filed a complaint against Deshmukh with the Malabar Hill police station on March 21, based on the letter Singh sent chief minister Uddhav Thackeray on March 20. In the letter, written three days after he was shunted out as commissioner on March 17, Singh had also mentioned a text message chat, which he claimed took place on March

16 between him and assistant commissioner of police Sanjay Patil. The chat reportedly went over details of how Deshmukh and his personal assistant Sanjeev Palande had asked Patil and now suspended assistant police inspector Sachin Vaze to collect the amount. In an interview to Lokmat daily on March 18, Deshmukh had said that Singh was removed for leaving "unpardonable gaps in the investigation into the Antilia bomb scare case" (where a Scorpio carrying explosives was found abandoned near the residence of bill-