

OPINION 8
TURNING LIABILITY
TO ASSET**RAM TEMPLE 2&3**
AYODHYA AWAITS
ITS BIG DAY**AVENUES 13**
TIPS TO ACE
CLAT 2020

LUCKNOW, WEDNESDAY AUGUST 5, 2020; PAGES 14 ₹3



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14 SPORT

Surge of elation on bhoomi puja eve

Ayodhya decked up, PM to lay foundation of Ram Mandir at 12.44-12.45 pm

BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■
AYODHYA

The temple town of Ayodhya has been fortified and decked up like never before, painted all over in yellow hue, for the “bhoomi puja” for the construction of Ram Temple at the Ram Janmabhoomi Complex. Prime Minister Narendra Modi will lay the foundation stone on Wednesday.

“The foundation stone function will start at 12.30 pm and the shila (stone) will be laid between 12.44 and 12.45 pm after offering prayers to Lord Ganesha,” Champat Rai, general secretary of the Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust told this reporter.

The PM will lay a 40-kg silver brick to symbolise the start of construction of the Ram Temple that is core to the ruling BJP’s ideology and poll promises. A campaign for the temple marked the rise of the party to the national spotlight in the 1990s.

Rai said that religious functions like different pujas have started. These include Ramarchan Puja, where prayers are held to invite all major gods and goddesses who consider Lord Ram as their Isht (the god of worship). Vedic saints are conducting the prayers facing Ramlala on his temporary seat, Rai said.

A total of 21 priests from Varanasi, Ayodhya, and Prayagraj started the ritual of Bhoomi Puja by organising Gauri Ganesh Puja at the Bhoomi Puja site on the Ram Janmabhoomi premises. Priests are also performing puja at the Hanumangarhi and Ram ki chavni temples and aarti at the

Saryu ghat in the evening.

On Tuesday morning, Ramacharya puja along with dhawaj and Nisan puja of Lord Hanuman were performed at the Hanumangarhi temple. Except for the priests of the temples, none was allowed to attend these pujas due to Covid pandemic.

Pandit Kalikram handed over a green colour dress along with a religious flag to the head priest of the Ram Lalla temple Acharya Satendra Das, which Ram Lalla will wear on Wednesday. Ram Lalla will wear a yellow dress on Thursday.

Pandit Kalikram has been presenting the dresses for the idols for the last two years. He will also light diya at almost all the temples of Ayodhya in the evening of August 5.

The city has been turned into a fortress with barricades put up across the main thoroughfare of Ayodhya - particularly those lanes which connect the city to Ram Janmabhoomi Complex. The jawans of the paramilitary force are deployed around the city. The shops are closed. The road side eateries have downed their shutters, but the local residents are not complaining.

“Our movements have been restricted for two days but we are not complaining. This is an indicator of good things to come. We will have our own Ram Temple after almost five centuries. And for that why will one complain,” Dilip Maurya, who owns Maurya Tea Stall near Ghantaghar, said. There is an air of festivity around Ayodhya. Religious songs or the chanting of Sunderkand wafts through the air as one drives through the empty roads of Ayodhya.

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Devotees light lamps on Deepotsav at Ramghat on the eve of bhoomi puja of the Ram Temple in Ayodhya on Tuesday PTI

SIDELIGHTS



● Iqbal Ansari, a litigant in the temple-mosque dispute, was the first person to be invited

● 1,000 men deployed in Ayodhya to shoo away monkeys at temple site

● UP CM Yogi Adityanath’s official residence fully illuminated on Tuesday

● Silver coin as ‘prasad’ for every guest in Ayodhya

● Coronavirus test certificate compulsory for Ayodhya invitees

● I feel humbled that during the Ram Janmabhoomi movement, destiny made me perform a pivotal duty in the form of the Ram Rath Yatra from Somnath to Ayodhya in 1990, which helped galvanise the aspirations, energies and passions of its countless participants

LK ADVANI

Advani recalls his role in temple movement

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Not invited to attend the Ram Mandir bhoomi puja ceremony in Ayodhya on Wednesday, the architect of the Ram temple movement and veteran BJP leader LK Advani on Tuesday reminisced his role in “galvanise the aspirations, energies and passions of its countless participants of the movement.”

Claiming that it was a historic and emotional day for him and for all Indians, Advani recalled the “pivotal duty” he

performed in carrying out the Ram Rath Yatra from Somnath to Ayodhya in 1990.

A day before Prime Minister Narendra Modi lays the foundation stone for a Ram temple in Ayodhya, Advani said in a statement it is his belief that the Ram Mandir will represent India as a strong, prosperous, peaceful and harmonious nation with justice for all and exclusion of none to truly usher in “Ram Rajya, the epitome of good governance.”

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Foundation stone was laid in 1989; on August 5 just construction will start: VHP

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) president Alok Kumar has claimed the foundation stone for the construction of a grand Ram Temple at the birthplace of Lord Shri Ram was laid way back in 1989, and on August 5 just the construction work will start.

Without taking any names, he said the construction of the temple was embroiled in the hurdles created by various

Modi to stay for 3 hours, to pray at Ram Lalla temple

PNS ■ AYODHYA

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will be in Ayodhya for over 3 hours on Wednesday, and for the first time offer prayers at the Ram Lalla temple and Hanumangarhi after becoming the PM of the country in 2014.

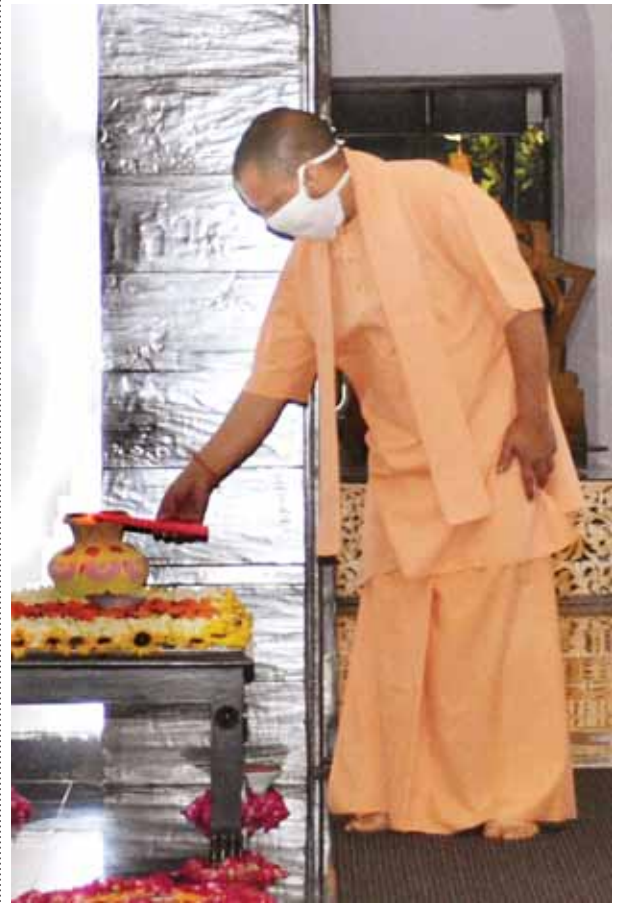
Though Modi had visited erstwhile Faizabad district, now rechristened as Ayodhya by the Yogi Adityanath Government, he never went to these temples to avoid any controversy.

Modi will also be the first Prime Minister to visit Ram Janmabhoomi Complex. Earlier, Jawaharlal Nehru and Indira Gandhi had come to Faizabad but did not offer prayers at RJB Complex.

The PM will fly from New Delhi at 0935 hours on Wednesday morning by a special IAF aircraft and will reach Lucknow at 1035 hrs.

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CM lights diya at official residence



PNS ■ LUCKNOW

A day before bhoomi puja, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath lit diya and burnt firecrackers as a part of Deepotsava ahead of the foundation stone laying ceremony for the construction of Ram temple in Ayodhya.

The 5 Kalidas Marg official residence of the chief minister was lit up with diya and rangolis made of flower petals and colours. The chief minister along with his staff lit diya.

“A day before the foundation stone for the construction of Ram temple will be laid in Ayodhya, the whole of India is elated over the development.

This diya is resplendent with the love and affection of Rambhakts across the country,” Yogi Adityanath wrote in his tweet in which he shared a picture of lighting a diya on Tuesday evening.

The chief minister had earlier asked the people not to come to Ayodhya for the August 5 function and instead light diya at their homes on the evenings of August 4 and 5. The joy was reflected in Ayodhya where people lit 3.51 lakh diya at the bank of the river Saryu on Tuesday evening. People also light diya at their homes while sadhus and mahants light diya at the temples and the muths.

CAPSULE

PAK INCLUDES J&K IN NEW POLITICAL MAP

Islamabad: On the eve of the first anniversary of the revocation of the contentious Article 370 and Article 35A, Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan unveiled a new political map which includes the UT of J&K as part of Pakistan on Tuesday. Khan has decided to present the new political map at the United Nations as well. The Imran Khan cabinet approved the new map in which the complete Jammu & Kashmir, is shown integrated with Pakistan. The illegal map shows J&K as “Indian illegally occupied J&K — disputed territory — final status to be decided in line with relevant UNSC resolutions.” Thereby cocking a snook at the Govt of India.

COURT DISMISSES BAIL IN IB OFFICER MURDER CASE

New Delhi: A Delhi court Tuesday dismissed the bail plea of a man arrested in the case of IB official Ankit Sharma’s murder during the northeast Delhi riots in February, saying he and others had been allegedly “instigated on communal lines” by suspended AAP Councillor Tahir Hussain due to which they were “lying charged to attack all and sundry from the other community”.

CBI probe into Sushant death, proposes Bihar

PTI ■ PATNA/MUMBAI

The Bihar Government on Tuesday recommended a CBI enquiry into actor Sushant Singh Rajput’s death case, Chief Minister Nitish Kumar said, a move contested by Rhea Chakraborty’s lawyer, who insisted the State had no jurisdiction to make such a recommendation.

As Patna and Mumbai Police were locked in a bitter turf war over who had the mandate of law to investigate the sensational death of Rajput, Nitish earlier said his Government will recommend handing over the case to the central probe agency after the actor’s father gave his consent.

KK Singh, Rajput’s father, had on July 25 lodged a police complaint against Chakraborty, a budding actor and his son’s rumoured girlfriend, of abetting his suicide, keeping him in wrongful confinement and defrauding him of crores of rupees.

“The actor’s father spoke to the DGP and gave his consent for a CBI probe. Since he had lodged an FIR with Bihar police, we could not have recommended a CBI enquiry. Now that he has consented, I have asked the DGP to complete all formalities today and the Government will send its recommendation today itself,” Nitish had told journalists.

Rhea Chakraborty’s lawyer Satishmane Shinde, meanwhile, called into question the Bihar government’s decision. “There cannot be transfer of a case which had no legal basis to begin with for the Bihar police to get involved,” he said.

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Aaditya slams ‘dirty politics’, says he has no role in case

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Amid indirect insinuations being made at him by the BJP-led Opposition on issues relating to actor Sushant Singh Rajput’s alleged suicide, Maharashtra’s influential Minister Aaditya Thackeray on Tuesday slammed opponents for indulging in “dirty politics” and “maligning” him and his family, and categorically said he has nothing to do with Sushant’s suicide.

Aaditya’s statement came on a day when Maharashtra’s former Chief Minister and BJP’s Rajya Sabha member Narayan Rane alleged that the actor and his ex-manager Disha Salian were “murdered”. So much so that Rane claimed that Disha was “raped” and “murdered”. He also alleged both the incidents were linked.

Breaking his silence over the allegations linking him to Sushant’s suicide made against him over the past several days by the BJP leaders without naming him, 30-year-old Aaditya, who is the son of Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray, issued a statement in Marathi on his twitter handle, denying his role in matters relating to the actor’s suicide and said his political opponents were desperately indulging in “dirty politics”.

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Amid India-China row, Vivo likely to quit as 2020 IPL title sponsors

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Chinese mobile phone company Vivo is likely to pull out as the IPL’s title sponsor for this year and is in talks with the BCCI for an “amicable separation” amid rising Sino-India diplomatic tensions.

The one year pullout could be treated as a moratorium period and if the relations improve, BCCI may look at inking a fresh three-year deal with the company from 2021 to 2023. The IPL will be held in the UAE from September 19 to November 10 this year.

“Yes, the discussions are on between BCCI office-bearers (president Sourav Ganguly and secretary Jay Shah) with the representatives of the company. There is a possibility that Vivo will not be title sponsors for one year,” a senior BCCI official told PTI.

Chinese sponsorship became a bone of contention after the BCCI declared it would review the deals following the violent clashes between the armies of the two countries.

Trump bans hiring of H1B visa holders, blow to Indians

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

In another huge blow to Indian IT professionals eyeing the US job market, President Donald Trump has signed an executive order asking federal agencies to hire Americans and preventing them from contracting or subcontracting foreign workers, mainly those with H-1B visas.

The move came over a month after the Trump administration on June 23 suspended the H-1B visas along with other types of foreign work visas until the end of 2020 to protect American workers in a crucial election year.

The H-1B visa, most sought-after among Indian IT professionals, is a non-immigrant visa that allows US companies to employ foreign workers in speciality occupations that require theoretical or technical expertise. The technology companies depend on it to hire tens of thousands of employees each year from countries like India and China.

“Today I am signing an executive order to ensure that the federal government lives by a very simple rule, hire American,” Trump told reporters in the Oval Office of the White House on Monday before signing the order against hiring H-1B visa holders for federal contracts.

Trump told reporters that his administration will not tolerate firing of hardworking Americans in the pursuit of cheap foreign labour.

“As we speak, we’re finalising the H-1B regulation so that no American workers are replaced ever again. H-1B should be used for top highly paid talent to create American jobs, not as inexpensive labour



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“As we speak, we’re finalising the H-1B regulation so that no American workers are replaced ever again. H-1B should be used for top highly paid talent to create American jobs, not as inexpensive labour

programmes and destroy American jobs,” said Trump, who was surrounded across the Cabinet Room table with individuals campaigning against job outsourcing.

Prominent among them were Sara Blackwell, founder and president of Florida-based Protect US Workers organisation; Jonathan Hicks, a software engineer in the Tennessee Valley Authority; and Kevin Lynny, founder of Pennsylvania-based US Tech Workers.

The H-1B visa has an annual numerical limit cap of 65,000 visas each fiscal year as mandated by the Congress.

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Covid-19 IN INDIA

TOTAL

CASES: 19,06,613

DEATHS: 39,820

RECOVERED:

12,81,660

ACTIVE: 5,84,684



STATES	TOTAL CASES	DEATHS	RECOVERED
Maharashtra	4,57,956	16,142	2,99,356
Tamil Nadu	2,68,285	4,349	2,08,784
Andhra Pradesh	1,76,333	1,604	95,625
Karnataka	1,45,830	2,704	69,272
Delhi	1,39,156	4,033	1,25,226
Uttar Pradesh	1,00,310	1,817	57,271
West Bengal	80,984	1,785	56,884
Telangana	68,946	563	49,675
Gujarat	65,704	2,529	48,561
Bihar	62,031	349	40,760
Assam	48,162	115	33,429
Rajasthan	46,679	731	32,832
Haryana	37,796	448	31,226
Odisha	37,681	258	24,483
Madhya Pradesh	35,082	912	25,414
Kerala	27,956	88	16,299

611 positive cases reported from city

LUCKNOW: The spike continued as 611 persons tested positive for coronavirus on Tuesday, while there were eight deaths across the city. Besides, 315 patients were discharged, taking the total number of such persons to 5,043. With eight deaths, the city toll reached 124 while the total active cases are 4,638. A senior official at the CMO office said those who tested positive in the city included 25 from Talkatora, 24 from Mahanagar, 23 from Thakurganj, 21 from Cantt, 20 each from Gomti Nagar & Bazaarkhala, 19 each from Ashiyana & Alambagh, 18 from Indiranagar, 17 each from Rae Bareilly road & Chowk, 15 from Hazratganj, nine each from Naka, Saadatganj & Jankipuram, eight each from Chinhat, Sarojinagar & Krishnanagar, seven each from Aliganj, Vikasnagar & Hasanganj, six from Kaiserbagh, four each from Gudamba, Banthara & Manaknagar, and two from Kakori.

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Dharmendra Pradhan tests Covid positive

New Delhi: Oil Minister Dharmendra Pradhan on Tuesday tested positive for coronavirus and has been admitted to Medanta Hospital.

In a tweet, Pradhan said he has been admitted to hospital after testing positive of Covid-19. Pradhan, 51, had developed Covid-like symptoms on Monday and was tested on Tuesday.

“After seeing symptoms of Covid-19, I got tested. The report has come positive,” he tweeted. “On the advice of doctors, I have been admitted to hospital and I am healthy.”

Sources said Pradhan had last week met Home Minister Amit Shah, who was admitted to Medanta on Sunday after testing positive of coronavirus. His staff too had earlier tested positive and has been in isolation since.

Pradhan is one of the several high-profile names to have tested positive.

Kerala doc among ISIS fidayeen in Af jail attack

Kabul/New Delhi: Of the 11 ISIS suicide bombers involved in the Afghanistan prison break terror attack that left 39 people dead on Monday, one was a doctor from Kerala.

The ISIS suicide bomber has been identified as Kallukettiya Purayil Ijas, a physician and resident of Kasargod in Kerala.

Friends in the small town where Ijaz had his ancestral home in Kasargod in Kerala identified him from the picture.

They said Kallukettiya Purayil Ijas has been missing since 2016 and they believe that he had left the country with his wife to Afghanistan.

In July 2016, a parent from Kasargod had lodged a police complaint, stating that his 30-year-old son Abdul Rashid was missing along with his wife Ayisha (Sonia Sebastian) and their child for almost two months after they had gone to Mumbai.

Detailed report on P12

AYODHYA AWAITS ITS BIG DAY

‘Tryst with destiny’

Ayodhya: Comparing the ‘bhoomi puja’ to mark the beginning of construction of a Ram temple to the day India attained independence from the British, a former vice-chancellor of a state university here said Wednesday’s ceremony will be the country’s “tryst with divinity”.

“India had its ‘tryst with destiny’ on August 15, 1947 and I hope that August 5 will be Ayodhya’s and India’s tryst

with divinity,” Prof Manoj Dixit, former Vice-Chancellor of the Dr Ram Manohar Lohia Avadh University here, told PTI.

“The city is feeling joyous ahead of the momentous occasion. It was tryst with destiny in August 1947 and it is going to be tryst with divinity in August 2020,” Srivastava said.

“Every Ayodhya resident is celebrating this festival. There is worshipping and religious events in virtually every house-

hold of Ayodhya. It seems that Lord Ram is visiting every house in Ayodhya, and personally meeting the residents of the temple town.”

Rishikesh Upadhyay, Mayor of Ayodhya told PTI that the entire stretch of road from Saket College to Hanumangarhi and Ramjanambhoomi area has been painted yellow. “The atmosphere is very good and the entire city is soaked in

the developments which have gripped the temple town, Ayodhya resident Dr Indroneel Banerjee, said, “People are happy that things are finally moving in the forward direction as far as construction of the Ram temple is concerned. The developments, which we were promised decades ago will eventually see the light of the day. There is happiness among people from different sections of the society.”

According to social worker Rajneesh Singh, Deepawali has descended early this year in Ayodhya.

“People have started reciting religious hymns, and the atmosphere is absolutely ecstatic. In the two-kilometre radius of Ram temple area, at least 5 lakh earthen lamps will be lit, and in the entire district there will be at least 20 lakh earthen lamps lit on that day,” he said.

Singh claimed that there is not a single potter in Ayodhya who has any earthen lamps left. “We are arranging earthen lamps from Basti, Bahraich, Ambedkarnagar and adjoining districts,” he said.

PhD aspirant Saurav Mishra, another resident of the temple town, said, “The city is giving a bright yellow look, much to the excitement of residents. It is a matter of pride that we are able to see commencement of the construction of Ram temple. We are fortunate enough to see the results of the hard work of our ancestors and experience its success.”

Sachin Chaurasia, a businessman said, “There is a festive atmosphere. We are only waiting for August 5.”

However, another resident Anshuman Singh, a PhD aspirant, said, “There is excitement in the city as far as construction of Ram temple is concerned. But it seems that all of this is only a publicity for the party (BJP) ahead of the 2022 UP Assembly polls.” **PTI**

Hanuman Garhi temple all decked up for PM’s visit

Ayodhya: The famous Hanuman Garhi temple here is all decked up for the visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi who will be in the city for the ‘bhoomi puja’ of Ram temple on Wednesday.

As soon as the prime minister reaches Ayodhya on Wednesday, he will first go to this temple as it is believed that before visiting Lord Ram one should pay their respects to Lord Hanuman.

The priests in the temple are disheartened that they will not be able to meet Modi due to the protocols in place against coronavirus.

“At the temple, all of us had made a lot of preparations to present a ‘gada’ (mace), ‘mukut’ (crown), silver brick, stole and a turban to the prime minister. But, this will not be possible now due to COVID-19 protocol. Our plan to give him the gifts now stands cancelled,” Hanuman Garhi Mahant Raju Das told PTI. “The chief minister visited the temple on Monday. Now the prime minister will pray on Wednesday but all priests will remain at a distance and no one will be allowed near him. Modi is likely to stay here for 5-7 minutes,” he said.

He said that all preparations for Modi’s visit are almost complete and the ‘bhoomi puja’ will be historic for the city of Ayodhya.

On the significance of visiting Hanuman temple first, the Mahant said according to legends they believe that no work is complete without the blessings of Lord Hanuman.

Seventy-six steps lead to Hanuman Garhi which is one of the most popular Hanuman temples in North India. The shrine houses Hanuman’s



Pilgrims walk down a flight of stairs after offering prayers at Hanuman Garhi temple, as the town prepares for a groundbreaking ceremony of Ram temple in Ayodhya.

mother, Anjani, with a young Hanuman sitting on her lap.

About this temple, Mahant said, “When Lord Ram returned to Ayodhya after conquering Ravana, he gave this place to Hanuman ji to live, so its called Hanuman Garhi or Hanuman Kot. From here, it is believed that Lord Hanuman used to protect Ramkot.”

He said that construction

of the Ram temple will start a new era for Ayodhya city which has witnessed many “tense moments” in the past.

“Not only us, all Rambhaktas are happy with the new beginning. It is not just due to religious reasons, but the people here are happy to feel that their city will now have more opportunities and development,” the Mahant said. He said that vedic rituals

started in the temple on Monday and will continue till the ‘bhoomi puja’. After the ‘bhoomi puja’, the construction of Lord Ram’s temple will start with full speed.

The entire city has been decked up for Modi’s visit. Invited guests have started coming and most of them will reach here by Tuesday evening, a local administration official said. **PTI**



with divinity,” Prof Manoj Dixit, former Vice-Chancellor of the Dr Ram Manohar Lohia Avadh University here, told PTI.

“The city is buzzing with colour, gaiety, enthusiasm. There is grandeur in the city this time. However, Ayodhya always knows how to keep itself in balance. We have never come across a case from Ayodhya where any Muslim has been poked at. Ayodhya is

also said Wednesday’s groundbreaking ceremony would mark the country’s “tryst with divinity”.

“The city is feeling joyous ahead of the momentous occasion. It was tryst with destiny in August 1947 and it is going to be tryst with divinity in August 2020,” Srivastava said.

“Every Ayodhya resident is celebrating this festival. There is worshipping and religious events in virtually every house-

devotion of Lord Ram,” the mayor said.

Explaining the significance of yellow colour, Allahabad-based astrologer Ashutosh Varshney told PTI that yellow is the colour associated with Lord Ram and Lord Vishnu. “It is also the colour associated with ‘Brihaspati’ (Jupiter) the guru of the Gods. Yellow is also a colour, which is associated with divinity,” he said.

Expressing happiness over

Special dress with gems, stitched using golden thread, to adorn Ram Lalla

Ayodhya: For the past three and a half decades, brothers Shankarlal and Bhagwatlal ‘Pahaadhi’ have been stitching clothes for Ram Lalla in Ayodhya. Their dedication will be manifest in the splendid dress they have meticulously crafted for the deity to wear on August 5, during the bhoomi puja ceremony of the Ram temple.

Operating from their shop named after their late father Babulal and located in the city’s Badhi Kutiyaa area, the brothers stitch clothes for only deities and seers.

“My father late Babulal started stitching the clothes of Ram Lalla in 1985. He used to carry our sewing machine to the Ramjanambhoomi and stitch the clothes with me and my elder brother in tow,” Shankarlal, 54, told PTI on Monday.

“The three of us used to make

the clothes of Lord Ram. The dresses were made and stitched virtually in front of the deity. Since then, our work is continuing,” he said.

Shankarlal said that for Wednesday, the day of bhoomi puja to mark the beginning of the construction of the grand Ram temple in Ayodhya, two sets of dresses have been made — one is green, while the other is orange.

“The clothes are made using soft material such as ‘makhamal’ (velvet). After all, they are for Ram Lalla who is a child. The green dress has been made keeping in mind the day-specific colour, while orange is considered auspicious,” he said.

On Wednesday, the green dress will be worn first and the orange one later, Shankarlal said.

The special dress for the ceremony has nine gems stitched in



golden thread. “There is grandeur in the clothes of the Lord as well,” he said. On Sunday, the dresses were handed over by the tailors, said Acharya Satyendra Das, the chief priest of the Ram temple.

“A day-specific colour scheme is followed for the dresses worn by Lord Ram. On Monday the dress is white, on Tuesday it is red, while on Wednesday it is the turn of the green dress for the Lord,” Shankarlal said.

On Thursdays the idol is dressed in yellow, Fridays are for cream-coloured dresses, on Saturdays it is the turn of blue clothes while on Sundays pink clothes adorn the deity.

Shankarlal also said the same cloth, with which Ram’s dress is stitched, is used to make dresses for Lakshman, Bharat, Shatrughan, Hanuman and Shaaligram.

“Earlier, 11-metre-long fabric was required to make the dress, but now, we need about 17 metres of cloth. Once the grand temple is built, I do not know how much cloth will be required to make one set of dresses for Lord Ram and others,” Shankarlal said.

At present, Shankarlal is assisted by his nephews Pawan Kumar, Sanjay Kumar and Shravan Kumar. “My son Rajveer is in class 7. As soon as he clears class 8, he will join me,” he said.

Shankarlal’s elder brother Bhagwatlal ‘Pahaadhi’ attributed their stitching expertise to God. “The entire family is involved in this. Whatever qualities have been given by God, we are making dresses using those qualities only. It is He who is getting them made by us, as He gets everything done.”

Interestingly, the brother duo

and their family members depend on other tailors for their own apparels. “We only make clothes for Lord Ram and some clothes of seers. We do not accept any orders from the common people. We even do not make our own clothes. Our own clothes are made using the services and expertise of other tailors,” Shankarlal said.

“I feel overwhelmed that I was born in Ayodhya and got an opportunity to serve Ram Lalla. What could give more happiness than this?” he asked.

The brothers and their shop are a centre of attraction these days due to the media’s presence as the city prepares for the groundbreaking ceremony. Passersby often greet them with chants of ‘Jai Sriram’ which the duo is quick to reciprocate, much to the delight of the visiting devotees. **PTI**

ANOTHER CORE BJP PROMISE FULFILLED

New Delhi: For the BJP which was once forced to keep the “contentious” Ram temple issue aside to woo allies, the beginning of construction of a grand temple in Ayodhya is an ideological victory over its rivals with even many opposition leaders welcoming the development.

Incidentally, the ground-breaking ceremony by Prime Minister Narendra Modi for the temple’s construction, in the presence of leading lights of Hindutva movement including RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat, will be conducted on Wednesday which coincides with the first anniversary of the annulment of Article 370, another key ideological plank for the saffron party.

It is only fitting, political watchers say, that Prime Minister Modi and Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath will be the main political presence at the ground-breaking event, as both are known for their uncompromising commitment to the Hindutva cause.

Notably, Modi as a national office-bearer in the BJP played an important role in LK Advani’s ‘Ram Rath Yatra’ in 1990 while Adityanath’s late guru Mahant Aavaiyanath headed the group of sadhus and Hindu organisations that was formed in 1984 to spear-head the temple movement.

If the Supreme Court’s verdict in November, 2019 in favour of building the temple at the site, where believers hold that Lord Ram was born, put a legal closure to the historical dispute between Hindu and Muslim groups, the beginning of its construction is likely to further consolidate Hindutva sentiments.

“For us, the Ayodhya issue had ceased to be a political issue long back. It was always a matter of faith for us, and our manifestoes in all general elections underlined our commitment to build the temple and also scrap Article 370. But, of course, now that both promises have been fulfilled, we will talk about them,” a BJP leader said.

Though it was Vishwa Hindu Parishad under late Ashok Singhal which conceptualised the Ram Janmbhoomi movement in 1984 and began mobilising sadhus and Hindu groups nationwide, the issue gained political currency like never before after the then BJP president L K Advani started his ‘Ram Rath Yatra’

in 1990.

This had followed the party’s decision to come out openly in support of the temple’s construction, where the Babri mosque stood at that time before being brought down by frenzied kar sevaks in 1992, in its national executive meeting in Palampur in 1989.

Advani’s Rath Yatra was also seen as a counter to the Mandal politics aimed at reservation for Other Backward Groups unveiled by the V P Singh government in 1990.

Advani launched the famous ‘Rath Yatra’ from Somnath temple in Gujarat on September 25, 1990, drawing people in thousands as his chariot rolled through the country’s heartland, at times triggering communal riots as well, while the movement gained momentum.

The ‘Rath Yatra’ was to end in Ayodhya on October 30, 1990 but was cut short after the then Bihar chief minister Lalu Prasad Yadav ordered Advani’s arrest in Samastipur, citing the alleged communal tension it had caused.

Many ‘kar sevaks’ (religious volunteers) were killed in police firing in Ayodhya on October 30 as the Mulayam Singh Yadav-led government in Uttar Pradesh used force to stop them from reaching the disputed site. Hindutva groups put the death toll at over 55 even as police said it was 17.

As the Ram temple wave picked up steam, a considerable section of backward castes warmed up to the BJP, which formed its first government in Uttar Pradesh with Kalyan Singh, an OBC, becoming chief minister in 1991.

The demolition of Babri Masjid at the disputed site on December 6, 1992 made the party a pariah in politics for a while but could not stop its rise to power.

Keen to shun the tag of political “untouchable”, the BJP under Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Advani was forced to put the issue, considered contentious by most parties, along with Article 370 and the Uniform Civil Code on the backburner to make

new allies, a necessity for coming to power in the coalition era between 1989-2014.

The party has been steadfast in its commitment to its core causes after Modi took charge of the party and brought it to power in 2014. This was the first time that the BJP won a majority in the 543-member Lok Sabha, making it immune to political pressures that its earlier government under Vajpayee often felt.

The waning of the Hindutva movement due to a variety of reasons coupled with the BJP’s organisational atrophy in Uttar Pradesh saw the party steadily losing ground there since late 90s before the ‘Modi wave’ of 2014 helped it reclaim its bastion in the Lok Sabha polls and then notching up an unprecedented win in the 2017 assembly polls.

The party’s win in 2019 general elections with an even bigger mandate has seen it pursue its core causes with a renewed vigour.

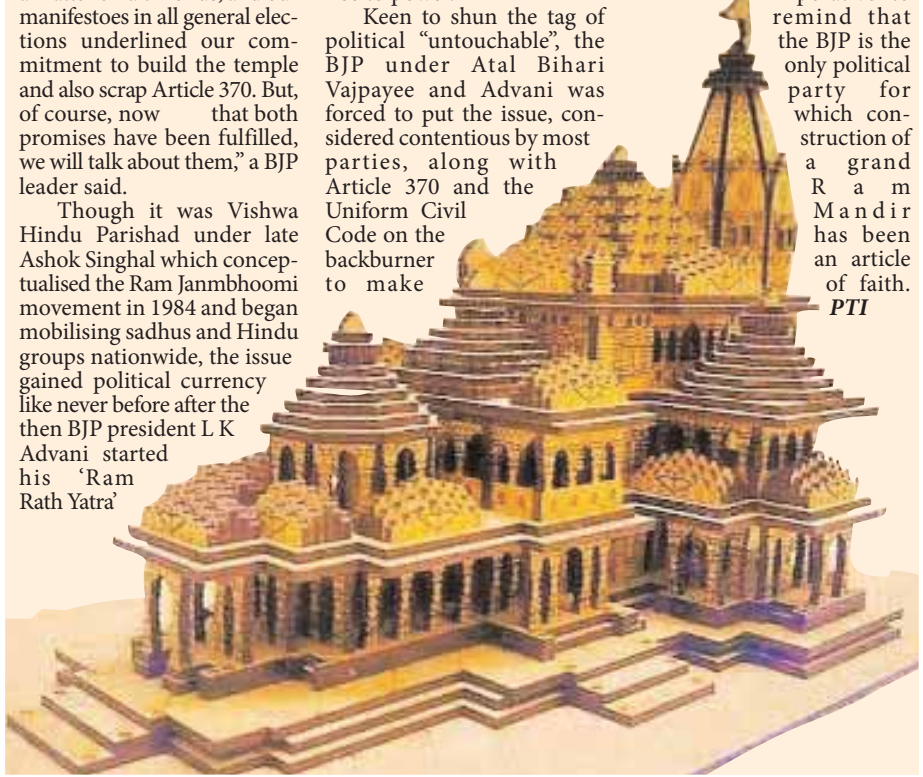
A day before the beginning of the temple’s construction, Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra hoped that the ground-breaking ceremony of the Ram temple in Ayodhya becomes a “marker” of national unity, brotherhood and cultural harmony.

She said for ages Lord Ram’s character had served as a source of unity for the entire Indian sub continent.

Another Congress leader and former Madhya Pradesh chief minister Kamal Nath had earlier welcomed the temple’s construction.

BJP’s Amit Malviya said that in the run up to the ceremony in Ayodhya, when “morally bankrupt secular” politicians are suddenly discovering their devotion for Lord Ram, it is imperative to remind that the BJP is the only political party for which construction of a grand Ram Mandir has been an article of faith.

PTI



Ravan temple priest to celebrate foundation laying of Ram temple

Ayodhya: Nearly 650 km from Ayodhya, a priest of a temple dedicated to demon king Ravan is eagerly awaiting the ground-breaking ceremony of the Ram temple.

Tucked away in Gautam Buddh Nagar’s Bisrakh area is a temple dedicated to Ravan, the dark figure in the epic Ramayana who was killed by Lord Ram.

Mahant Ramdas of the Ravan temple said he will distribute sweets after the conclusion of the ‘bhoomi poojan’ ceremony in the temple town of Ayodhya on August 5.

“I am very happy that the bhoomi pujaan for the temple of Lord Ram is taking place in Ayodhya. After the ceremony, I will distribute ‘ladoos’ and celebrate the happy moment. The bhoomi poojan for the temple of Lord Ram in Ayodhya is indeed a very good development. I am happy as a grand temple will be built there,” he told PTI.

Mahant Ramdas said, “If Ravan was not there, then no one would have known about Shri Ram. And in the absence of Lord Ram, no one would have known anything about Ravan”.

According to local folklore, Bisrakh is the birthplace of Ravan and, “we call it the

Ravan Janambhoomi,” the priest said.

Describing Ravan as a knowledgeable person and an expert in many fields, he said, after abducting Sita, he kept her at Ashok Vatika, and did not take her to his palace.

“Apart from this, he posted women to guard Sita. If Lord Ram is called ‘*maryaadaa purshottam*’ (the person who upheld dignity), then I think

Ravan also to some extent can be considered as a person who upheld dignity (of people in various aspects),” he said.

The temple in Bisrakh has idols of Lord Shiva, Parvati and Kubera.

“The temple does not close even during the night. Devotees coming here offer prayers to Lord Shiva, Kubera and even Ravan. Around 20 per cent of devotees who come here

worship Ravan,” according to Mahant Ramdas.

According to Ramayana, Ravan abducts Lord Ram’s wife Sita and takes her to his kingdom of Lanka, where he keeps her in captivity in Ashok Vatika. Later, Lord Ram, with the support of ‘vanara’ King Sugriva and his army of ‘vanaras’, attacks Lanka, kills Ravan, and rescues Sita. **PTI**



MOMENTS OF CELEBRATIONS: UP Chief Minister lit lamps and crackers at his 5 Kalidas Marg residence in the state capital on eve of the foundation laying ceremony of the Ram Temple in Ayodhya on Wednesday



I geel humbled, says LK Advani

New Delhi: A day before Prime Minister Narendra Modi lays the foundation stone for a Ram temple in Ayodhya, veteran BJP leader LK Advani on Tuesday said it is a historic and an emotional day for him and for all Indians, as he recalled the “pivotal duty” he performed in carrying out the Ram Rath Yatra from Somnath to Ayodhya in 1990.



In a statement, he said it is his belief that the Shri Ram Mandir will represent India as a strong, prosperous, peaceful and harmonious nation with justice for all and exclusion of none to truly usher in “Ram Rajya, the epitome of good governance”. Advani is considered a key figure in the Ram Janmbhoomi movement, as he had undertaken the “Ram Rath Yatra” in 1990 as the then BJP president to mobilise the masses for building a Ram temple at the Ayodhya site where believers hold that Lord Ram was born.

“I feel humbled that during the Ram Janmbhoomi movement, destiny made me perform a pivotal duty in the form of the Ram Rath Yatra from Somnath to Ayodhya in 1990, which helped galvanise the aspirations, energies and passions of its countless participants,” he said. “Shri Ram occupies an esteemed place in India’s cultural and civilisational heritage and is an embodiment of grace, dignity and decorum. It is my belief that this temple will inspire all Indians to imbibe His virtues,” he said.

The 92-year-old BJP leader is not among the invitees for the ground-breaking ceremony of the temple by Modi on Wednesday due to his advanced age amid concerns over the spread of COVID-19 epidemic.

With the construction of the temple to begin nearly three decades after he undertook his yatra, Advani said sometimes significant dreams in one’s life take a long time to fruition, but when they are finally realised, the wait becomes very worthwhile.

“One such dream, close to my heart is now getting fulfilled... A grand mandir for Shri Ram at Ram Janmbhoomi has been a desire and mission for the Bharatiya Janata Party,” he said.

On this auspicious occasion, he said he wanted to express his gratitude to all those saints, leaders and people from India and the world over who made valuable contributions and sacrifices in the Ram Janmbhoomi movement.

“I am also very happy that due to the decisive verdict of the Supreme Court in November 2019, the construction of Shri Ram Mandir is getting started in an environment of tranquility. This will go a long way in strengthening the bond between Indians,” he said.

“May Shri Ram bless India and her people always,” Advani added, signing off his statement with “JAI SHRI RAM”.

We’re overjoyed: VHP

Ayodhya: The VHP Tuesday said the bhoomi pujaan ceremony for a Ram temple in Ayodhya is a rare moment that “comes once in several lifetimes” and that they are “overjoyed”, but are making sure the event does not become a coronavirus hotspot.

Vishva Hindu Parishad national working president Alok Kumar also rejected questions about the muhurt of the event, saying the “best advice” has been taken including from the Head of the Jyotish Department of the Banaras Hindu University on timing of the ceremony.

“It is something which comes once in several lifetimes, the finest moment, and we are overjoyed,” he told PTI.

Asked how difficult it was to keep the guest list short, the VHP leader said, “It was rather an impossible task. Because if somebody would ask me that those who laid down their lives, their families should be invited. I would say ‘yes absolutely’. But then the number would have exceeded.

“It is something which comes once in several lifetimes, the finest moment, and we are overjoyed”

“All those who remained in jail (in connection with the movement), their number is in thousands. So, it was one of the impossible tasks, but something had to be done.”

He also appealed to people to “be disciplined” and not come to Ayodhya for the ceremony. “Let us focus on our places and places around us. And work for development of Ramatva.”

Delving on the concept of Ramatva, he said, “Ramatva is ushering a Ram Rajya. It is going back once again to Shabris and Nishads.

Ramatva took Lord Ram to Nishadraj and embrace him, and took him to Shabri’s ashram.

Shabri and Nishadraj are characters of the epic Ramayana belonging to lower strata of the society.

“Lord Ram has said that he does not accept the caste structure, the high or the low. Therefore, social harmony. He went to Ahilya’s ashram to give her dignity back. He went to vanars and bhils and organised them, empowered them,” Kumar said.

“We shall have a society, where there would be no appeasement or exploitation. Above all, there has to be an end to terrorism by organising the power of good,” he said.

He also said the VHP will work to strengthen the traditional family system of Bharat wherein families will become central to human life.

This will help in getting rid of the problems of loneliness and depression, he added. “Ram is there, he is in our heart, and he is relevant to the core,” he said. **PTI**

Hindutva now basic coat on canvas of Indian politics: Govindacharya

New Delhi: Hindutva is now the “basic coat on the canvas of polity” and political parties subscribing to its various shades may be vying for power in future as socialism and secularism are no longer the pivot of politics, former RSS ideologue KN Govindacharya said on Tuesday.

A day before Prime Minister Narendra Modi attends the ground-breaking ceremony for building a Ram temple in Ayodhya, Govindacharya, once a powerful BJP general secretary, underscored its significance, saying this marks the return of national politics to its “roots” of Hindutva which, he added, remained at the margins for decades before going from strength to strength 2010 onwards.

As “special assistant” to the then BJP president LK Advani during 1988-91, Govindacharya is considered a key figure in planning the “Rath Yatra” taken out by Advani in 1990 which had propelled the Ram

Janmbhoomi movement and consequently the party to the centre-stage of Indian politics.

Speaking to PTI, he noted that Congress leaders like Digvijay Singh and Kamal Nath have now been speaking in favour of the temple’s construction, and said this signals that even many opposition leaders understand the issue’s ideological and emotional significance to the masses.

To a question, he said, “Prime Minister Narendra Modi has embraced Hindutva, and people in turn have embraced him.”

The Congress under Sonia and Rahul Gandhi “declined” and became “discredited” by antagonising masses, he claimed, adding that a big part of the credit for the BJP’s rise should be given to opposition parties.

The Congress should return to the ideals of Mahatma Gandhi, he said, observing that Indira Gandhi was much “wiser” to Hindutva

sentiments after her return to power in 1980 following her party’s big defeat in 1977. “Many pro-Hindutva or Hindutva-subscribing political groups may vie in competition for supremacy and a better slice of gains in future. The basic coat on the canvas of polity is Hindutva now,” Govindacharya, the BJP general secretary (organisation) between 1991-2000, said.

He has since cut his ties with active politics and is associated with groups advocating nationalist and swadesi causes.

As socialism and secularism were the pivot of politics between 1952-80 and 1980-2010 respectively, Hindutva has now come to acquire the same dominance, he said. Asked about criticism that some groups, especially minorities, have about Hindutva, he defended the ideology, saying it is “non-adversarial, comprehensive and has respect for all modes of worship.” **PTI**

Retired judge calls for peaceful coexistence, religious harmony

Bengaluru: As the stage is set for the ground-breaking ceremony for Ram temple construction at Ayodhya on Wednesday, retired Supreme Court judge N Santosh Hegde has called for promotion of religious harmony and peaceful coexistence and respect for different faiths.

“It is a good idea to make that as an object of the temple so that there can be peace in the world,” the former Solicitor General of India said when asked if the temple should be promoted as a symbol of national integration, and social and communal harmony.

Hegde said one of the most dangerous things for conflict today is religion.

“In that background, there should be some effort from somebody or other to bring about peaceful coexistence, respecting each religion,” the former Karnataka Lokayukta told PTI on Tuesday.

“It is a good idea to start Bhumi Pujan as an indicator of that or foundation for developing harmony among various religions,” he added.

The Supreme Court had in November last year paved the way for the construction of a Ram temple by a Trust at the disputed site of the Babri Masjid’s demolition in



In this Nov. 10, 2019, file photo, people read a newspaper reporting about a Supreme Court verdict for building of a Hindu temple on a site in a decades-old land title dispute in Ayodhya.

Ayodhya.

It also directed the Centre to allot an alternative 5-acre plot to the Sunni Waqf Board for building a new mosque at a “prominent” place in the holy town in Uttar Pradesh.

The Uttar Pradesh government has allotted a five-acre land in Dhannipur village in Sohawal Tehsil of Ayodhya for the mosque’s construction.

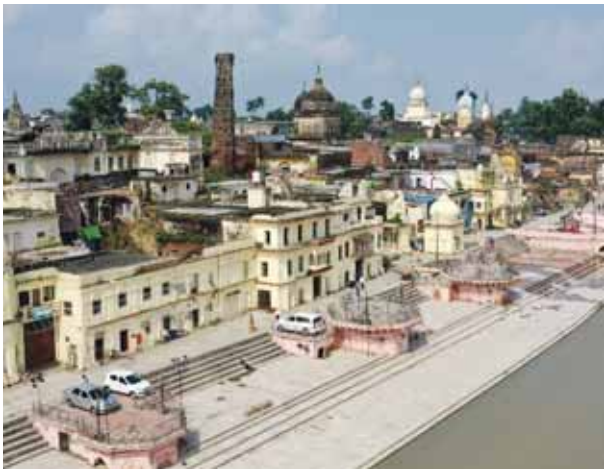
Rituals continue in Ayodhya for bhoomi puja

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Religious rituals continued for the second day on Tuesday in the run-up to the bhoomi puja for the construction of Ram temple at the Ram Janmabhoomi premises in Ayodhya on Wednesday noon.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will lay the foundation of the grand 161-foot tall Ram temple and will attend the bhoomi puja along with RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat and other senior seers and dignitaries.

A total of 21 priests from Varanasi, Ayodhya and Prayagraj started the ritual of bhoomi puja by organising Gauri-Ganesh puja at the bhoomi puja site in the Ram



Janmabhoomi premises. The priests also offered puja at the Hanuman Garhi and Ram ki



Chhawani temples while in the evening they performed aarti at the Saryu ghat.



On Tuesday morning Ramacharya puja along with Dhawaj and Nishan puja of

Lord Hanuman were performed at the Hanuman Garhi temple. Except the priests of



the temples no one was allowed to attend these pujas due COVID-19 pandemic.

Pandit Kalikram handed over a green coloured dress along with religious flag to the

head priest of the Ram Lalla temple, Acharya Satendra Das. Ram Lalla will wear this dress on Wednesday and a yellow dress on Thursday.

Pandit Kalikram has been presenting the dresses for the idols for the last two years. He will also light diyas at almost all the temples of Ayodhya in the evening of August 5.

Meanwhile, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath reviewed the arrangements for the August 5 function in Ayodhya on Monday. During his over 4-hour stay in the temple city on Monday the chief minister met the state officials, security personnel and members of the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra trust and some senior seers.

CLASSIFIED

सूचना

एलुद्वारा मैं घोषणा करता हूँ कि सुन्दर कुमार और सुन्दर कुमार सिन्हा पुत्र श्री चोहराका प्रसाद, पिताजी सी-1245, एम.आई.डी., राजनीपुर, लखनऊ एक ही व्यक्ति हैं। मेरे सेवा से संबंधित प्रक्रांतों में मेरा नाम सुन्दर कुमार है। मैं घोषणा करता हूँ कि मुझे भविष्य में श्री सुन्दर कुमार सिन्हा के नाम से जाना जाएगा।

NOTICE

We Kamal Kumar Arora & Suman Arora R/o House no 24/4, Chander Nagar, Alambagh, Lucknow, disowns my son Dheeraj Arora and my Daughter inlaw Pragya Tandon from my movable and immovable property for their wrong deeds & misbehaviour. Our family is not liable for their deeds.

WANTED

MD College, Amarsanda, Anwari, Barabanki, Regd - Principal, Professor, Associate Professor for B.Com course qualification & experience are as per ugc norms and guidelines. apply with resume & supporting doc. with in 7 days Emails : mdcollegeelko@gmail.com. Mob: 9415026210, 7388888790

NOTICE

I Army No 4190764-L Hav, Manvir Singh, S/o Girdhari Singh unit 15, kumaon C/o 56, APO hereby declare that in my service record inadvertently the name of my wife's Savita Devi while her correct name Savita Singh may be recorded in my service records.

NOTICE

I Army No. 4197464-M NK, Virendra Singh Bisht, S/o Inder Singh Bisht, unit 15, kumaon C/o 56, APO hereby declare that in my service record inadvertently the name of my wife SONY BISHT while her correct name SONI BISHT may be recorded in my service records.

NOTICE

Property Allotment Letter of Mahip Narayan Yadav has been lost from my bag. Property No. ID 283902 of 10/05/2010 of Sulabh Awas C 1/23 Scheme G.N. Extension 2nd Floor. Gomti Nagar, Lucknow. Use of above paper's is illegal. Ashwani Kumar Tripathi, 162, Kalyanpur Khurd, Kanpur

NOTICE

I Army No. 13627938-P NK, Narendra Singh Rawat, S/o Purn Singh Rawat, unit 15, kumaon C/o 56, APO hereby declare that in my service record inadvertently the name my Son's mentioned as DIVYANSH while his correct name DIVYANSH RAWAT. May be recorded in my service records.

NOTICE

I, GANGOTRI DEVI mother of DHARMENDRA KUMAR JAYASWAL No. 15444130H resident of Vill- Mahuli khori, P.O. Maskanwa, Teh. Mankapur, Dist- Gonda, State- Uttar Pradesh, PIN- 271305, have changed my name from ASHA DEVI to GANGOTRI DEVI & my date of birth is same 01 January 1973 vide affidavit before the LD. Notary public at Mankapur dated 21.07.2020.

‘Aadhaar shila placed in 1989, mandir nirman to start now’

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) president Alok Kumar claimed that the foundation stone for construction of a grand Ram temple at Ram Janmabhoomi was laid way back in 1989 and only its formal construction would start on August 5.

Without taking names, Kumar said that the temple construction was impeded by hurdles created by various governments, manipulations by political forces and long delays in the courts.

“After about 31 years, the construction of Ram temple will begin in the presence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi on August 5. We hope that in about three years, devotees will be able to worship Ram Lalla in the sanctum sanctorum of a grand temple,” Kumar said in a statement issued in Lucknow.

“We believe that this massive effort is not only to build another temple. It is in fact for the establishment of Ram Rajya across the globe. This cannot be achieved only by the government and sections of society and every individual will have to join the mission,” he said.

The VHP president said

that there was no poverty and sickness during Lord Ram's rule.

“Ramatava will descend by establishing a harmonious society based on equality where every person will be treated with dignity. Everyone would be assured food, clothing and shelter along with education and gainful vocations. Family values will be respected and everyone will have opportunity to elevate himself to realise the supreme goal,” he said.

“For this, with the cooperation of Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) more than one lakh ‘Ekal Vidyalayas’ function in the country. The VHP will speed up the spread of education, sanskar, sanitation, organic agriculture and self-sufficient villages through these institutions,” he said.

“The VHP will speed up efforts for better education, health and income generation, especially among Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. The VHP shall, for this purpose, act as a ‘bridge’ between the government welfare schemes and beneficiaries,” he stressed.

The VHP president said while wandering in forests, Lord Ram saw the havoc caused by demonic activities

and unsuitable alien culture and vowed to end the demons from the earth. “Our outfit will consolidate the power of the good to free the country from all forms of evil,” he said.

“The VHP will also work to strengthen the traditional family system of Bharat where in the families will become the centres of inculcation of human values and love towards each other. This would rid the problems of loneliness and depression,” he said.

The VHP leader also said that Lord Ram constantly strived for social harmony even during his 14-year exile. He visited all sections bare-footed to shower them with his love and consolidate the society.

“VHP is working on the same ideals to bring about a harmonious society. We shall build a Bharat which will embrace with love and friendship. We shall have a society where there would be no appeasement or exploitation,” he stressed.

The VHP chief concluded by saying, “We are confident that with our collective efforts, a self-confident and self-reliant Bharat will be established and it will perform its mission of spreading peace and happiness across the world.”

Increase bed capacity in Covid hosps: CM

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has directed officials to increase the bed capacity in Level-2 and Level-3 Covid hospitals by 50,000 beds at the earliest and has asked Director General, Health and Director General, Medical Education to act in time-bound manner in this regard.

“Besides arranging the beds, the facilities for medical personnel and other logistics should also be made ready at the earliest,” Yogi said while presiding over the Unlock 3.0 review meeting at his official residence here on Tuesday.

He said the Integrated Command and Control Centre (ICCC) should be activated and made fully functional in all districts. “Where the ICCC is not functional, the responsibility of the district magistrate concerned be fixed. The ICCC should contact the home isolated COVID-19 patients twice a day to get update on their condition,” the chief minister said.

Yogi also directed officials to further improve ambulance ser-

vices. He said half of the ambulances of ‘108’ ambulance service, medical colleges and government hospitals should be used for COVID-19 patients and half for non-Covid patients. He further said that the COVID-19 patients should be provided bed in Covid hospitals on the basis of their condition.

The chief minister said that caution had to be exercised at all levels to break the chain of coronavirus infection. “Nobody will be allowed to spread the pandemic as it requires concerted efforts of all concerned,” he said. Yogi asked the officials to improve the health services in f Kanpur Nagar and arrange more ventilator beds there.

The chief minister directed officials to provide all possible help in flood-affected areas. He instructed officials to distribute dry ration in flood-affected areas and ration kits in the marooned villages. The chief minister asked the officials to continue the cleanliness and sanitisation drive on Saturdays and Sundays with the same efficiency to control the spread of COVID-19 and other conta-

gious diseases.

Those present in the meeting included Chief Secretary RK Tiwari, Infrastructure and Industrial Development Commissioner Alok Tandon, Agriculture Production Commissioner Alok Sinha, Additional Chief Secretary (Home and Information) Awanish Kumar Awasthi, Additional Chief Secretary (Finance) Sanjeev Mittal, Additional Chief Secretary (Revenue) Renuka Kumar, Additional Chief Secretary to CM Shashi Prakash Goyal, Director General of Police HC Awasthi, Additional Chief Secretary (Health) Amit Mohan Prasad, Additional Chief Secretary (Medical Education) Rajneesh Dubey, Additional Chief Secretary (Rural Development and Panchayati Raj) Manoj Kumar Singh, Additional Chief Secretary (MSME) Navneet Sehgal, Principal Secretary (Animal Husbandry) Buvnesh Kumar, Principal Secretary to Chief Minister Sanjay Prasad, Secretary to Chief Minister Alok Kumar and other senior officers.

Akhilesh attacks UP govt over flood relief

Lucknow (PNS): Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav alleged that the Uttar Pradesh government was not bothered about farmers' problems even as they were badly affected by floods. He also charged that the Bharatiya Janata Party government was preoccupied with Ram temple at Ayodhya and had no time to take stock of the floods in the state.

Akhilesh said, “Farmers in the state are fed up of false promises made by the BJP. Many districts are flooded, people are spending days on embankments or on roofs. The lives of cattle are also in danger. At many places, rivers are flowing above the danger mark. Roads, bridges are damaged. But the BJP regime has no time to compensate farmers for losses suffered by them due to calamities.” Millions of people from thousands of villages have been affected by floods in Barabanki, Ayodhya, Kushinagar, Gorakhpur, Bahraich, Lakhimpur Kheri, Azamgarh, Mau, Basti, Gonda, Sant Kabir Nagar, Sitapur, Siddharth Nagar and Balrampur. Hundreds of villages have

lost contact with other areas. Crops in thousands of hectares have been damaged by floods,” the SP chief claimed. Attacking the government over the flood situation, Akhilesh said, “Sharda in Palia Kalan in Lakhimpur Kheri, Saryu in Turtipar area of Ballia, Rapti at Bardaghat in Gorakhpur and Rapti barrage of Shravasti are flowing above the danger mark. Ghaghra river is also in spate after release of water from Nepal dams and their embankments are threatened. Villagers are frightened by the situation and possibility of breach of embankment. Rohini river, Kuwanas, Gandak, Kunhra rivers are also flowing near the danger mark.” “The local administration is negligent in providing relief to them. Saryu is 108 cm from the danger mark in Barabanki. It has reached the top, causing a chaos in three teshils – Ramnagar, Sirauli Gauspur and Ram Sanehi Ghat. Cattle are hungry, there is no choice for them. Two children have drowned in flood waters in Sitapur but the BJP government in the state has been ignoring the affected people's plight,” Akhilesh alleged.

Breaking silence, Priyanka sings paeon to Ram Lalla

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Breaking protracted silence over bhoomi puja for a Ram temple at Ayodhya, Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi said the function should be one to spread national unity, fraternity and cultural confluence.

Releasing a statement on Tuesday, Priyanka said that Ramayana had a deep and indelible mark on world culture and on the Indian subcontinent. “Lore of Lord Ram and Mother Sita have kindled our cultural and religious memories for thousands of years,” she said.

“Indian ethos and values have been inspired by the Ramayana in religion, policy, duty, sacrifice, sublime, love and service. From north to

south, east to west, Ram katha has been expressed in different forms. Like countless forms of Sri Hari, Ram katha too is endless and infinite,” she said.

The Congress leader said that for ages, Lord Ram's personality had been a thread, uniting humanity in the sub-continent. The Lord gave shelter to all and is a symbol of sacrifice.

“Lord Ram belongs to Shabari, Sugriva, Valmiki and also to Bhasa. He belongs to Kamban, Eshutachchan, Kabir, Tulsidas and Raidas. Lord Ram has been a giver to all. ‘Raghupati Raghav Raja Ram’ sung by Mahatma Gandhi is going to enlighten all of us,” Priyanka said and added even Waris Ali Shah said: “Whosoever is God is Ram.”

The Congress leader further said that national poet Maithili Sharan Gupt termed Lord Ram as the ‘force of the weak’.

“In the words of great poet Nirala, Lord Ram is tireless and the fundamental imagination of power. Lord Ram stands for courage, confluence, restraint and cooperation. Lord Ram is everyone's helper and wants the welfare of all. That is why he is ‘Maryada Purushottam,’ the Congress leader said and concluded her statement with ‘Jai Sia Ram’.

Even as the Congress general secretary confined herself to Lord Ram, her veteran colleague, Pramod Tiwari attacked the government, claiming that the bhoomi puja was confined to a one-party affair.

Targeting Yogi Adityanath

for his comments made on the Congress on Monday, Tiwari said that the party did not need certificate of nationalism from those who sided with Britishers during freedom struggle. He said that Congress always sacrificed for the nation.

Tiwari reminded shilanyas puja by former PM Rajeev Gandhi in Ayodhya and said that from the very beginning, the party took a stand of respecting a court decision or a mutual agreement between both sides on Ram the Temple issue.

“After the Supreme Court paved the way for construction of a Ram temple, all credit-jacking by BJP leaders are only aimed at gaining political mileage of it,” Tewari commented.

Rash driver mows down four, three succumb

Lucknow (PNS): Rash driving claimed three lives in Bijnor while a speeding truck knocked down a farmer in Sonbhadra late Monday night.

In Bijnor, a mango supplier, Naem of Naugaon (Amroha), was standing outside his orchard along with his partner Phool Singh and workers Nasir and Pappu on Haldaur road in Bisat hamlet (Bijnor) on Monday night. Suddenly the driver of a speeding car lost control and ploughed into the group, killing Naem and Phool Singh on the spot.

The mishap left Nasir and Pappu with critical injuries and they were rushed to district hos-

pital where Pappu also succumbed to his injuries. A case was later registered against the car driver and CCTV footages were being scanned to identify the driver and vehicle.

In Sonbhadra, a farmer going on a bicycle was fatally crushed by a speeding truck on Varanasi-Shaktinagar road in Amoliya hamlet of Robertsganj. Pratap (40) of Aamdeh hamlet of Robertsganj was returning from his fields when he was injured in the accident. He was shifted to a hospital by passers-by where he died. A case was registered and the body was sent for autopsy.

OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER R. E. D. DIVISION LUCKNOW U.P. ADDRESS : A-BLOCK, SARVODAY NAGAR, INDIRA NAGAR, LUCKNOW.

Letter NO.- 442 /RED/Tender/File No-017 Bond Clerk Date : 29.07.2020

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The Executive Engineer, U.P.R.E.D. LUCKNOW on behalf of Governor of Uttar Pradesh invites the percentage rate bids through e-tendering system from the eligible and approved Contractors registered with UP RED, in appropriate class A, B, C and D as the case may be. The Bidder may submit bids for any or all of the works

1. Name of work as per table.

Sl. No.	Name of District	Scheme	Name of Work	Total estimated cost (in Lakhs)	Bid security (EMD) (in Lakhs)	Cost of Bid document including GST (in Rupees)	Period of completion including rainy season
1	Lucknow	अन्य योजना	महात्मा गान्धी नगर प्रशिक्षण कालोनी व कोल्लेन्डर की सड़क-सड़क / मरम्मत हेतु अवरोध कार्य।	38.99	0.78	2720.00	2 Months
2	Lucknow	विभागीय निधि	एन सी ई एन स्टाफ कालोनी, ग्राम सुवर्णा खेड़ा, विभागीय निधि का खण्ड मोहनलालजय लखनऊ में 02 किलो का निर्माण कार्य।	12.76	0.26	860.00	2 Months

2. Date of availability of Bid documents on website : 06-08-2020. 3. Last Date/ Time for receipt of bids through e-procurement: 13-08-2020 up to 12.00 Noon. 4. Date of opening of bids through e-procurement: 13-08-2020 at 12.30 pm. 5. The Employer has right to issue addendum/corrigendum as per ITB clause-9 on-line which will not be published in any news paper. All prospective bidders are advised to keep regular watch and visit e-tender portal regularly. For further details please log on to <https://etender.up.nic.in> and download the bid document

Executive Engineer Rural Engineering Department Division-Lucknow On behalf of Governor of UP
U.P.: 153952, Date : 31.07.2020
विभाग वेबसाइट www.up.gov.nic.in पर उपलब्ध है।

NORTH CENTRAL RAILWAY, PRAYAGRAJ

E-Tendering Tender Notice

Tender Notice No. 2320202021 Dated : 31-07-2020

Divisional Railway Manager (Engineering)/ North Central Railway Prayagraj, for and on behalf of the President of India, invites E-TENDERS on prescribed form for the following work up to 13.30 hrs. on 26.08.2020. The details of the Tender are as under:

S. No.	Tender No.	Name of Work	Approx Cost (in ₹ Lakhs)	Earnest Money
1.	86	Improvement of coral club by replacement of roof and improvement to toilet.	71,80,011.70	1,43,600.00
2.	87	ALD-Renovation of operation theatre & surgical ward in central hospital, North Central Railway, Prayagraj.	73,87,474.28	1,47,800.00
3.	88	Subedarganj - Construction of RCC Boundary wall & Provision of Dog kennel in parade Ground of Subedarganj.	52,76,056.53	1,05,500.00
4.	89	ALD-Combined Tender for Installation of 10 Nos. & 09 Nos. automatic bacteriological treatment plant & treatment of drinking water at various pumps at Allahabad for five years under ADEN/HQ-1/PRYJ & ADEN/HQ-1/PRYJ.	1,16,42,496.28	2,08,200.00
5.	90	Housekeeping and operation of officer's Rest house & officer's Transit camp at Railgaon colony, Subedarganj for 18 months.	16,58,627.85	33,200.00
6.	91	ALD-Extension of control office building to accommodate centralized rolling stock monitoring entre in DRM office Prayagraj. (Phase-I)	42,27,820.80	84,600.00
7.	92	Hiring of 01 No. Emergency road utility vehicle 01 ton capacity for SSE/ Works (Incharge) under ADEN/Line/PRYJ, ADEN/HQ-1 & ADEN/HQ-1/PRYJ of Allahabad Division for 02 years.	8,39,520.00	16, 800.00

Completion period : For Tender no. 86: 05 months, For Tender no. 87,88 and 91: 06 months, For Tender no. 89: 63 months, For Tender no. 90: 18 months, For Tender no. 92: 24 months, Eligibility Criteria for similar work : Sr. No. 1 to 3 - Any civil Engineering Work, Sr. No. 4 - Installation Operation maintenance of water treatment plant for disinfection of drinking water and Sr. No. 5 to 7 - Not Applicable. Date of Opening of Tender : 26.08.2020. Note : 1) The complete information along with tender document of above E-Tenders are available on Website www.ireps.gov.in up to 13:30 hrs. on the due date of tender opening i.e. 26.08.2020. 2. Bids other than in the form of E-Bids shall not be accepted against above tenders. For this purpose, vendors are required to get themselves registered with IREPS website along with Digital Signature Certificate issued by CCA under IT Act-2000. 3. Rates entered into Financial Rate page and duly signed digitally shall be considered. Rates and any other financial entity in any other form letter head attached by vendors shall be straightway ignored and shall not be considered. 4. The tenderers shall submit a copy of certificate as given in tender document, in standard format, without which their tender may not be considered and shall be summarily rejected. 5. The supplier/ contractor of goods and /or services would be subject to GST Act and Rules as applicable from time to time. 6. Credentials in the name of firm applying for the work will only be considered. 7. Though no minimum eligibility criteria is specified for the works at SN. 5, 6 & 7. (Tender value being less than Rs. 50.00 lakhs) Bidders are advised to upload documents so that their financial capacity, capability & past performance to undertake the tendered work can be adjudged during evaluation of their offer. 8. Documents being attached should be signed by the tenderer on its body. 9. This tender notice has also been uploaded on www.ncr.indianrailways.gov.in. 10. Payment of Earnest Money Deposit (EMD) shall be accepted through net banking or payment gateway only. 11. In case of any difficulty helpdesk available on the website of IREPS may be approached. 12) Tender on line can be submitted up to 13.30 hrs. on 26.08.2020 83020(AN)

North central railways www.ncr.indianrailways.gov.in @ CPNCR

Although every possible care and caution has been taken to avoid errors or omissions, this publication is being sold on the condition and understanding that information given in this publication is merely for reference and must not be taken as having authority of or binding in any way on the writers, editors, publishers, and printers and sellers who do not owe any responsibility for any damage or loss to any person, a purchaser of this publication or not for the result of any action taken on the basis of this work. All disputes are subject to the exclusive jurisdiction of competent court and forums in Lucknow only. Readers are advised and requested to verify and seek appropriate advice to satisfy themselves about the veracity of any kind of advertisement before responding to any contents published in this newspaper. The printer, publisher, editor and any employee of the publisher's group will not be held responsible for any kind of claim made by the advertisers of the products & services and shall not be made responsible for any kind of loss, consequences and further product-related damages on such advertisements.

Indiranagar, Chinhat worst-hit

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The Health department is focusing on Indiranagar and Chinhat in containment exercise because these areas are witnessing the maximum number of coronavirus cases at this point of time. Chief Medical Officer Dr Rajendra Prasad Singh said they were getting the situation under control with the help of regular sanitisation and contact tracing in these areas. However, he said the situation would be better in coming days. About the age profile of patients, he said most of them were middle-aged persons while others included senior citizens.

“Senior citizens are going to hospitals for treatment of other diseases and contracting coronavirus infection,” he said.

He added that they were following the same strategies for containment of the exercise with only minor reshuffles for better results. “We have increased the number of doctors at the Integrated Control and Command Centre and also appointed a new superintendent at the Sarojininagar health centre. We have also brought a specialist from BKT to the Command Centre. We are making changes for better administration at the hospitals,” he said. However, he insisted that it was a small percentage of people who had tested positive in the district.

Meanwhile, Additional CMO MK Singh said that they had covered 70 per cent of the pollution in the district under door-to-door surveillance.

“Apart from surveillance and sample collection in containment areas, we are also doing mass testing from wherever we are getting the requests. There have been requests from various organisations and banks for carrying out testing of more than 100 people if anyone turns out to be positive.

CMS founder among 611 test +ve for coronavirus

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The spike continued as 611 persons tested positive for coronavirus on Tuesday, including CMS founder Jagdish Gandhi, while there were eight deaths across the city. Besides, 315 patients were discharged, taking the total number of such persons to 5,043. With eight deaths, the city toll reached 124 while the total active cases are 4,638.

A senior official at the CMO office said those who tested positive in the city included 25 from Talkatora, 24 from Mahanagar, 23 from Thakurganj, 21 from Cantt, 20 each from Gomtinagar & Bazaarkhala, 19 each from Ashiyana & Alambagh, 18

from Indiranagar, 17 each from Rae Bareilly road & Chowk, 15 from Hazratganj, nine each from Naka, Saadatganj & Jankipuram, eight each from Chinhat, Sarojininagar & Krishnanagar, seven each from Aliganj, Vikasnagar & Hasanganj, six from Kaiserbagh, four each from Gudamba, Banthara & Manaknagar, and two from Kakori.

Five of the deceased were from Lucknow while the rest from outside. “There was one death each at Integral Hospital, SGPGI, Era Medical College, RML, Mayo & Lok Bandhu hospitals, and two at KGMU.

KGMU spokesperson Dr Sudhir Singh a 54-year-old

man from Gomtinagar, admitted to the hospital on July 28, died of respiratory failure on Tuesday. He was suffering from chest injury, Dr Singh said. Besides, a 71-year-old man from Chandrashekhar Marg, who was admitted on July 3, also died of respiratory failure on Tuesday.

Meanwhile, in the state, 2,983 patients tested positive, including 259 from Kanpur, 109 from Varanasi and 130 from Prayagraj, taking the total number of cases to 1,00,310. There were 41 deaths, taking the state toll to 1,817. Besides, 1,878 patients recovered, taking the total number of such persons to 57,271.



People standing in queue at Civil Hospital to get themselves tested

Pioneer

containment zones as had been done earlier, he said there was no such plans. “However, the administration can take a call on making these areas large containment zones,” he said. He added that the maximum num-

ber of Covid-19 patients who died in Lucknow were from other districts.

The official said the working had smoothened to a large extent at the Integrated Control and Command Centre, and

they had a complaint redressal system which was functioning separately.

Meanwhile, Dr Abhijeet Chandra from KGMU said with the coronavirus becoming rampant in the city, they had held back the liver transplant programme. “Most of these patients are likely to catch coronavirus infection in the post-operative period because their immunity levels are less,” he said. He said four liver transplant operations were pending and the patients were being managed with drugs. “It is difficult and if there is an emergency operation which is not carried out in Lucknow, it is then done in a limited way in Delhi and the results are not good,” he pointed out. He said there was no option and they would wait for two more months and then review the situation.

LEADER OF OPPOSITION DEFEATS CORONAVIRUS

Leader of Opposition Ram Govind Chaudhary recovered from Covid-19 and was discharged from SGPGI on August 3. SGPGI media spokesperson said the 66-year-old was healthy and tested negative for coronavirus.

“He was admitted to the Covid hospital with pneumonia, diabetes and cardiac problems on June 23, and was kept on oxygen. He had problems of breathing for 8-10 days and was also on BiPAP support for a couple of days. He recovered even though he was in a high-risk category,” she said.

Chaudhary was under the care of Dr Devendra Gupta, who is the incharge of ICU-2 at the Covid hospital of SGPGI. “He tested positive several times but succeeded in defeating Covid-19 with his courage and patience. He expressed satisfied with the treatment being given at SGPGI,” the spokesperson said.

Civil services: Achievers ecstatic

PNS ■ LUCKNOW



Yashlok Dutt



Vivek Rajpoot

immensely when I was demotivated, and my brother was a big support system. My mother died in 2001 and my father brought us up single-handedly. He is a very happy man today and he was confident that I would crack the exam,” he said.

About his study routine, he said: “I studied for five hours daily and the previous failures helped me this time.” Yashlok said that he would love to work for the poor and the marginalised. “To see from outside and criticise is easy as compared to working in the system and making changes. I hope that I can help people,” he added.

Vivek Rajpoot, who achieved 488th rank, said it was

his ninth and final attempt. He said he was extremely happy. An architect who has been in and out of jobs after doing BArch from IIT-Roorkee, Vivek said perseverance was the key.

“There were several occasions when I reached the interview stage but could not get through. You should keep doing things which you think are right, and it will ultimately work for you,” he said. He pointed out that it was his sixth interview and it was hard to carry on, if not for the support by his family, friends and, of course, hard work. He said he would like to make a difference in a positive way, whatever area he goes into.

Government official’s son goes missing, found in Varanasi

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The sudden disappearance of the son of a senior government official sent the cops into a tizzy even as they remained on toes throughout the day on Tuesday. The cops heaved a sigh of relief after the boy was traced in Varanasi in the evening. The 16-year-old boy left his house of Indiranagar saying he was going to meet some friends, and later went missing. His mobile phone was also switched off. After his father contacted the police, three teams

were formed to trace the boy. A team led by ADCP Rajesh Srivastava reached the scene. Initial probe revealed that the boy’s phone was switched off near Aurobindo police outpost. The ADCP said the boy was traced in Varanasi.

Meanwhile, the Naka police recovered a 16-year-old boy, who was reported missing from Hardoi a few days back.

KHANDELWAL EXTRACTATIONS LIMITED
CIN: L24241UP1981PLC005282
Regd. Office: 5147, Nayaganj, Kanpur-208001
Email: khandelwal@pobox.com
Website: www.khandelwalextractions.com
Notice available at: www.bseindia.com
NOTICE OF BOARD MEETING
Notice is hereby given that a meeting of the Board of Directors of the Company is scheduled to be held on Friday, 14th August, 2020 at its registered office inter-alia, to consider and approve the Un-audited financial results of the Company for the quarter ended 30th June, 2020.
Khandelwal Extractions Limited
Place: Kanpur Surabhi Pasari
Date: 04.08.2020 (Company Secretary)

Young lovers end lives, couple found dead

PNS ■ LUCKNOW,

Two young lovers ended their lives in Firozabad while a couple was found dead inside their Meerut home after which their kin cried foul play.

In Firozabad, Deepak Sharma (27) of Dakshin Nagal Pachiya was having an affair with a girl from the neighbourhood which was opposed by the latter’s family. On Monday evening, Sharma’s kin found him lying unconscious and rushed him to a hospital where doctors pronounced him dead, saying that he had consumed some poisonous substance.

After the information of Sharma’s death reached his colony, his lover also consumed poison and was pronounced dead upon being rushed to a hospital. A case was registered and the bodies were sent for autopsy.

Elsewhere in Meerut, a couple was found dead under mysterious circumstances in Kazipur area of Kharkhaunda on Tuesday. Sonu aka Karn of

Hapur used to live with his wife Reshma in a rented accommodation in Kharkhaunda area of Meerut for the last six months. The couple got married about two years back. Sonu’s father Keshpal and other kin lived in a separate house in Kanshiram Colony of Meerut.

On Tuesday afternoon, Sonu’s family members reached his house and found the doors locked from inside. When no one responded from inside the house after several attempts, the kin looked through the window and found Sonu’s body hanging from the ceiling and Reshma lying on the floor near the bed.

Later the police were informed and after preliminary inquiry, the cops suspected it to be case of suicide.

Sonu’s family alleged that Sonu had a dispute with a youth living in Medical police station area and suspected that the couple might have been murdered by the youth. A case was registered and investigations were on.

4 persons commit suicide

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Four persons ended their lives in separate incidents in the state capital. A 40-year-old man hanged himself at his house after his family members went out for some work, in Kakori on Monday evening. Police said the man committed suicide, but failed to explain the reason.

As per reports, Prakash of Asat Kheda in the area was found hanging from the ceiling with a rope tied around his neck. His son Mohit Kumar Gautam and wife had gone out for some work. Mohit told the police that he got a call from a neighbour about the incident and reached the house.

“Neighbours brought him down but he had died by then,” Mohit told the police. Prakash worked as a labourer.

In another incident, a 32-year-old labourer ended his life at his house in Thakurganj on Tuesday morning. Deepak Chaurasia of Jagdeepur locality was hanging from an iron rod, with a rope tied around his neck in a room on top floor of his house.

Another youth, Utkarsh

(24) aka Chhotu of Pan Dariba in Naka was found hanging at his house on Monday. Police said Utkarsh had been suffering from some mental disease for the last 3-4 years and he might have ended his life under a severe bout of depression. The police said Utkarsh was found hanging from the ceiling of a room with a dupatta tied around his neck.

In another incident, a 35-year-old woman, identified as Seema of Gosainganj, was found hanging from a tree in the area on Tuesday. Reports said Seema had a love marriage with one Jitendra and for the past few months, the couple were not on good terms. On Tuesday, Seema left the house and later took the extreme step.

Meanwhile, a youth, identified as Shani Kumar (21) of Bharosa village of Para, drowning in a pond in the area on Tuesday afternoon. Reports said that Shani, along with his friends Ajay Gautam, Sandeep, Jitendra Gautam, Karan (all of Para) and Rammi & Babu Yadav (both of Kakori) had gone to Kodila pond in the area to take bath. The police

said Shani reached the middle of the pond and drowned. “Shani’s friends tried to save him, but in vain. They later informed his family,” the police said.

TEACHER NABBED FOR ACTING FRESH WITH MINOR STUDENT

A tutor was arrested on the charges of acting fresh with an 11-year-old girl student in Jankipuram on Monday. The accused was identified as Shailendra Tripathi of sector-H in the area. Reports said the accused acted fresh with the girl at his house when she was there for tuitions on August 1. The girl narrated her ordeal to her parents after returning home and they lodged a complaint. Consequently, he was nabbed. The girl is a student of class IV. The police said a case for eve-teasing and detaining the victim was lodged against the accused, who was also booked under POCSO Act.

In another incident, the Jankipuram police arrested a youth, identified as Deepak Kumar, on the charges of acting fresh with a minor girl on August 1.

OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER, CONSTRUCTION DIVISION-I, U.P.JAL NIGAM, RAEBARELI

NIT No.: 1031/G-6/44

Date.: 29.07.2020

E- TENDER NOTICE

U.P. Jal Nigam, undersigned invites on-line percentage rate E-Tender in two bid system for execution of proposed work House connection & Laying/ Replacement of Damaged or Choked pipe line in different water supply schemes in District Raebareli under Jal Jeevan Mission on Turn Key basis upto **30.08.2020 till 17:00 Hrs.** The details for submission of e-bids will be available in the tender document on the UP Govt’s e-procurement website <https://etender.up.nic.in> from **14.08.2020 to 30.08.2020 till 17:00 Hrs.** The technical part of e-bids will be opened on **31.08.2020 at 15:00 Hrs.** in the office of the Executive Engineer, Construction Division-I, U.P. Jal Nigam, Raebareli. The cost of Bid Document is **Rs. 10000.00 + 18% G.S.T. extra or Rs. 5,000.00+ 18% G.S.T. extra** whichever is applicable. The e-notice can also be viewed on the official website www.jn.upsc.gov.in. **ALL THE MODIFICATIONS/ CORRIGENDUM HERE AFTER WILL BE PUBLISHED ONLY ON THE E-PROCUREMENT PORTAL.**

मध्यंचल विद्युत वितरण निगम लिमिटेड
अल्पकालिक ई-निविदा
सुचना अधोहस्ताक्षरी द्वारा ई-पोर्टल <https://etender.up.nic.in> पर दिनांक **19.08.2020** को समय 12.00 बजे तक ई-निविदा अपलोड की जानी है, ई-निविदा का प्रथम भाग दिनांक **19.08.2020** समय 14.00 बजे खोली जायेगी। निविदा संबंधी समस्त जानकारी मध्यांचल विद्युत वितरण निगम लिमिटेड की वेबसाइट www.mvnl.in पर भी अवलोकित की जा सकती है, परन्तु निविदा का प्रथम व द्वितीय-भाग <https://etender.up.nic.in> पर ही अपलोड किया जायेगा। अधोहस्ताक्षरी को बिना कोई कारण बताये किसी अथवा सभी निविदाओं को निरस्त करने/संशोधन करने/विभिन्न फर्मों के मध्य विभक्त करने का अधिकार सुरक्षित है। **1. निविदा सं-31/विनिविर्(प्रो)/लेसा/2020-21** : लेसा सिस गोमती क्षेत्र के अन्तर्गत 33 एवं 11 कोवेंडी तथा एलाटीडी केबिलों में फाल्ट लोकेट करने का कार्य एवं उससे संबंधित अन्य कार्य। निविदा प्रपत्र मूल्य 3000/-+ 18 प्रतिशत जीएसटीडी ₹ 540/- सहित कुल ₹ 3540/-+अप्रतिदेय एवं धरोहर राशि ₹ 91,000.00 मात्र। **अधीक्षण अभियन्ता, विद्युत नगरीय वितरण मण्डल (प्रथम), लेसा नवन, रेजीडेन्सी, लखनऊ।** पत्रांक : 1254 दिनांक : 4.8.20 “राष्ट्र हित में बिजली बचाये टोल फ्री नं-1800-1800-440”

RAKSHA BANDHAN

On the occasion of Raksha Bandhan, UPSRTC provided free bus rides to women for 24 hours. UPSRTC operated 8,105 buses providing free travel facility to 6,49,379 women passengers. Checking teams monitored the operational arrangements on route in shifts. The teams also ensured the availability of buses on the route as per demands.

ADMISSION OFFER

Ishita Niwas, a student of City Montessori School, Gomti Nagar Campus II, has been offered admission with a scholarship of US\$ 40,000 by the University of Detroit, USA, for pursuing higher studies there. She has been awarded this scholarship for the entire study period of four years. Thus, yet another talented student of CMS made it to an esteemed foreign university owing to her diligence, aptitude and knowledge.



CITYBRIEFS

ANALYTICAL TOXICOLOGY

The New Education Policy-2020 lays emphasis on strengthening the link between research and teaching at the undergraduate level. It is believed that this approach towards skill-based learning will help individuals identify skill sets much earlier, thereby fostering a strong culture for innovation and empowering students to be future ready. These were the thoughts that echoed during the inauguration of the add-on course on ‘Analytical Toxicology’ being offered online, jointly by Indian Institute of Toxicology Research (IITR) and Hindu College, University of Delhi, under the umbrella of CSIR Integrated Skill Development Initiative. Director-general of Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) and secretary, Department of Scientific and Industrial Research (DSIR), Shekhar C Mande laid emphasis on the role of CSIR in fostering a technology, research and innovation-driven ecosystem in academic institutions of the country. IITR director Alok Dhawan shared the salient features of the field of Toxicology



Raksha Bandhan celebrations at Mankameshwar temple on Monday

Pioneer

and its scope for various avenues in the real world. He highlighted that Toxicology has always been a translational science which defines the domains of safety. Principal, Hindu College (Delhi), Anju

Srivastava reiterated that the college has always made efforts for providing learning experience beyond the curriculum and it was another such attempt in that direction. The inaugural event also included

Tight security in Kashi on eve of bhoomi puja in Ayodhya

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Tight security arrangements have been made in this holy city on the eve of proposed bhoomi puja programme of Ram temple in Ayodhya here on Tuesday. Senior district and police officers visited various sensitive areas to study the situation. Besides, at various places including railway stations, bus depots and others, the cops kept close vigil on all the activities and checked the people. Security arrangements have also been tightened in Dwadas Jyotilinga Kashi Vishwanath and some other temples. Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Amit Pathak inspected various areas to take stock of the situation. The local administration heaved a sigh of relief after passing of the fifth and last Monday in the auspicious month of Shravan a day ago when hundreds of devotees offered prayer at Kashi Vishanath and other temples.

Expressing their happiness over the laying of the foundation programme for Ram temple, the activists of Namami Gange (Kashi unit) assembled at Dashaswamedh Ghat and offered prayer. They prayed the Almighty to remove all the hurdles coming in the way of construction of a grand temple in Ayodhya. Convenor Rajesh Shukla termed the bhoomi puja as 'Mangal Utsav' of the Indians. He said that the prayer was offered at the same place where earlier the Prime Minister Narendra Modi had offered Ganga Puja at Dashaswamedh Ghat. They also recited Ramayan Path for making the country self-reliant, welfare of the people and maintaining harmony. Shivam Agrahari, Ram Prakash Jaiswal, Satyam Jaiswal and others were also present. Similarly, a group of people including Muslims also assembled near Gita Mandir at Nai Sarak to celebrate the day.

Earlier, amidst the chanti-



SSP Amit Pathak inspecting security arrangements at Godowlia in Varanasi on Tuesday on eve of bhoomi puja in Ayodhya

Pioneer

ng of the traditional slogan of Har Har Mahadev apart from Jai Sri Ram, the local people sent off the three senior scholars of the city to Ayodhya. After offering prayer at Sankatmochan temple they left for Ayodhya. They included secretary of Kashi Vidvat Parishad Dr Ram Narayan Dwivedi, Prof. Ram Mohan Pandey and Prof Vinay Pandey. They will attend the foundation laying programme in Ayodhya. They felt that the timing chosen for bhoimi puja of Ram temple is best as per jyotish shastra. Besides, on the call of the Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath to the Sant Samaj of Varanasi, Mathura, Prayagraj and Gorakhpur, Akhandh Maharudrabhishek programme will be continue from Wednesday to the completion of Ram temple construction in view to avoid any hurdles in the same. It will be held daily in the

morning at Birdopur (Mehmoorganj) office of Uttar Pradesh Patrakar Sangthan, informed association chief Raghuvveer Singh and Peethadishwar of Kailash Math Ashutosh Giri Maharaj.

Though some of the opposition parties did not mention Ram temple issue in their protests, they were seen on the roads here during the day. Samajvadi Party (SP) workers led by its former city general secretary Laloo Yadav took out a padyatra from Nakhsh Gosai Bada said that it was the continuation of their Halla Bol campaign being launched in the city for the last 11 days. They were demanding waiving off electricity bills of middle class, poor and weaver families as they had faced a lot of hardship during the coronavirus pandemic. After passing through Lohatia, Maidagin, Visheshwarganj they reached

Machodhauri Park where they led by district chief Sujit Yadav handed over a memorandum to local CO.

Besides, a joint group of left and other parties reached district headquarters and handed over their 11-point charter of demands to the district administration. Apart from raising their voices against deteriorating law and order situation, they also demanded waiving of power bills and sufficient help to the poor. They also demanded implementation of pro-farmer policies and withdrawal of all pro-corporate house policies.

The delegation comprised district secretary of CPM Nandlal Patel, Forward Bloc leader Sanjay Bhattacharya, district chief of RJD Surendra Yadav, city incharge of CPI(ML) Kamlesh Yadav and district secretary of CPI Jai Shankar Singh.

93 new COVID-19 patients found

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Varanasi has heaved a slight relief when after many days, the number of COVID-19 patients found here were in double figures. With the detection of 93 cases here on Tuesday, the total number of COVID-19 cases has increased to 3,325. The day also saw one more death, increasing the toll to 69. During the day, the follow-up reports included 88 patients recovered from home isolation and the total number of patients cured at home has increased to 565, while 47 recovered from the hospitals. With this, the total number of patients discharged from the hospitals has reached 1,270 while the total number of cured patients is 1,835, leaving 1,421 active patients. Since the permission given to the patients for home isolation, the recovery rate, which was fallen to even below 40 per cent level, has started improving, once again.

Meanwhile, District Magistrate (DM) Kaushal Raj Sharma, along with Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Amit Pathak inspected District Jail at Chaukaghat. They also checked the barracks and food facilities in the jail premises. They have instructed the jail officers to ensure maintaining social distancing in the premises apart from ensuring that everyone should wear masks.



DM KR Sharma reviewing corona situation at Control Room in Varanasi on Tuesday

Pioneer

In the recent time, a large number of prisoners and police personnel were found corona patients in the region. Later, the DM held a meeting with the health officers to review the COVID-19 situation at Integrated COVID-19 Command Control Room, Siga. He has instructed the health officers to keep watch on various corona-infected patients who are also suffering from various other diseases. He said that no laxity should be tolerated in this direction. ADM (Finance), CMO and many other officers were also present.

According to the Chief Medical Officer (CMO) Dr VB Singh, in the first report received by 11 am during the day as many as 20 new corona patients were found out of 105 reports received from Microbiology department of Banaras Hindu University (BHU). There were also two deaths increasing the number to 68. Till then, the total test reports received were 46,876 and the results of 7,127 excluding 304 RTPCR samples collected a day ago are awaited. Out of these, 43,624 were negative reports, while 3,252 positive. The total number of sam-

ples collected was 54,307. Earlier, a day ago 139 positive patents were found. The day also saw three deaths and in recent days, the mortality rate in the district has increased sharply. They were women aged 65 and 50 belonging to Malhaya Tola (Ramnagar) and Hukulganj respectively while third one was a male aged 32 from Gillat Bazar (Shivpur). With the addition of 23 red zones, the total number of hotspots has increased to 967 including 395 red zones. Besides, there are 572 green zones including 43 new ones.

IIT-BHU to help NHAI improve road quality

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Indian Institute of Technology, Banaras Hindu University (IIT-BHU) will play an important role in improving the quality of roads in India. The experts of the institute will conduct a research work on the development of performance based mix design process for bituminous mixtures. For this, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) has been signed between IIT-BHU and the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI), Union Ministry of Road Transport and Highways. This research work will be carried

out under Dr. Nikhil Saboo and Dr Ankit Gupta, both assistant professors in the Department of Civil Engineering, as the principle investigator (PI) and co-PI respectively.

The surface layer of the flexible pavement is the costliest component, which bears most of the vehicular loading in the highway. The current methods involved in the mix design of bituminous mixtures has certain deficiencies and cannot assure performance of the surface layers in terms of resistance to rutting and fatigue cracking.

It is envisaged that this study will come up with more

logical guidelines on rational practices for developing mixes which can sustain heavy vehicular loading in Indian Highways. Such optimised mix design will reduce the variability associated with the performance of bituminous mixes and will serve as an economical guideline for the long term performance of flexible pavements.

This project is aimed towards construction of durable and long lasting roads in India. It will also help in reducing the life cycle cost by delaying the need of frequent maintenance. The outcomes of this project will be imple-

mented through construction of test sections in collaboration with NHAI. These roads will be evaluated periodically to understand the applicability of the developed methodology. This will help to gain more confidence in adopting the developed technology for construction of durable roads in India.

‘This industry-academia relationship is anticipated to open further opportunities for exchange of ideas and expertise which will lead to sustainable development of infrastructure in the country,’ said the Director of IIT-BHU Prof. PK Jain.

134 test positive in Prayagraj

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ ALLAHABAD

An increasing number of Acorona positive patients also showed a rapid rise on Monday night as 134 new positive cases have been reported, while two corona patients died at Swaroop Rani Nehru Hospital. The two deceased were the women who lived in the city itself. The number of corona patients rose to 2,822 on Monday night.

Among the new patients are PWD's mechanical engineers and four bank employees. Corona has been confirmed in an employee of HDFC Bank Civil Lines branch, two employees of State Bank of India Bamrauli and one employee of Bank of Baroda.besides, an eminent businessman of Lukerganj, a railway employee, teacher,

anganwadi worker, private school computer teacher, Electricity department employee and Excise Department employee have also come under the grip of corona on the same day.

On Monday night, 69 corona patients from different COVID hospitals were also discharged after they fully recovered. Dr. Rishi Sahai, the Nodal Officer for COVID-19 said that the report of 1,152 samples has come negative. In addition, samples of 1,069 corona suspects have been taken for testing.

Due to the high number of corona patients, there are many suspected patients who have had enough days of sampling, but they are still waiting for the report. Sampling report of 2,563 corona suspected patients has not been received yet.

It may be pointed out here that 62,275 samples have been sent by the Health department for testing so far. In which 55,696 reports have also come.

As the graph of death is increasing, the beats of people are increasing. In such a situation, the district administration has asked more and more people to get corona examined. He also called upon the village heads to ensure that every person with signs of infection should get corona examined at the CHC.

If the corona is tested on time and treatment starts as soon as the report is positive, then he/she can be saved from death. On the other hand, if one reaches the hospital in critical condition, it becomes difficult to save him. So far, the doctors have come up with this result from the case history of

those who have recovered and died from corona.

The District Magistrate Bhanu Chandra Goswami called upon all village heads to increase their activity. Their contribution during the corona period has been commendable but there is still more work to be done by them.

The DM asked the village heads that now in the rural area, the person who has got symptoms of fever, cold, cough etc.should be immediately taken them to the nearest CHC where the corona is being tested from 10 am to 2 pm. Testing report is also coming soon. When positive in the test, get him/her admitted to the hospital immediately. In the area where corona patients are found, sanitisation operations must be done there, the DM added.

COVID HDU complex inaugurated

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ ALLAHABAD

COVID High Dependency Unit (HDU) complex was inaugurated on Tuesday at Military Hospital Prayagraj for Prayagraj Station comprising Army units and Air Force Station in and around Prayagraj. The complex was inaugurated by Maj Gen IM Lamba, General Officer Commanding, Purva UP and MP Sub Area

The COVID High Dependency Unit (HDU) complex comprising HDU for COVID, COVID testing lab with viral transport media and Rapid Antigen testing, toilet complexes, donning doffing room was created under operational works by the Army authorities in a record time of three months. Brigadier Sundeeep Bhandari, VSM, Commandant, Military Hospital Allahabad reiterated that from March 2020 till now under COVID preparedness, lot of efforts have been made



Maj Gen IM Lamba, General Officer Commanding, Purva UP and MP Sub Area inaugurating COVID High Dependency Unit complex at Military Hospital Prayagraj

Pioneer

for enhancement of medical infrastructure, essential medical equipments, drugs, testing

facilities and manpower training on disinfection and sanitation. The hospital has 120

beds dedicated for COVID (70 for males, 40 for families and 10 for critical care).

NCR GM reviews safety, new opportunities in freight loading

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ ALLAHABAD

General Manager, North Central and Northern Railway Rajiv Chaudhry has stressed to utilise lean passenger operations period to carry out works required for speed raising.

On Tuesday the General Manager reviewed position of safety, new opportunities in freight loading, speed raising in New Delhi-Howrah and New Delhi Mumbai trunk routes to 160 Kmph through video conferencing with PHODs of North Central Railway and Divisional Railway Managers Prayagraj, Jhansi and Agra.

The status of works required for raising speed of

New Delhi- Howrah and New Delhi- Mumbai routes to 160 Kmph had been reviewed on August 2 by the Ministry of Railways. North Central Railway is the most important Railway in speed enhancement work over both the trunk routes covering maximum stretch. During weekly review meeting of North Central railway on Tuesday Rajiv Chaudhry directed for immediate planning of block working for these major works by all concerned departments i.e. engineering, electrical, signalling and mechanical. He stressed that the current lean passenger operation period needs to be utilised to maximum extent to carry out this

massive work and directed all concerned agencies to mobilise resources immediately to start working on this ambitious and very important Railway project from September-2020.

Safety of trains and road users at level crossings has always remained a high priority item for Railways. With a view to further enhance safety at level crossing gates General Manager emphasised on improvement in level crossing road surface and illumination infrastructure. Chaudhry suggested the use of heavy duty pipe across the road surface for making speed breakers so as it doesn't break frequently under load of heavy vehicles and protection against speeding

vehicles is available through pipelines even if the outer surface is damaged to some extent. He said that field level engineers must take stock of prevailing situations at each level crossing gate and design and construct roads at crossings in such a way that speed of approaching vehicles to level crossing is reduced to minimum but evacuation on other side of level crossing is faster. He also stressed that illumination audit of all level crossing gates must be done. Wherever local electricity is not available, adequate capacity solar light shall be fitted to ensure improved illumination and safety at level crossing gates.

AIKSCC for reduction in fuel prices

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ ALLAHABAD

The AIKSCC has demanded a reduction in fuel prices to half, at least to the price of Air Turbine fuel, ₹ 44 per litre in order to reduce the burden on the peasantry. It will also help to revive Indian markets and economy by increasing income of 80 crore farmers.

Farmers all over the country are holding a nationwide protest on August 9, the anniversary of the Quit India movement with the slogan 'Corporate Bhagao, Kisan Bachao'.

Addressing a national campaign on facebook live, WG member and GS, AIKMS, Dr Ashish Mital said that today total taxes on diesel and petrol are around ₹ 51, which is 65% of the cost, while ready to sell fuel is around Rs. 26 28 only.

The tax includes central excise duty of ₹32.98 on petrol which was only ₹9.20 in November 2014 and ₹31.83 on diesel which was only ₹ 30.46 then. VAT of ₹18 per litre is additional.

The government has been raising fuel taxes to shore up its income. While it allots high margins to companies and then claims it is giving fuel subsidy, while in reality it

is heavily taxing it. Similarly it claims high agriculture subsidy even though high diesel prices affects cost of inputs, tilling, harvesting, transport and processing of food crops and is a negative subsidy. It thus extracts out of the labour of farmers and just as the British extracted 'lagaan' it extracts fuel taxes.

This taxation is much higher than what the governmnts of our neighbours charge.

In Pakistan petrol costs an equivalent of ₹ 45 and diesel ₹45.75, in Sri Lanka ₹ 65.25 and ₹ 42, in Bangladesh ₹ 78.75 and ₹ 57.75. Indian prices are ₹ 83.75 and ₹ 79.50 as per the international fuel pricing list.

The high taxation is to overcome heavy expenditures being made by the government to cover up corporate losses.

The GOI paid Indian banks ₹ 68,607 crore in April 2020 to waive debts of 50 rich-est Indians. The present NPAs are around ₹ 8.5 lakh crore and another ₹ 6lakh crore are slated to build up by March 2021.

Either the government pays this to banks or the banks will suffer losses and tell common account holders that

their money is lost. The government is not ready to recover this money from big corporate houses from whom it is due.

SIGHT OF TWO BLIND PERSONS RESTORED: Dr SP Singh, Principal, MLN Medical College and Director, Regional Institute of Ophthalmology, MD Eye Hospital, Prayagraj restored the sight of two blind persons through Keratoplasty operation here on Tuesday. The donor of cornea was Saroj Kumari Srivastava aged about 65 Resident of 143-D, Alopibagh, Prayagraj who passed away on August 2, 2020. Pankaj Kumar Srivastava, son of the deceased informed the Eye Bank situated at Regional Institute of Ophthalmology, MD Eye Hospital.

Late Saroj Kumari Srivastava during her lifetime had made a wish to donate her eyes to the eye bank after her death for the restoration of sight to the blind persons.

As soon as Prof SP Singh received the information of death, he immediately directed the eye bank Incharge Dr Kshama Dwivedi, Associate Professor, under the supervision of whom a team of doctors consisting of Dr Pranav

Saluja, Dr Jitendra, Dr Sanchita, Dr Sanskriti, Dr Shekhar and Dr Shweta Gupta rushed to the residence of the deceased for collection of eyes.

The two corneas were properly examined by Dr SP Singh and it was found that the donated eyes were suitable for corneal transplantation. The prospective recipients were called and transplantation of the donated corneas (Keratoplasty) were done. After the corneal transplantation operation two blind patients got their sight and now they are seeing the world. Dr SP Singh has done a number of keratoplasty operations in the past and now these blind persons are seeing the world.

Dr SP Singh has appealed to the general public to come forward in donating eyes after their death for the restoration of sight to the blind persons. Indeed it would be a great service to mankind if the heirs of the donor fulfill the wishes of the dead person and inform the eye bank promptly for the donation of eyes after death. It will go a long way in promoting the corneal transplantation surgeries in the hospital, so the blind persons could see.

DM expresses concern over delay in reaching COVID-19 patients

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

District Magistrate BR Tiwari has expressed concern over the poor tracking and tracing of coronavirus positive cases and the delay in approaching the COVID-19 patients despite the health authorities being contacted by them.

He said the health teams should reach the COVID-19 patients as early as possible when the person informed the control room or health authorities.

The district magistrate said due to the failure of the rapid response team and the surveillance teams to reach the COVID-19 patients, they were approaching hospitals on their own in critical conditions and after much delay.

Dr Tiwari directed the health officials to ensure that

370 more test positive

KANPUR (PNS): Coronavirus cases surged in Kanpur Nagar as 370 people tested positive in the last 24 hours.

Chief Medical Officer Dr Anil K Mishra said with 370 more people testing positive for coronavirus between Monday evening and Tuesday evening, 6670 cases had been confirmed in the city so far. He said 60 COVID-19 patients were discharged from hospitals in the last 24 hours, and with this 2,323 infected persons had been cured in the city and at present 3858 active cases were undergoing treatment at various Covid hospitals.

The CMO said nine more COVID-19 deaths were reported in the city, pushing the death toll to 233 on Tuesday evening. He said 2329 samples were taken for testing in the city.

the rapid response team, surveillance teams and contact tracing teams reached the patients at the earliest.

He warned that laxity in this regard would not be tolerated.

The district magistrate said directives had been issued to the health authorities to give further momentum to testing and to make surveil-

lance teams active.

He said there was a general complaint that there was acute crisis of beds in Covid hospitals and thus private hospital were being contacted to provide help by setting up holding areas in their respective hospitals.

Dr Tiwari said in view of the surge in coronavirus positive cases, it had been decid-

ed to allow home isolation and till date around 870 cases had been allowed home isolation.

He said the health authorities would provide essential medicines to people in home isolation. The district magistrate said it had been decided that doctors of community health centres (CHCs) and primary health centres (PHCs) would monitor the home isolation patients. He added that it had been decided to provide essential medicine kits to patients allowed home isolation.

Dr Tiwari said very soon the isolation kits would be provided to patients in home isolation. He said the kit would contain 10 tablets of paracetamol 500 mg, three tablets of evermectin 12 mg, 10 tablets of Vitamin C 500 mg, three sachets of Vitamin D-3 and 20 sachets of Ayush Decoction.

UPSIDA allows sub-division of sick unit's land

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Uttar Pradesh State Industrial Development Authority (UPSIDA) has provided many reliefs to allottees of plots in industrial areas.

Industrialists are now allowed sub-division of their sick unit land.

Apart from construction of multi-storied building under the flatted factory model, they are also allowed to construct residential flats there for sale or for rental purposes.

In a bid to reduce the problems of industrialists, the UPSIDA management has made certain amendments to the Land and Building Regularisation Rules and enforced them with immediate effect.

After the amendments, construction of flatted factory on some part of surplus land of the sick industrial units has been allowed by conversion of land use.

For the conversion of surplus land by big industrial units, UPSIDA would allow its sub-division. For the sub-division of the proposed surplus land, allottees would have to spare half portion of the sub-divided land for buy-back by the UPSIDA.

Under the buy-back scheme, the UPSIDA would pay the cost of this half portion of the sub-divided land to the allottee.

UPSIDA Chief Executive Officer Mayur Maheshwari said industrialists were now able to take benefits of sub-division of their land and construction of flatted factory facilities.

He said from June onwards, around 30 acre land had been allotted to 56 industrial units. The industrial units to be set up on this land involve investment of around Rs 450 crore and would provide jobs to over 4,600 people, he added.

Management of fungal diseases, pests key to sustainable agriculture: Experts

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Pulses play a major role in human diet and are considered a rich source of proteins. But the major constraints in achieving good yield of pulses are various fungal diseases and pests. Thus, there is need to understand major fungal pathogens and their management strategies for sustainable agriculture.

The major pulse crops in India are Bengal gram, pigeon pea, black gram, green gram, lentil and peas, which are attacked by several pathogens that cause considerable damage to the crop. This was stated by Prof RK Mishra from the Indian Institute of Pulse Research (IIPR) while addressing a webinar organised by SN Sen Degree College.

He said the IIPR had through its extensive research identified two anti-fungals, Pulse Derma and Pulse Derma-1, which were highly successful in saving the crop from damage. He said Bengal gram was affected mainly by wilt, blight and rust.

Prof Mishra said today eating organic was a symbiotic process, where the consumers could not just be buyers but they also had to work with farmers and suppliers. He said the local solution comprised various stages, like the grains were repeatedly dried, cleaned and natural control mechanisms such as neem leaves, vasambu or red chillies used to control pest infestation.

Prof Mishra said the pest problems increased during the monsoon due to moisture in the air but it was also difficult to dry pulses during this season. He said the pests could easily be managed as one added flour through a sieve and the flour got attacked the earliest, then the broken grains and then the whole grains.

He said among the pulses, those with skin were more vulnerable to attacks than the split versions. Prof Mishra said fungi showed the greatest diversity with their conservatively estimated 1.5 million species and they were one of the primary decomposers in the ecosystem.

Four held for smuggling heroin

CORRESPONDENT ■ CHANDAULI

The Mughalsarai Kotwali police raided three places on Monday and recovered 677 grams of heroin. During this time the police arrested four persons, including a historysheeter of Sagra police station, on charges of smuggling heroin. The police sent the accused to jail by filing a case against them. Police said the recovered heroin was worth ₹ 80 lakh. Mughalsarai Kotwali police was tipped off around 3:30 am on Monday that a youth was standing near the bus

stand with heroin and was waiting for someone. At this which the police conducted a raid and caught Sonu Das, a resident of Kali Mahal with seized 52 grams of heroin. After being informed around 4:30 am the police raided Galla Mandi trifurcation and caught Vijay Yadav alias Bundal, a resident Konia Kazzakpura, Varanasi along with 525 grams of heroin. According to the police, the accused was a historysheeter of Sagra police station. On being alerted around 7:30 am the police arrested Ravi Singh and Riyaz Khan, from an area near the

guard running room on Bhupauli Road and recovered 100 grams of heroin from them. Mughalsarai Kotwali incharge inspector Shivanand Mishra, S-Is Vipin Singh, Shrikant Pandey and Satyendra Vikram Singh, head constables Arvind Bhardwaj, Premchandra Singh, and Brijesh Pal and constables Pritam Bind and Sunil Kumar Sahu were present during the raids. CO Sadar Kunwar Prabhat Singh said total 677 grams of heroin was recovered by raiding all three places. Its cost was ₹ 80 lakh, he added.

Safety arrangements satisfactory at Manduadih: CCRS

PNS ■ VARANASI

Chief Commissioner of Railway Safety (CCRS), New Delhi, Shailesh Kumar Pathak expressed satisfaction while monitoring the passenger safety arrangements at Manduadih station through CCTV cameras on Monday. He also expressed happiness over smooth train traffic movement from all the three directions at this railway station of NER here. He was here to inspect the safety arrangements, upgradation of passenger's facilities and operational smoothness of trains under the ongoing doubling of tracks work on Manduadih-Prayagraj Rambagh (Allahabad City) route of Varanasi division of NER. Subsequently during his window-trailing inspection the CCRS reached Madhosingh railway station in his special vehicle from the newly-laid

track line by checking the speed limit. He also inspected the railway tracks, their fittings, crossover lines, over head tractions, colour light signals, information/warning boards and distance standards. Afterwards, Pathak continued his inspection



through the old track lines on Madhosingh-Jhansi rail section. During this window trailing inspection, he checked the overhead cables, HT) crossing of 800 KV and major IJET bridge over Ganga between Jhansi and Prayagraj Rambagh railway stations. During his stay there he issued some instructions to

the officers concerned regarding isolation of traction lines. He also inspected all the minor and major bridges, culverts, curvatures, points and crossings, over head lines, electric poles, railway track line fittings, electrified colour light signals, RE area sitting boards, high voltage warning boards, road underpasses and railway crossings etc. between Manduadih and Prayagraj Junction railway stations. During his inspection, CCRS was accompanied by ADRM (Operations) SPS Yadav, senior divisional operations manager Rohit Gupta, SDE-III Atul Tripathi, SDEE (Electrical Traction) Pankaj Kesharwani, SEE (General) Satyendra Yadav, senior divisional signal and telecom engineer Ashutosh Pandey, senior divisional safety officer SK Yadav and chief project manager of Rail Vikas Nigam Limited (RVNL) Vikas Chandra.

Route march conducted

CORRESPONDENT ■ MIRZAPUR

In view of bhoomi puja at Ayodhya the police conducted a route march on the main thoroughfares of the city which was led by the SP, Dr Dharmveer Singh. He said that the march was taken out to instil confidence among the



people and warn the outlaws. He said in view of the alert not only at district headquarters but even in remote areas the route march was conducted. It started from the police office on Monday and after passing through the city culminated at Station Road. Meanwhile SP distributed kits of food items to the deprived persons through the Police Public Annapoorna Bank on Monday. On the occasion of Rakshabandhan

he distributed kits having food materials, including flour, rice, biscuit, pulse, edible oil etc in the slum areas located at Raidani Colony under City Kotwali police station and at Sangmohal under Katra Kotwali police station. Apart from these places the SP distributed kits at railway station and he taught the lesson of social distancing to people. He urged the beneficiaries to remain safe from coronavirus not only in their own interest but their family members too. He was accompanied by the ASP (city), CO city and SHOs of Katra Kotwali and City Kotwali.

MAN DIES: A man fell into a well and died after inhaling poisonous gas in Sarsavaan village under Kachhawan police station. Reports said that Sola Prajapati (55), son of Balmukund Prajapati, fell into the well in an inebriated state and died after inhaling poisonous gas there. The police reached the spot along with fire brigade but till the filing of the report his body could not be brought out from the well.

Man hit by bus, dies

CORRESPONDENT ■ GORAKHPUR

One person was killed when he was hit by a bus on the Sonauli highway. His relative too was seriously injured in the accident. Police took them to the CHC where doctors declared Vindresh Sahni (32), son of Rampreet Sahni, a resident of Mahadeva Khutaha Bazar under the Paniara police station in Maharajan, dead. The injured, Harihar, was referred to the Gorakhpur Medical College in view of his critical state. Vindresh had come to Tola Mafia in Basantpur village under the Campierganj on Monday morning with his wife on a motorbike.

Mishap death

CORRESPONDENT ■ MAHOBA

One person was killed when a speeding auto-rickshaw overturned near Bijanagar Road recently. As a result the victim identified Manulal, son of Karia, a resident Makarabi under the Kabrai police station died on the spot.

Bikru ambush: Judicial panel members visit village

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Members of the judicial commission, set up by the Supreme Court visited Bikru village in Chaubepur on Tuesday and carried out investigations about the July 3 early morning ambush in which eight cops were killed and the gunning down of gangster Vikas Dubey in an encounter with police on July 10 morning.

It may be recalled that on the proposal of Uttar Pradesh government, the Supreme Court has approved the setting up of a three-member commission to investigate the Bikru carnage and the killing of gangster Vikas Dubey.

The commission is headed by retired judge of Supreme Court, Justice (Retd) BS Chauhan. The other two members of the commission are Justice (Retd) Shashi Kant Agarwal who retired from Allahabad High Court and former DGP KL Gupta.

The commission is required to submit its report to the UP government within two months. The commission has been provided office and staff by the Central government.

All the three members of the commission reached the Circuit House here on Tuesday morning and gathered prima facie information about the incident from District Magistrate Brahma Deo Ram Tiwari and SSP Pritinder Singh. Thereafter, the commis-



Judicial Commission Members visited Bikru village on Tuesday.

Pioneer.

sion members went to Bikru village along with police and district administration officials.

The crime scene was recreated at Bikru village in advance. The backhoe (JCB) was also parked at the same spot where it was present on the night of July 2 to block the entry of police party.

The commission members visited the spot where eight police personnel were killed, the demolished house of Vikas Dubey and his neighbouring houses.

They stayed in the village for around one hour and minutely inspected the crime scene, including the house where Circle Officer Devendra

Mishra was killed.

They also recorded the statement of daughter-in-law of Prem Shanker who was killed in police encounter. They asked her about people who indulged in exchange of fire in the early hours of July 3.

The commission members also quizzed some villagers separately.

Kids to be immunised against pneumococcal infections: CMO

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Chief Medical Officer Dr AK Mishra said the Uttar Pradesh government had launched a pilot project in 19 districts of the state as part of the National Immunisation Programme under which children would be given pneumococcal conjugate vaccine (PCV13) to protect them against pneumococcal infections. According to Dr Mishra, the bacteria which causes these infections spreads through person-to-person contact and can lead to serious infections like pneumonia, blood infections, and bacterial meningitis.

He said that after the pilot project, the immunisation programme would be launched in 56 districts of the state. Dr Mishra said this vaccine contained purified capsular polysaccharide of pneumococcal serotypes conjugated to a carrier protein to improve antibody response compared to the pneumococcal polysaccharide vaccine. He said this vaccine had been recommended by the World Health Organization and Unicef and both had recommended the use of the conjugate vaccine in routine immunisations given to children. He said a special campaign would be launched to provide information and training of the programme to

ASHA workers.

The CMO said the pneumococcal vaccine was given to children at 45 days then 105 days and the third time in the ninth month.

He said this infection was mostly in throat and nasal route and spreads later to the chest, causing many problems which could be fatal as well.

Dr Mishra said pneumonia was the single largest cause of death among children under five world-wide and pneumococcal pneumonia was the most common cause of severe pneumonia among children in the developing world.

He said in India, pneumococcal disease was the leading cause of vaccine preventable deaths and illness among children under five years of age.

He said it was the major cause of hospitalisations or even death in children under five years in the country.

Dr Mishra said even when treatment for pneumococcal pneumonia was possible, in the form of a Pneumococcal Conjugate Vaccine or PCV, the costs associated with treatment could have substantial impact on the financial stability of low-income states.

He said the burden of pneumococcal disease was the greatest among under privileged children and vulnerable populations who did not have access to affordable quality

health care.

He added that the incidence of the ailment was particularly higher in places marked by poverty, illiteracy, lack of hygiene, poor diet and nutrition.

YOUTH FATALLY STABBED

A youth was stabbed to death in a country-made liquor shop in Maswanpur under Kalyanpur police station on Monday night.

According to reports, Manoj Kumar Yadav of Shiv Nagar in Maswanpur, who was consuming liquor in the shop, got involved in a heated argument with local goon Monu Gautam, snatched the knife of the shop canteen and repeatedly stabbed Manoj ans escaped. Police admitted the profusely bleeding Manoj to LLR Hospital (Hallet Hospital) where he succumbed to his injury late in the night.

Investigations are on. Meanwhile, a woman was killed while her husband and two children were injured when their bike collided with another motorcycle in Akbarpur Kotwali police station area of Kanpur Dehat on Monday evening.

According to reports, Deepmala (34) of Baraur (Akbarpur), a primary school teacher, was going to her parents' house at Barra World Bank Colony in Kanpur on

bike along with her husband, Radhey Shyam Trivedi, and two children, Aaroh (4) and Dhairya (3), to tie rakhi to her brothers on Raksha Bandhan on Monday evening. At Jainpur, their bike collided head-on with another motorcycle.

Deepmala sustained serious head injury. She was rushed to the district hospital where she was pronounced dead by the doctors.

BANK OFFICERS GIVE WARM SEND OFF TO RAJESH SRIVASTAVA

All India Bank Officers' Association, UP South, state general secretary Rajesh Srivastava was given a warm send off on his retirement.

Various speakers praised Rajesh Srivastava for his dedicated services to the bank and said the youth should emulate him for his commendable services. Association president Kuldip Singh said in the present times when there was global pandemic, all care had to be taken by the bank employees while working. He advised them to constantly use masks, sanitisers and follow social distancing. He said banks had to offer their services to the clientele and thus all must be prepared for this.

Later Ankur Mishra was elected state general secretary and he took over the charge.

Sinha assumes charge

CORRESPONDENT ■ SONBHADRA

Subrata Shekhar Sinha assumed charge as Director (Technical) in NCL recently. With a rich experience of 37 years Sinha was working as General Manager in South Eastern Coalfields Limited prior to joining the NCL family. He completed his B.Tech from IIT (BHU), Varanasi in 1983 and started his career in CIL. With the diversified experience of open-cast and underground coal mines, he headed different positions in SECL and boosted the production and productivity numbers. He played a vital role in testing and implemen-

tation of the country's first shortwall mining method in a SECL underground mine. During his tenure at Coal India Headquarters, Kolkata, he held many key positions, including head of Production department and also played an important role in the procurement of high-capacity equipment and implementation of ERP. During his stint in Coal India Limited, he visited Australia for training programmes and to attend international conferences. He also visited the USA for the Executive Development Programme of Wharton Business School by the University of Pennsylvania in 2009.

Boy drowns

CORRESPONDENT ■ MIRZAPUR

A boy drowned in a canal in Pasahin village under Jamalpur police station here. As per the reports, Keshari (5), son of Ramesh, was playing outside his house when he somehow reached the nearby canal and drowned there. After two to three hours of searching his body was found floating in the canal. Meanwhile an old man died when a clay wall collapsed in Bagahaan village under Chunar police station. Reports said while the mud house of Dangar Paswan (85) was being dismantled the wall collapsed and he was buried under its debris. After rescuing him his family was planning to take him to a doctor but he died on the spot.

After Ayodhya

As the foundation stone is laid for the temple, we must not let triumphalism get the better of Lord Ram's *dharma*



Years of politics and the clash of "isms" have actually overlooked the cultural consciousness and the civilisational ethos that Lord Ram represents. Revered variously as *Maryada Purushottam* Sri Ramchandra Raja of Ayodhya or the *Imam-e-Hind*, he has, beyond being a central figure of the Hindu pantheon, been an anchor of the Indic way of life and the way it should be lived. As Swami Vivekananda said, "he is an embodiment of truth, morality and ideals." The God-king of Ayodhya, who set an example of what social order should be and how it should be conducted, is, therefore, more of a human construct, one we

could model ourselves after easily. And he was a selfless leader of people, putting them first. His wars were on principle of the right over wrong; he could have converted all the *rakshasas* into his own clan after killing Ravana but he chose not to. Simply because he respected his limits and that of others and believed in upholding the sense of righteousness. It is this vision that pervades our collective consciousness and regardless of whether a temple at his birthplace was demolished and a mosque built in its place, which in turn was overrun, the fact is Ayodhya is unanimously believed to have been the place where he was born. In that sense, it is our existential fountainhead. He is a belief and emotion so strong that restoring his birthplace is not about historical corrections but a return to the truth as it should be seen and practised. To that extent the *bhoomi puja*, or the foundation-stone laying ceremony at the site, is not just a milestone, it is an edict on what *dharma* should be. It should not be about Hindu triumphalism but about upholding values exactly the way he would have wanted. Lord Ram was a pluralist, not an isolationist. Celebrating him shouldn't be about symbolism, for majoritarian might is measured by grace, not by muscularity of an imposition. But that is a tall order in today's show and tell politics. What began as a mass movement to reclaim the site, launched by the BJP in 1989 to chart an alternative political path, gained massive traction once the then party supremo LK Advani began a Rathayatra from Gujarat. Although he couldn't complete the yatra, it aroused passions across the country and paved the way for the party's ascendancy to political power. And in the process, religiosity overtook secularism as an electoral agenda. Only social justice forces in the shape of VP Singh, Mulayam Singh Yadav and Lalu Prasad Yadav held out. But that led to polarisation and Ram became less of a guiding visionary with his neo-disciples becoming more like avengers of historical insult. Hinduism became Hindutva. In fact, the Congress, too, was taken in by the Hindutva wave with Rajiv Gandhi himself allowing the opening of the Babri Masjid gates and 'shilanyas' prayers to be held inside for fear of losing the Hindu vote. This opened the floodgates for the right-wing fringe like the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) and the Bajrang Dal to claim political centrastage. That's when the temple became more than a symbolism, a runaway cause to justify everything from a majoritarian perspective. Rajiv Gandhi had grossly misjudged that the mosque, too, could co-exist. That was not to be. Advani had merely sought a balanced discourse where Hinduism could be defined not by exclusion, revisionism and minority appeasement but as an inclusive philosophy of national life. One that translated into the reasoned prime ministership of Atal Bihari Vajpayee. Unfortunately, today he and many seniors have been benched, not even consulted or properly invited to temple affairs. Meanwhile, the hardline extremism and otherisation of non-Hindus have become the centrifugal force of the BJP, one that has been condoned by a tacit electorate, which returned the Narendra Modi Government with a brute majority. One that has the silent approval of the Opposition, which has fallen in line, swept aside by the tide of identity politics.

So what after Ayodhya? Is it the culmination of temple politics or will it be milked further electorally? Or will it spur a demand for more reclamations at Kashi and Mathura? At one time, hardliners would have been enthusiastic but the BJP's ideological anchor, the RSS, is itself cautious about continuing the temple issue beyond the Ram *jannabhoomi*. In fact, RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat has categorically said that there are no plans for either Kashi or Mathura, that the RSS does not get into agitations and that the Ram temple was an exception. Having won a massive mandate, the BJP had to address its core constituency and has delivered a promise made many years ago and which at one time seemed just manifesto material. But both the RSS and the BJP are also realist about consolidating power. While the nation heaved a collective sigh of relief at the resolution of the Ayodhya dispute, there is undoubtedly a sense of fatigue about continuing politics in the name of Ram. There are much bigger concerns in the post-pandemic world to tackle, the bleak economy and restarting the nation once again. Even Ayodhya wants to get back to normal, hoping the temple will accelerate the local economy. Besides, the BJP's image has already taken a beating courtesy hate crimes, cow vigilantism and the anti-citizenship law protests and it wouldn't want to create new faultlines or give ammunition to others to do so. Ram *rajya* may be ideal but the BJP has got to get real.

Forlorn hopes

Wholesale dispatches for the auto industry are climbing back to 2019 levels. Is this a good sign or a false dawn?



When reports from the automotive industry came early in August, they were reassuringly positive. The country's largest carmaker, Maruti-Suzuki, said that wholesale dispatches to dealers were up by one per cent from July 2019. The country's second-largest carmaker, Hyundai Motor India, registered a decline of two per cent for domestic dispatches. While both carmakers have showed a considerable decline in exports, other producers, too, displayed a relatively healthy number of wholesale dispatches for July 2020 compared to July 2019. Even two-wheeler companies, Hero Motocorp, Honda and

TVS, showed considerable numbers in July 2020, almost matching July 2019 numbers and importantly climbing significantly over sales in June 2020. And in a sign that the rural economy is picking up, tractor sales for July 2020 continued to surpass expectations, showing double-digit growth for all leading manufacturers.

However, there are some signs that things have not all returned to normal. Commercial vehicle sales are still muted, with transporters still having excess capacity. With educational institutions and public transportation services limited, there has been almost no offtake of buses in the past four months. One must draw attention to the difference between wholesale and actual retail sales; the latter are yet to recover. While most manufacturers have managed to get their production in order, thanks to special permissions even in lockdown zones, retail sales have been hit as dealerships have had to stay closed on days when cities, districts and even whole States endured lockdowns. What must also be remembered is that the entire automotive industry was suffering in 2019. Sales had been muted as the economy was still sputtering. In fact, last year, sales were down sharply from 2018. One should wait and watch to see how actual retail sales in the months of August and September pan out. These are historically weak months leading up to the bonanza of the last three months of the year, the so-called "festive season." And while it is encouraging to see that auto manufacturers have managed to get their houses back in order, much more needs to be done for the entire economy to get back on track after the Wuhan virus derailed all hopes of growth. These might be green shoots but they may not be enough to ensure that the plant called the economy grows big and strong by 2021.

Turning liability to asset

Merely privatising the PSBs will get us nowhere. Along with this move, the Government must bring sector-specific reforms. And they must come quick



GOURAV VALLABH

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) in its Financial Stability Report released on July 24 warned that the Gross Non-Performing Assets (GNPA) ratio of scheduled commercial banks (SCBs) could rise up to 14.7 per cent by March 2021 from the current 8.5 per cent in March 2020. This piece of news was followed up by former RBI Governor Urjit Patel's shocking revelation that the central bank wanted to be tough against the loan defaulters but the Government wanted him to "go soft", which eventually forced him to resign. A series of happenings in the banking sector in recent times has made everyone doubt the character and intentions of the current Government to recapitalise public sector banks (PSBs).

Recently, the All India Bank Employees Association (AIBEA), too, released a list of 2,426 borrower accounts that have been categorised as "willful defaulters" with dues amounting to ₹1,47,350 crore to the banking system. It also mentioned that such huge amounts are being technically written off by the NDA Government. Moreover, recently, the Union Government announced that only five PSBs would continue to exist and that the rest of the unmerged banks would be sold off to private bidders in the name of recapitalisation. Only last year, the Government had merged 10 State-owned banks into four, creating a handful of larger banks in the process.

On the one hand, the Government is trying to infuse private capital into the PSBs and on the other, it is forcing both the State Bank of India (SBI) and Life Insurance Corporation (LIC) to bail out failed private sector banks such as Yes Bank. The statements and actions of the Government appear to contradict each other. A comparison of the BSE PSU bank index *vis-a-vis* BSE Sensex from 2014 to 2020 reveals that the former has seen no growth in the last six years while the latter has seen a steady rise. The BSE PSU bank index has instead fallen by 2.63 per cent, while the overall index has grown approximately by 11 per cent on a CAGR basis. This clearly reflects that investors are not happy with the way the PSBs have been functioning.

On the one hand, the Government is pushing for a technical write-off of bad loans, on the



other, it has failed to investigate or punish the willful defaulters. This is evident from the fact that SBI has been recovering less than one per cent of its write-offs each year. As per reports, SBI's technical write-off of bad loans in the last eight years amounted to ₹1.23 lakh crore, while recovery from bad debts during the same period was less than ₹9,000 crore, which is less than one per cent of the collection efficiency every year.

Around 84,545 fraud cases — involving about ₹1.85 lakh crore — were reported by scheduled commercial banks and select FIs during 2019-20 as per RBI in an RTI response. This takes the total loss to ₹3.6 lakh crore due to frauds in the last six years (FY 2014-15 to 2019-20). Since July 19, 1969, when 14 banks were nationalised, they have been contributing immensely to build credit lines for the marginalised sectors like agriculture. The National Credit Council, in its meeting held in July 1968, emphasised that commercial banks should finance priority sectors like agriculture and small-scale industries.

Over the years, the priority sector lending norms have seen major changes and have, in fact, evolved with a greater focus on those segments that have traditionally been neglected from accessing credit. Thus,

“THE GOVERNMENT MUST COME UP WITH A WHITE PAPER THAT MUST BE PREPARED IN CONSULTATION WITH ECONOMISTS, FORMER FINANCE MINISTERS AND RBI GOVERNORS. THE WHITE PAPER SHOULD INCLUDE DIVESTMENT PLANS FOR PSBs. A THOROUGH INVESTIGATION INTO THE DIVESTMENT PROCESS, TOO, IS A MUST”



SOUNDBITE

In this profession (cinema), you are only as good as your last project. Some films don't turn out the way you expect them to.

Actor
—Sharman Joshi



The decisions that Governments take now will have lasting impact on hundreds of millions of young people, and on the development prospects of countries for decades to come.

UN chief
—Antonio Guterres



Hindutva is now the basic coat on the canvas of polity and political parties subscribing to its various shades may be vying for power in future as socialism and secularism are no longer the pivot of politics.

Former RSS ideologue
—KN Govindacharya



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Better late than never

Sir — PV Narasimha Rao should be remembered for being a tactful Prime Minister, who handled a peculiar situation that developed in the country when an uncontrolled gathering pulled down the disputed structure at Ayodhya on December 6, 1992, paving the way for the ultimate foundation stone-laying ceremony for a grand Ram temple today.

He will also be remembered for successfully running a minority Government for a full five-year term and paving the way for a new era of economic reforms. It is indeed regrettable that like many other Congress veterans, he was not only sidelined by his own party but even insulted after his death. The Congress still refuses to look beyond the Gandhis.

Though a bit late, the present ruling Government has done well to honour forgotten national heroes such as Rao and Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel. The real tribute, however, will be when Rao is honoured with the highest civilian award of Bharat Ratna. He deserves the maxi-

COVID-19 fallout on children

Data collated so far show that children are less affected clinically by COVID-19 than adults; they are not completely immune to SAR-CoV-2; are only less susceptible to contracting the virus and developing severe disease from it; and they can be carriers but are far less likely to spread the contagion than adults. However, the Coronavirus pandemic affects children less in terms of health but its impact on their lives and growth is incalculably immense. It has turned their world upside down; has exacerbated the problems already faced by them due to poverty, malnutrition, regressive cultural values and practices, poor parenting and physical abuse.

The pandemic has caused a decline in economic activity, fall in household incomes and has forced millions of families to subsist on reduced daily intake of food. Deprived of adequate nourishment, children suffer stunted physical and cognitive growth. Governments must arrange to provide food to children who used to get mid-day meals in schools. Children are creative, inquisitive and agile; they need classrooms and playgrounds to grow up and blossom.

mum recognition.

Madhu Agrawal
Delhi

Change for good

Sir — Once again, the Prime Minister's Office intervened at

the right time to help the common man. This time, it has brought an end to the practice of eateries charging exorbitant prices for snacks and beverages at the Kochi airport. The snacks and beverages sold at food outlets at the airport burnt a hole in the passengers' pocket as a

heavy amount was charged.

The PMO's intervention has brought the prices down to tea and snacks being sold at ₹15 and coffee at ₹20. Earlier, people had to shell out ₹100 for a cup of tea and a minimum of ₹200 for snacks. Other airports across the country must take cue and slash

prices of refreshments.

M Pradyu
Kannur

Trust Govt hospitals

Sir — With the Coronavirus having breached the 1.8 million mark, it has spared none. Even Bollywood celebrities, as well as many of our leaders, have been hit by the virus. Union Home Minister Amit Shah is the latest one to have contracted the disease and has been hospitalised in one of the best and costliest private hospitals in the country.

Several other Ministers at the Centre as well as in States have contracted the virus. Shockingly, most of them were treated and continue to be admitted in private hospitals. To the contrary, when an average person falls sick, he/she prefers reaching out to a Government hospital as private ones are unaffordable. Our administrators must start trusting the Government facilities.

Rishi
Via email

Send your feedback to:
letterstopioneer@gmail.com

FIRST COLUMN

The Congress must decide

The party needs leadership, direction, revival, a new narrative and unity. Maybe even a non-Gandhi at the helm, soon



KALYANI SHANKAR

For the first time since Sonia Gandhi took over as the Congress president after the resignation of Rahul Gandhi last August, the rift between the “old guard” loyal to Sonia and Team Rahul has come out in the open. The reason for this is simple. Both the senior and younger leaders are frustrated with the *status quo* in the party when it sorely needs to revive, with a strong leadership at the helm. However, this “old guard” versus “young Turks” fight in the Congress is not new. It was there even during Indira Gandhi’s days when she split the party in 1969, pushing out the syndicate led by the then Congress president K Kamaraj. The syndicate thought that they could manipulate Indira but she proved to be a shrewd politician and emerged stronger despite the split. After she won the Bangladesh war, politically she reached her zenith. Later, when the Congress party split in 1978, Congress (Indira) emerged as the real Congress.

When Rajiv Gandhi succeeded Indira in 1984 after her assassination, he was surrounded by his own coterie. But he also kept some of the senior leaders close to him. Since Rajiv was a politically strong leader with over 400 Congress MPs backing him, the feud between the seniors and younger leaders was muted.

Later, after Rajiv’s assassination, a section of the old guard brought Sonia into the party in 1988. They were loyal to her while she also depended on them for support and guidance as she was a political greenhorn. It was a big task to guide such an old party as the Congress. Things went smoothly for years and over time Sonia tightened her grip on the party.

However, the fight between the old guard and the young leaders began when she promoted her son. While the senior leaders were apprehensive about their future, Rahul’s team was getting impatient to get meatier roles within the party and in Congress-ruled States. The politically-savvy old guard managed to block all attempts to bring a non-Gandhi to the helm of the party and bring back Sonia when Rahul resigned last August. Rahul himself criticised the old guard in the May 25 Congress Working Committee meeting.

Now, with the departure of Jyotiraditya Scindia in March and rebellion by Sachin Pilot — two of the closest aides of the Gandhi scion — Team Rahul is further agitated. The fact that the newly-elected MP Rajiv Satav, said to be close to Rahul, was bold enough to be critical of the old guard and the UPA-2, says a lot about the divide within the party. It was only after senior leaders like Anand Sharma, Manish Tiwari, Milind Deora and so on retorted strongly that Satav withdrew his remarks about UPA-2.

Sonia and Rahul are not like Indira and Rajiv. Leading a weakened Congress is different from leading a politically-strong party. The departure of two young and charismatic leaders like Scindia and Pilot in the last four months and the loss of Madhya Pradesh and a wobbling Rajasthan have weakened the leadership further. Younger leaders from Team Rahul like Milind Deora and Jitin Prasada are likely to leave soon.

The immediate urgency in the party is the leadership vacuum. If Rahul wants to come back as the party chief, he should do so at the earliest. The “Bring Rahul” chant has already begun. Fortunately for the Gandhis there is no challenge to Rahul. However, if he does not want to come back, Rahul should make it clear now.

Dissent in the Congress is also not new as it functioned as an umbrella party providing space for all kinds of opinions. But discussing differences within the party forum and publicly airing grievance are two different things. The generational divide in the Congress goes much beyond and if no corrective measures are taken, it will affect the revival of the party.

Can this issue be resolved? It is indeed tricky, as both camps are not willing to wait. With both Sonia and Rahul helplessly watching the fight and with a leadership crisis plaguing the party, they need some quick and out-of-the-box thinking. As the old guard says, now is the time for introspection and correction. The party should have a conclave like it did in Pachmarhi and Shimla.

Former Minister Salman Khurshid has put the present crisis in perspective. In an article, he sums up, “The loss of promising young leaders, irrespective of the reason, is indeed unfortunate and sad. But the young, who feel we, the older generation, are not giving way, must not forget that there are even younger ones waiting on the sides. The crisis is not about young and old but about those who want to leave and those who are determined not to abandon the ship in stormy weather.”

The erosion has begun in the party like it happened before Sonia took over in 1998. The Gandhis should realise that 2020 is not 1998. Also, the family has proved that they are not vote catchers now. The party needs leadership, direction, revival, a new narrative and unity. Maybe even a non-Gandhi at the helm, soon. But it needs to decide fast as time and tide wait for none.

(The writer is a senior journalist)

IT IS A BIG TRAGEDY. IT COULDN’T HAVE HAPPENED WITHOUT THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE GOVERNMENT AND THE POLICE. THAT IS WHY NO ACTION IS BEING TAKEN.

—CONGRESS RAJYA SABHA MP SHAMSHER DULLO

POINTCOUNTERPOINT



I ASSURE YOU AS THE CHIEF MINISTER THAT NO ONE WILL BE SPARED AND THE GUILTY WILL BE PUNISHED TO ENSURE JUSTICE.

—PUNJAB CHIEF MINISTER AMARINDER SINGH

Miles to go in J&K

Politically, the revocation of Articles 35A and 370 marks the fulfilment of the BJP’s poll promise but emotional integration may take more time and requires imaginative handling by all stakeholders



PRAMOD JAIN

During the last one year, Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) has seen many far-reaching changes. On August 5, 2019, the Parliament revoked Articles 35A and 370 of the Indian Constitution and reorganised J&K through an Act of Parliament, carving J&K as well as Ladakh as Union Territories (UTs) out of the erstwhile State. The J&K Constitution became inoperative, all Central laws now extend to J&K and many State laws are inoperative. The other major changes included the abolition of the bicameral legislature and its replacement by a unicameral arrangement and reduction in the life of the Assembly from six to five years. There is now only one flag in J&K i.e. the Tricolour. Though politically, the revocation of Articles 35A and 370 marks the fulfilment of the BJP’s long-held election promise, emotional integration may take more time and requires imaginative and sustained handling by various primary and secondary stakeholders.

Institution-building for good governance: Good governance is predicated upon a reasonably robust institutional framework in terms of both structure and agency. While a lot has been done in terms of the structure, the agency needs due attention, keeping the long-term horizons in view.

J&K never had direct British rule or the Indian Civil Service (ICS). The All India Services (AIS) were extended to it as late as the 1960s and have not yet bloomed in the real sense. Till recently 50 per cent local induction — especially when the State services are themselves recruited on a very narrow, limited-to-J&K base — was a regressive policy that has been done away with. For administrative integration and for higher standards of public administration, the UT should have 100 per cent direct recruit AIS officers. Fortunately, the IAS, IPS and IFS cadres have been reviewed and are being expanded shortly. There are quite a few bright wo/men in the State services; they need encouragement, exposure and training. Post-1990, the J&K Police managed to get enormous authority, manpower, infrastructure and funds. But they need to adequately attend to maintaining law and order, crime management and normal policing. This must be done in a manner that is transparent and ensures public access as well as accountability at various levels of the civil set-up.

Civic engagement: To build a progressive and modern UT, the focus must be on strengthening, even re-doing, from the perspective of the user-citizens, the institutions of governance so that they speedily and professionally respond to public issues, people’s problems and local needs. Civic engagement and public outreach programmes like “Back to Villages”, devolution of more powers including control over staff, functions and funds to the elected municipal and panchayat bodies, block development councils (BDCs) *et al* are indeed welcome steps. Giving good monthly honoraria to all, having life insurance and providing the protocol equivalence of District Magistrate to all the BDC Chairmen will boost their morale and motivate others to join public life, thereby strengthening the local democratic institutions. However, the new initiatives must be supplemented by a “Back to Basics” programme in every department, both in the UT secretariat and in the field, so as to attend to the basic but forgotten/ignored/diluted aspects pertaining to the very *raison d’être* of governance.

At the core of this approach lies the need for an enhanced civic engagement and to afford an opportunity to the enlightened citizens, especially urban, to relate to and become a part of the system, thereby enhancing the “ownership” of the

“ INCLUSIVE DEVELOPMENT BASED ON CIVIC ENGAGEMENT HAS TO BE A GENUINELY PARTICIPATORY EXERCISE, IN WHICH ALL DELEGATED RESPONSIBILITY IS DISCHARGED BY THE ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES; ALL DECISION-MAKING HAS TO BE THEIRS. THE TRADITIONAL, BUREAUCRATIC AND TECHNOCRATIC APPROACH, JOKINGLY CALLED ‘YOU PARTICIPATE, I DECIDE,’ HAS TO BE REPLACED BY A PRO-PEOPLE ORIENTATION IN THE GOVERNMENT MACHINERY, ESPECIALLY IN THE STATE RURAL DEVELOPMENT AND PANCHAYATI RAJ DEPARTMENT AND IN THE URBAN DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT ”



Government-funded schemes and projects. This energisation of the administrative structure and agency, coupled with enforcing accountability and productivity, especially at the cutting edge levels, will reduce citizens’ trust deficit, enhance social capital and mainstream the marginalised population — the processes of social engineering necessary for inclusive development.

People as stakeholders: Inclusive development based on civic engagement has to be a genuinely participatory exercise, in which all delegated responsibility is discharged by the elected representatives; all decision-making has to be theirs. The traditional, bureaucratic and technocratic approach, jokingly called “you participate, I decide”, has to be replaced by a pro-people orientation in the Government machinery, especially in the State Rural Development and Panchayati Raj Department and in the Urban Development Department, besides others having a significant public contact.

The newly-empowered Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) and municipal bodies must not be seen as the Government’s departmental appendages or field units, as the officers tend to be seen, but as separate *loci* of power. Better functioning bodies must be given additional responsibilities and funds so as to build their stake in local area development. A new and revamped grievance redress mechanism (complaints registering methodology) needs to be put in place so that people can raise their voice about all that is unwanted or unacceptable. The old practice of officers holding regular camps in villages and at the *tehsil* headquarters needs to be strengthened and institutionalised. All vacant seats in panchayats, BDCs and other bodies must be filled up through early elections. Now that the 73rd and 74th constitutional amendments have been extended to J&K, bringing about positive changes is both imperative and logical. The statutory post of the ombudsman for the PRIs also needs to be filled up early.

Restoring basic services: Connected with the above is the task of restoring basic services like 4G, which will go a long way to assuage the grievances of the younger generation and help businesses. Essential services like high-speed internet, power and water supply must keep pace with the citizens’ expectations. While there is a marked improvement in the supply of quality electricity in the twin capitals and major towns, similar improvement is yet to be registered with regard to rural areas. People often complain that every wind and rainstorm leads to a power breakdown. Better power and water supply and other managerial issues must be tackled with the people’s participation, taking PRIs on board, with the Divisional Commissioners and District Development Commissioners playing the key role of coordination and monitoring.

Strengthening the rule of law: The rule of law is a basic ingredient of a democratic system, free society and a market-led economy. It postulates that all citizens are equal before law, none is above the law, none can be condemned unheard, none can be a judge in his own cause; there would be no arbitrariness in decisions taken by public authorities. The celebrated historian and author, Niall Ferguson, avers that the decline in the rule of law is a major factor contributing to the degeneration of nations.

In almost every Assembly session in J&K, there have been acrimonious debates, *inter alia*, on the alleged backdoor appointments, political bigwigs being asked to recommend names for selection of candidates, appointments through relaxation of rules and so on. In this backdrop, the rule of law needs to be strengthened and re-established, wherever required, in the day-to-day working of the administration at various levels, and it needs to be visible.

The task may require training and re-training the decision-makers, their intensive monitoring and introduction of checks and balances as well as giving punishments for wrongdoing. It is indeed difficult, though not impossible.

Political party development: Though the timing of the electoral event is the sole discretion of the Election Commission of India, election to the State Assembly is the logical next step. Since political parties are a necessary part of the electoral and democracy-building processes, they need to come out of their current, self-imposed hibernation. All parties need also to seriously go in for “political party development”. They should groom ideologues with a grip over the political economy and public policy issues, those who can link up the macro and micro, and devise vision, mission, strategy and plan of action to establish a bottom-up interface with the voters, especially the younger ones.

All parties perhaps need a new pedagogy and communication approach, through social media platforms, emails and text messages. They also need to strengthen the governance institutions because people’s political behaviour is always influenced by the institutions, political and administrative. Collectively all of them have a responsibility to ensure that democracy delivers, and delivers to the satisfaction of the electorate at large.

Limitation of stereotypes: It has been seen that J&K-related stereotypes don’t generally capture the essence of all that is good, bad and ugly, and only strengthen the archetypal discourse fixated on the romantic-emotive. The need of the hour is a broad spectrum of new, bold, long-term and sustainable policy initiatives and their time-bound, effective and professional implementation. Lieutenant-Governor GC Murmu will do well to nudge political parties to resume political activity sooner than later. He is already consolidating on the work done by the Union Ministries and the UT administration but the efforts need to be speeded up and expanded as early as possible. There cannot be a trust deficit for long.

(The writer is a retired IAS officer of the J&K cadre)

The kingmaker with the heart of a king

Now that Amar Singh is no longer with us, I am sure he will be remembered by the ordinary people as long as they live for his kindness



SANTANU GANGULY

It was August 2018 and I was curating a Bengali Film Festival in Delhi. National Award-winning actress Rituparna Sengupta was one of the guests at the festival. While heading towards her hotel from the airport, she told me, “I have invited Amar Singh for the opening ceremony.”

So I conveyed the message to the organisers. But to my surprise, they informed me that the Samajwadi Party leader and Rajya Sabha member could not be accommodated as the festival got support from the Chief Minister of Delhi, Arvind Kejriwal. The Chief Minister’s Office had clearly mentioned that as per established protocol, no other political

person could be present at the function. It was a very peculiar situation and the organisers were very tense as they did not want to offend the Chief Minister.

So, the moment Amar Singh arrived, I took him to the conference room, since the opening ceremony was yet to begin. I made him comfortable, gave him a cup of tea and set up an interview with *Doordarshan*. My intention was to let the Chief Minister arrive and take his seat on the stage before seating Amar Singh in the front row among the audience.

Those moments spent with Amar Singh, while waiting for Arvind Kejriwal to arrive, turned out to be very memorable. I got the opportunity to talk to the veteran politician, industrialist, the close friend of Bollywood royalty Amitabh Bachchan and the kingmaker of Indian politics over tea for about half an hour. I call him kingmaker, because of the way he saved the Manmohan Singh Government in a floor test in Parliament. Even his



harshest critics will have to agree that he had been blessed with exceptional floor management skills in Parliament.

During our chat, I was amazed to hear him speak fluent Bengali. Then he claimed himself to be a Bengali at heart and began talking about his school and college days in Kolkata, the time, the memories, the culture, the people and, of course, the politics.

It was then that I reminded him of his great contribution to the Cinefan: Asian Film Festival, 2003.

This was before Cinefan was merged with Osian’s. Aruna Vasudev had a hard time organising the festival as she got very nominal Government and corporate support. So she had approached Amar Singh on the recommendation of Vasant Sathe. At that time, Amar Singh gave us the ₹1 lakh we needed as the cash award for the Best Film voted by the audience. That was received by veteran filmmaker Goutam Ghose, for his Bengali film *Abar Aranye* (In the forest, again). As Amar Singh was very busy with some political engagement, he requested Vasant Sathe to present the award.

After listening to my tale, Amar Singh just smiled and said, “You know the ordinary people and the poor people always gratefully remember whatever little I have done for them. It has happened many times that during my visit to my constituency, many people come along with their children and ask them to touch my feet. They tell their children that ‘he is your grandfather. He did our *Kanyadaan*. Without his help our

marriage would not have been possible! Frankly speaking I don’t even remember the occasion or I personally don’t recall all the people, but they remember my help. I think my purpose in life is solved.” After a small pause, he continued, “But whatever I have done for rich people... no one ever thinks about those efforts.” I could see the sadness on Amar Singh’s face when he said that.

During the course of our conversation, I discovered that he was an avid reader and had an amazing collection of books in his personal library. After learning this fact, I requested him to visit the book store next door before going to the auditorium. He readily agreed and chose a good amount of books, mostly on history and politics. The store employees panicked as they did not have the facility to take payments through a credit or debit card and the bill was a whopping ₹20,000. Unfazed by this, Amar Singh just murmured “Oh! That’s not a big amount”, and took out the money from the pocket of his kurta and gave it to them.

Meanwhile, Kejriwal arrived and the opening ceremony of the film festival began. So we proceeded inside the auditorium. Amar Singh got his designated seat and everything went smoothly.

After the ceremony, when Kejriwal got off the stage to leave, Amar Singh just got up and with folded hands said to him in Hindi, “*Kyun, nehi pehchane ji?* (Didn’t you recognise me?)” Kejriwal, with his popular and charming smile, quickly held Amar Singh’s hands and exchanged greetings very cordially.

Anyway, at the end of the day, all of us were discussing Amar Singh’s sad acknowledgement of the fact that the ordinary people remembered his good deeds but the rich never remembered his kindness. Somehow, to this day, I can’t forget the sad, hurt face of Amar Singh. Now that he is no longer with us, I am sure he will be remembered by the ordinary people as long as they live.

(The author is a Delhi-based film festival curator, director, producer and freelance writer)

FOREIGN EYE



GIVING WINGS TO CREATIVITY

The Coronavirus pandemic has reconfigured the home as a site of creativity, one glimpsed through webcams and headphones. The format will surely vanish when arts venues reopen around the world. But for some women musicians this year, before and during the lockdown, the domestic space has offered artistic liberation at odds with the home’s reputation as a place of constraint for women.

(The Guardian editorial)

Crisis in Punjab Cong after MP, Raj

Punjab Congress chief Sunil Jakhar has written to party president Sonia Gandhi seeking action against 2 RS members for flaying State Govt over hooch tragedy



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

After Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan, internal wrangling within the Congress has now surfaced in Punjab.

Punjab Congress chief Sunil Jakhar on Tuesday said he has written to party president Sonia Gandhi seeking immediate action for anti-party activities against the party's two Rajya Sabha MPs Pratap Singh Bajwa and Shamsher Singh Dullu who have gone to town attacking its own Government over the tragic hooch incident.

Both Bajwa and Dullu have petitioned the Punjab Governor demanding a CBI and ED probe into the hooch tragedy and directly blamed Chief Minister Capt. Amarinder Singh for turning a blind eye to the alert they had sounded earlier.

Jakhar described the attack of the two MPs on their own government as a 'copy-paste job' of what happened in Rajasthan in January when in the wake of 107 infant deaths there, Sachin Pilot had flayed his own government that added

to his rift with Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot.

"Had action been taken against Pilot then itself, what is happening today in Rajasthan could have been avoided," Jakhar said.

Pointing out that Bajwa and Dullu had been engaging in anti-party activities and were in touch with BJP for quite some time by talking against their own party and targeting the Amarinder Singh government, Jakhar said their attacks had increased after the Chief Minister announced his decision to contest the 2022 elections.

"It is time to stem the rot and save the Congress from the petty machinations of the likes of Bajwa and Dullu, who have no shame in biting the hand that feeds them," Jakhar said.

Jakhar in his letter to Sonia sought strict action against the two MPs who were "disgracefully exploiting" a tragedy to further their own political ambitions and interests. Asserting that the actions of the duo could not be tolerated any longer, the Punjab Congress

Talks option open if Pilot camp leaves Khattar's hospitality, says Congress

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

With the Rajasthan Assembly session scheduled next week, the Congress is making attempts to hold talks with the rebel MLAs of the Sachin Pilot camp on the condition that they leave the hospitality of Manohar Lal Khattar-led BJP Government in Haryana.

Congress' chief spokesman Randeep Surjewala on Tuesday maintained that the only condition for talks with the dissident Rajasthan MLAs is that they leave the BJP's "suraksha chakra" (protection).

"Innocent kids are being killed, gang rapes are taking place, people are being beaten up in Gurugram. There is no police available for them, but 1,000 policemen are deployed for the security of 19 upset MLAs. The legislators should first give up the Haryana police's security, and friendship and hospitality of the BJP, return home and only then will the dialogue take place," said Surjewala on the sidelines

of party briefing.

The Congress has accused the BJP of making attempts to topple the Ashok Gehlot-led Congress government in Rajasthan by luring Pilot and a few dissidents MLAs who have been camping at a hotel in Haryana arranged by the BJP.

Rajasthan chief minister Ashok Gehlot, who earlier used harsh words against his former Deputy CM, struck a softer note saying he would welcome his deputy back and other dissident MLAs as well if the party's high command forgave them.

"If the high command forgives them (dissident MLAs), I will hug them. I have no prestige point," Gehlot said while talking to the media outside a Jaisalmer hotel, where the MLAs loyal to him were shifted ahead of the assembly session from August 14.

Gehlot has also rejected the claim of dissident Congress MLAs that their work was not being done.

The rift in the State Congress came to the fore

when Pilot and 18 other MLAs rebelled against the Gehlot government a month earlier. Gehlot has accused Pilot of trying to topple the Government and in between Gehlot had to do the rounds of Governor, Prime Minister and even wrote to President of India.

Amid internal rift at its peak for two weeks last month, senior Congress leaders including Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi tried their best to ask Pilot not to aggravate the crisis and get back to the party fold.

Other leaders who reached out to Pilot then were former Union Minister P Chidambaram and powerful party functionary Ahmed Patel.

"None, perhaps in the history of Congress might have received so much of pamperers as Sachin Pilot received in terms of about 20 senior leaders including Rahul and Priyanka asking him to pacify. We will try again ahead of the Assembly session," Surjewala said.

Jakhar described the action of the two MPs to approach the Governor as a manifestation of their desperate desire to grab the high seat of power by hook or by crook.

₹455 crore loan for JNU infra development

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Giving a big boost to its infrastructure development, the Centre has disbursed to the Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) a loan of ₹455 crore from the Higher Education Funding Agency (HEFA) for construction of new academic buildings, hostels, research centres and installation of an integrated and unified Enterprise Resource Planning System.

JNU Vice Chancellor Jagadeesh Kumar Mamidala said that funds allotted will be used for the construction of a vast range of infrastructure-related projects on campus.

"The funds allotted by HEFA shall be utilised for the construction of hostels for students and researchers of School of Engineering and Atal Bihari Vajpayee School of Management & Entrepreneurship, Trans-Disciplinary Academic Research, Advanced Animal Research Facility..." Mamidala said in a University Press statement.

He further said that the Advanced Instrumentation Research Facility, incubation centre for start-up companies, special care centre for E-learning and a lecture hall complex will be set up, among other work.

The statement further added that the unified and integrated Enterprise Resource Planning system will help in ensuring that all academic and administrative processes can be



JNU has over 8K students who are accommodated in 18 hostels with one even for married students

conducted online in an integrated manner.

Additionally, the University also mentioned that the Special Centre for E-learning would benefit approximately 1.1 lakh candidates on an average who fail to secure admission at the central varsity every year.

"The Special Centre for E-learning shall impart education by offering online degree programs to many such students who could not be admitted to JNU. These students can benefit from the expertise of JNU faculty," the statement added.

Often in the news for all the wrong reasons, the JNU has over 8,000 students who are accommodated in 18 hostels with one even for married students.

Despite the students' unrest, the University received a record 1,35,462 applications, which is 22% higher than last year, for admission to various courses this year. In 2019, the university had received 1,08,982 applications for admissions to several undergraduate, postgraduate, MPhil and PhD courses.

Army to start process of screening women officers for Permanent Commission soon

Application invited by Aug 31

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Army will soon start the process of screening women officers for giving them Permanent Commission (PC). It will convene a special Selection Board for this purpose and at the women officers wanting to opt for PC will have to submit relevant documents by August 31.

Towards this end, detailed administrative instructions have been issued to all affected women officers for submission of applications for consideration by the board, the Army said in a statement on Tuesday.

Women officers who have joined the Indian Army through the Women Special Entry Scheme (WSES) and Short Service Commission Women



(SSCW) are being considered and all of them have been instructed to submit their application forms, option certificate and other related documents to Army headquarters not later than August 31, it stated.

Specimen formats and detailed checklists have been included in the administrative instructions in order to facilitate correct documentation, the Army said adding the selection board will be scheduled immediately after receipt and verification of applications.

On July 23, the Defence Ministry issued the Government Sanction Letter specifying grant of PC to women officers in all streams in which they presently serve -

Army Air Defence (AAD), Signals, Engineers, Army Aviation, Electronics and Mechanical Engineers (EME), Army Service Corps (ASC), Army Ordnance Corps (AOC) and Intelligence Corps in addition to the existing streams of Judge and Advocate General (JAG) and Army Educational Corps (AEC).

The orders follow the Supreme Court verdict in February in which it directed the government that women officers in the Army be granted PC and command postings in all services other than combat. More than 300 women officers are likely to benefit from the new order.

Due to the prevailing restrictions imposed in view of the COVID situation, multiple means of dissemination of instructions have been adopted to ensure that these documents reach all affected women officers on priority, the statement added.

Singhvi favours comprehensive, aggressive policy against China

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In the backdrop of confrontation at the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in Ladakh, India has to go in for a comprehensive and aggressive policy on China, Congress leader Abhishek Singhvi has said. He also advocated a three-pronged shift in the strategy to deal with the eastern neighbour.

Airing these views in a seminar recently, Singhvi was in favour of the three-pronged strategy including New Delhi investing in building military capability, increasing diplomatic heft by aligning with like-minded groupings such as Quad and inflicting economic injury to China.

At a webinar organised by Law and Society Alliance, a Delhi-based think-tank, and Defence Capital, a national security and strategic affairs platform here, Singhvi said India and its polity has to grow

beyond local party politics to usher in single-minded, focused, and unified response to the China challenge.

He also called for a change in the mindset of the Indian bureaucracy and diplomats in providing strong, deft and resolute handling of the Chinese challenge on all fronts, be it geopolitical, economic or military.

"India and China are two swords in one scabbard called Asia. There has to be forced respectability between the two. In the real world, both respect and outward likeability are consequences of fear. The need is to generate fear about India in China. Only this is going to set the equilibrium between the two giants," the Congress leader said.

Strongly proposing that India should work towards leveraging its ties with Tibet and Taiwan, he said the divinity and glory of His Holiness

the Dalai Lama needs to be given the right place that he deserves in India, and New Delhi must unhesitatingly enhance diplomatic relations with Taiwan.

World Uyghur Congress director for China Affairs Ilshat H. Kokbore, in his presentation, highlighted the alleged human rights abuses by China on the minority Uyghur community in East Turkestan. He said in 2014, Tibetans organised an event on persecuted communities of China. "Out of many leaders, only I was able to attend while all others were not allowed," he added.

Recalling the intolerable human rights violations on him and his family, Ilshat said because he was outspoken against the Communist regime in China, his family was broken, his brother killed in 2004, his sister arrested in 2014 and his father died of shock.

Amity researchers develop prototype of cost-effective, multi-mode portable ventilator for Covid-19 patients

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A team of Research Scholars & Scientists from Amity University's ASET Design Centre has developed the prototype of a cost-effective, multi-mode portable ventilator specifically designed for Covid-19 patients.

Some of the salient features of this smart ventilator are volume and pressure control in accordance with the age of the patient: The ventilator offers a feature to adjust the breath volume supply to the patient according to their age.

On the advice of the medical experts, the operator just needs to select the required age and the ventilator will supply the necessary volume and pressure of the breathing air automatically to the patient, the University said in a statement.

Also, the ventilator can be rapidly deployed to any location as the majority of the parts can be 3D Printed and assembled locally. It is priced at under ₹10,000.

Covid-19 virus more virulent to males compared to female



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Covid-19 virus seems to be more virulent to males when compared to their female counterparts. Sample this: About 68 per cent of deaths due to virus is reported among male patients and 32 per cent among female patients in India, said the Union Health Ministry while sharing the details of the profile of the Covid-19 patients.

Also, 50 per cent of the total Covid-19 deaths reported in India so far are among people aged above 60, said Union Health Secretary Rajesh Bhushan at a press briefing here.

"About 37 per cent of

COVID-19 deaths in India took place in the age group of 45 to 60 years, while 11 per cent of deaths were recorded in the age group of 26 to 44 years," he said.

According to a study involving thousands of patients from Europe, men have higher concentrations of angiotensin-converting enzyme 2 (ACE2), an enzyme that enables the SARS-CoV-2 virus infect healthy cells in their blood, than women and this may probably help explain why men are more vulnerable to Covid-19 than women.

The study has been published in the European Heart Journal.

Sharp spike in Covid-19 cases likely in coming days

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Amid increasing efforts for ramping up the Covid-19 test capacity across the country, the Government on Tuesday indicated a further sharp surge in the infection in the coming days with case-loads already set to cross the 19-lakh mark on Tuesday.

Almost 50,000 Covid-19 cases are being reported daily over the past few days.

However, the cases are all set to be on the higher side as more tests means detection of more cases, indicated Union health secretary Rajesh Bhushan while addressing a press briefing.

He said that presently 28 states and UTs are performing more than 140 Covid-19 tests per day per million population as per the parameter defined by the WHO.

However, as the remaining seven States are yet to improve their testing capacity, the officials do not rule out more cases once they too enhance their test rate.

He said 28 states and UTs

have a Covid-19 positivity rate of less than 10 per cent, while India's positivity rate as on date is 8.89 per cent. Many states have increased their testing capacity, both RT-PCR & Rapid Antigen tests. Goa, Delhi, Tripura, and Tamil Nadu have increased their testing capacity, said Bhushan.

More than 2 crore Covid-19 tests have been conducted, including more than 6.6 lakh tests in the last 24 hours. Recovered cases are now double of the active cases.

In fact, Soumya Swaminathan, WHO's chief scientist at a video conference at Geneva too expressed concerns that India has a low testing rate when compared to some of the countries that are successfully trying to curb it.

"In India as a whole, the testing rates are much lower compared to some of the countries, who have done well like Germany, Taiwan, South Korea, Japan.

Even the United States is testing a huge number of people.

"So we need to have some benchmark and every public health department needs to have benchmarks on what is the rate of testing per lakh or per million, what is the test positivity rate," she said in an interactive session through video conference.

More than 18K desi ventilators supplied within 2 months

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Imported till May, ventilators manufactured within the country are now meeting the domestic demand with the Union Health Ministry stating that in less than 2 months more than 18,000 Make-in-India ventilators have been supplied to the States/UTs /Central Govt Hospitals/DRDO facility.

Union Health Secretary Rajesh Bhushan on Tuesday also said that funds from PM Cares fund were utilised to procure about 50,000 ventilators worth ₹2,000 crore.

An order for 30,000 ventilators has been placed with Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL), Bhushan said adding that Scanray provides tech support to BEL. Further orders of 13,500 ventilators from Andhra Pradesh MedTech Zone (AMTZ) and 10,000 ventilators from AgVa have been placed by the Union Health Ministry.

In response to a question about the rejection of AvGa ventilators, Bhushan said that these devices of a different make were rejected in Mumbai. He further clarified that the venti-



Bhushan said that only 0.27 per cent of total active cases in India are on ventilator support across the country

lators in question were donated to BMC-run hospitals and other healthcare facilities in Maharashtra by an NGO.

Stating that export of ventilators will not impact the domestic supply, Bhushan said that only 0.27 per cent of total active cases in India are on ventilator support across the country. "About 18,000 ventilators have reached states," he said.

In response to a question about the rejection of AvGa ventilators, Bhushan clarified that these devices of a different make were rejected in Mumbai. He further clarified that the "ventilators in question were donated to BMC-run hospitals and other healthcare facilities in Maharashtra by an NGO."

Patnitop land grab case: CBI searches at 11 locations in J&K

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The CBI on Tuesday conducted searches at 11 locations including Jammu, Udhampur and Kathua Districts of Jammu and Kashmir at the offices and residential premises of public servants including three former CEOs of Patnitop Development Authority (PDA) in an ongoing investigation of a case, registered on the allegations of large scale illegal construction/encroachment of land in the tourist location of Patnitop area of Udhampur District.

In its case, the CBI has accused 74 persons including eight public servants and 66 proprietors of hotels, resorts and guest houses. Earlier, a Preliminary Enquiry was conducted by the CBI on the directions of the High Court of J&K in the matter.

"It was alleged that the public servants having dominion/jurisdiction over land in Patnitop, in conspiracy with the Owners/Proprietors of the Hotels/Guest Houses/Resorts, etc. had allowed illegal construction/illegal use of the said land in violation of law, leading to loss to the Government," the CBI said in a statement.

It was further alleged that many Hotels/Guest Houses were constructed without any permission and were not registered with PDA. It was also alleged that officials did not take any action despite being aware of such encroachment. In some cases, no compounding fee was allegedly deposited by the Hotels, the agency alleged in the FIR.

The searches were conducted at the offices and residential premises of the three former CEOs of PDA and officers of the Transport Department and Sales Tax Department which led to the recovery of incriminating documents, huge investment in Fixed Deposits and immovable properties among others, officials said, adding further investigation is continuing.

They said accused will soon be summoned for questioning and separate disproportionate cases will be registered after verification of the seized documents relating to assets.

The three former CEOs of PDA accused in the case are SM Sahni, KK Gupta and Dr MM Malik, Additional Transport Commissioner of Jammu Rakesh Kumar Srangal, Joint Transport Commissioner Raman Kumar Kesar, Deputy Commissioner of Sales Tax Recovery Rajinder Singh and Inspectors Amresh Jasrotia and Zaheer Abbas.

Bihar polls: EC seeks parties' opinion by Aug 11



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Despite a growing demand to postpone the upcoming Assembly polls in Bihar due to the coronavirus pandemic and floods, the Election Commission (EC) has asked national and regional political parties to suggest their inputs by August 11 on how to conduct election campaigns and public meetings in the State in view of the crisis.

In a letter addressed to presidents and general secretaries of recognised political parties — both state and national — the EC stated "response from many parties is still awaited". Amid the ongoing pandemic situation, "the Commission has directed that some more time may be given to the political parties who have not sent their suggestions". Earlier, the poll body had sought their views and suggestions by July 31.

The term of the current assembly ends on November 29 and a new assembly has to be constituted before that. Presently, 13 districts are reeling under severe floods while the pandemic is expected to peak by October and November.

Several parties of Bihar have demanded that the polls be deferred.

J&K mainstream parties face difficulty in branding image post Art 370 abrogation

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

Post Abrogation of Article 370 and reorganisation of the erstwhile State of Jammu & Kashmir into two Union Territories the majority of Kashmir based mainstream political leaders, belonging to the National Conference (NC), Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) and the Congress party are still struggling to 'resurrect' their image in the eyes of their supporters.

Though some of them including PDP Chief Mehbooba Mufti are still under detention but all those who are out are 'purportedly' avoiding attending political functions due to growing 'mistrust' between them and their followers. So far only Omar Abdullah has gone public with his political statements triggering a divide within his own party.

Majority of these leaders

continue to remain in a 'state of shock' and find it difficult to stomach the fact that the ruling dispensation in New Delhi has 'dumped' them and stopped paying attention to their 'brand of politics'.

Ironically, the vacuum created by these mainstream players is yet to be filled by any significant player in the Kashmir valley.

Former Ministers and a couple of ex-legislators had joined hands together and founded Jammu and Kashmir Apni party under the leadership of Syed Altaf Bukhari but even they have failed to establish their foothold in the valley in the absence of any mass contact programme. They have only restricted their activity to meeting central BJP leaders and Union Ministers and addressing a press conference to highlight their grievances. They are yet to hold a public convention to demonstrate their

strength to their political adversaries. These events could not be held due to Covid-19 pandemic. In Jammu region, instead of consolidating its base the Bharatiya Janta Party is also facing resistance for failing to come up to the expectations of the people in the last one year.

On the other hand the common masses, in both the regions, are yet to come out of the hangover of experiencing a 'roller coaster' ride.

On its part, the Union Territory administration is claiming they are working round the clock to bring back the derailed political process on track and embark on the road to prosperity.

In the absence of the elected government in office the 'trimmed' down government machinery is working 'effectively' and 'efficiently' to ensure timely completion of flagship developmental projects on

ground zero.

On the security front the joint teams of security forces have been tracking down hiding terrorists and neutralising them to create a conducive atmosphere for initiating the stalled political process in the region.

Under the leadership of Lt-Governor Girish Chandra Murmu, "the period was utilised by the top bureaucrats to formulate structured policies for different sectors to ensure ease of business". To promote e-governance the entire government machinery has been augmented to reach out to the masses. At present at least 27 different services have been extended to speed up public delivery mechanisms.

Speaking to The Pioneer, a senior IAS officer, Rohit Kansal currently holding the charge of Power Development Department and Spokesman of Jammu and Kashmir govern-

ment said, "in the last one year several flagship projects have been completed and work is going on a large number of languishing projects to ensure their timely completion".

He said, "506 languishing projects costing Rs. 665 crores stand completed while 963 projects costing Rs. 2256 crores are scheduled for completion by March, 2021".

According to official sources, the pace of work on different projects sanctioned under the Prime Ministers Development Package has been expedited.

Till June 2018 before the BJP-PDP alliance govt collapsed only 26 percent of the total fund was utilised. At present around 49 percent i.e Rs 28,768 crore has been utilised.

The total package was worth 80,000 crores Rs 58,627 crore was allocated for the Union Territory of J&K. "A total of 63 infrastruc-

ture development projects were to be built up in Jammu and Kashmir under the Prime Minister's Development Package (PMDP). Between November 2015 and October 2019, only 18 projects were completed.

In the last one year the government also fulfilled its commitment of issuing Domicile certificates to West Pakistani refugees, Valmiki Community, Gorkhas, earlier considered as non state subjects and were deprived of their citizenship rights.

During the period the government also approved reservation benefits to people living along the international border (IB) in Jammu and Kashmir.

The Social Welfare Department had recently notified reservation rules for people residing within 0 to 6 km of International Border (IB), after amending Jammu and Kashmir Reservation Act-2005.

The government made the amendments in Jammu and Kashmir Reservation Rules, providing reservation to the people residing in 508 villages along the IB, in direct recruitments, professional institutions and post-graduate courses. Another senior IAS officer, currently holding the charge of Agriculture, Animal and Sheep Husbandry department, Navin Choudhary told The Pioneer, "while preparing for the Investors' meet we finalised sector wise policy framework of different departments to attract investment in Jammu and Kashmir. He said, in the wake of Covid-19 pandemic the investors meet could not be organised but the policy environment shortages were addressed.

He said, "we had no tourism policy, Horticulture policy and now we have policy documents of 22 sectors in place". He said all this hap-

pened due to the lean structure of the government. "Compared to the previous set up the decision making has been little faster in the new dispensation".

Sharing a report card of his own department Navin Choudhary said, "around 10.50 lakh farmers have been enrolled for Kisan Credit Card scheme in Jammu and Kashmir". Out of this 4 lakh cards were distributed during special drives in the recent weeks. He said, due to prevailing circumstances centering around Covid-19 pandemic, we are focusing on strengthening the primary sector in Jammu and Kashmir. The manufacturing and the services sector has taken a major hit so in order to protect the economy and small farmers we are extending them financial services and opening the doors for them to sustain themselves instead of getting into the trap of local money lenders.

UPSC results: IRS officer tops

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Already in the Indian Revenue Service, Pradeep Singh from Haryana has topped the 2019 UPSC Civil Services Examination while Pratibha Verma from Uttar Pradesh made it to the top among the women candidates. There are a total of 19 women candidates in the first 50 rankers.

The Union Public Service Commission on Tuesday declared the results of the Civil Services Examination 2019 which includes for the first time a 10 percent quota for Economically Weaker Sections (EWS) as one of the various categories like

General and other reserved categories. Of the total of 927 vacancies, 78 candidates have made it under EWS.

According to the results declared by UPSC this year, 829 candidates have been selected for the various services, including 66 who have been provisionally recommended. The results of 11 candidates have been withheld.

The results are on the basis of the written examination held in September 2019 and the interviews for a personality test held between February and August 2020 and in between suspended during the Corona related country wide lockdown.

The 10% EWS was imple-

mented for the first time this year, with 78 candidates selected under that category.

Apart from 304 successful candidates in the general category, there were 251 from Other Backward Classes, 129 from Scheduled Castes and 67 from S c h e d u l e d Tribes.

The successful candidates will join the Indian Administrative Service, Indian Foreign Service, Indian Police Service and Central Services Group A and B, in accordance with their merit list. There were a total of 927 vacancies reported by the government in these services, says a UPSC statement.

Allow followers to celebrate on bhoomi puja day: BJP to TMC

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Even as Bengal Government exchanged its bi-weekly lockdown dates beginning Wednesday which coincides with the ground-breaking ceremony at Ram Janmabhoomi site in Ayodhya, State BJP president Dilip Ghosh on Tuesday warned the Mamata Banerjee Government against committing excesses on the followers of Lord Rama who would celebrate it in their own manner.

"Though the BJP has not kept its own programme on Wednesday we have reports that many followers of Lord Rama would celebrate the day that is coming after 500 years

of struggle... I will expect that the Government will not cause any hindrance to those who will celebrate this ceremony," Ghosh said.

On reports that the billboards in favour of the celebrations were being torn down by the police at Kharagpur town Ghosh said "any excess perpetrated on the Ram Bhakts (followers of Lord Rama) will be dealt with accordingly," wondering "why the Government does not take cognizance of lockdown violations in areas dominated by certain communities and why it clamps down heavily on the Hindus when they celebrate their festivals."

He said "the police were

tearing down the hoardings put up by the followers of Lord Rama in Kharagpur. This is an atrocity committed on the Hindus who want to celebrate the occasion peacefully. The people are watching and they will take appropriate decision at an appropriate time if the Government tries to play mischief here."

Warning that the Trinamool Congress will have to bear heavy prices for its misadventures on Wednesday he invoked an oft repeated slogan in the Hindi heartland saying, "Jo humse takrayega chur chur ho jayega (anyone who confronts us will be blown into smithereens)."

1,083 infected in Kerala

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

More than 1,000 new persons tested positive for Covid-19 in Kerala on Tuesday. A release by the Government of Kerala said the State saw 1,083 new persons getting diagnosed with Covid-19 on Tuesday. Out of this, 902 persons contracted the pandemic through local transmission.

Though 1,021 persons were cured of the pandemic and left the hospitals for home, things are becoming worse in the State. All 14 districts saw more persons getting afflicted with the coronavirus through local transmission. There were 71 persons who could not pinpoint the source from where they got infected. Three persons lost their lives during the last 24 hours.

While Thiruvananthapuram had 242 new patients,

237 of them were contracted through local transmission. Similarly, in Ernakulam where 135 persons were diagnosed with the disease, 122 were affected because of local transmission.

Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan called off his media interaction though it was announced that he would be briefing media about Covid.

Those who infected with the virus on Tuesday include 16 health workers and 35 jawans of the ITBP station at Alappuzha. Meanwhile trouble is brewing up in the State as staff of the department of health and the Indian Medical Association's Kerala branch expressed their discontentment over the Chief Minister's move to entrust the responsibility of containment and quarantine management to the police.

108 die, 5,603 new cases in TN

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ CHENNAI

Though Tamil Nadu lost 108 of its citizens to Covid-19 and 5,063 new persons testing positive for the pandemic on Tuesday, the day had some encouraging news too.

Across the State, 6,501 persons were discharged from hospitals and left for their homes getting cured of Covid-19. Till date a total of 2.08 lakh persons have been cured of the pandemic.

While the State had 56, 698 active cases on Monday, the numbers came down to 55, 152 by Tuesday evening, said the bulletin issued by the Government of Tamil Nadu.

The 125 laboratories across the State tested 52,955 persons on Tuesday, establishing Tamil Nadu's lead over all other States in testing maximum number of persons.

The situation in Chennai showed some improvement as the number of persons tested positive for the pandemic came down to 1,023. There is a strong feeling that situation in Chennai is gradually improving. But the same could not be said about the three neighboring districts of the Metropolis. Chengalpatt (245), Kancheepuram (220) and Thiruvallur (358) remained areas of concern similar to Virudhunagar in south (424).

Gold smuggling: NIA takes 2 more persons in custody

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ CHENNAI

A source in the National Investigation Agency (NIA) probing the gold smuggling scam in Kerala told *The Pioneer* that investigation is moving in the right direction and speed and more powerful people would be taken into custody soon. "It is a slow process but that is how probes into cases like this take place. Whatever information we have collected is capable to take us to the doorsteps of the powerful and mighty," said the official.

The NIA on Tuesday took into custody two more persons from Malappuram district who are involved in distributing the smuggled gold to the end users and diverting the money to terrorist organizations. Shafeeq and Sharaguddeen were arrested based on the details furnished by T K Rameez who has been arrested earlier by the NIA.

Meanwhile, the agency handed over the case diary and other docu-

ments related to the arrest of Swapna Suresh and Sandeep Nair, the kingpins of the smuggling operation, to the special court hearing their bail application. "The court has asked us to ensure that there are sufficient proof so that we could slap the UAPA charge against the accused. We handed over the materials for the consideration of the court and there are sufficient grounds under which we could bring them under the UAPA (Unlawful Activities Prevention Act)," said Jaishankar V Nair, lawyer representing the agency in this case.

Interestingly, the Kerala Police does not figure anywhere in this investigation. The general feeling is that the State's police force is under orders from its top bosses not to help the NIA but even to derail the probe. The allegation that Swapna Suresh and Sarith could escape from Kerala to Bangalore (from where the NIA arrested them) only because of the tacit support of the Kerala Police.

SURGE OF ELATION ON BHOOMI PUJAN EVE

The temple town has been illuminated with lights while the Saryu ghat is lit up with earthen lamps in the evening adding sheen to the majestic grandeur of the city.

People rue that because of the Covid pandemic the festivity is at low key. "Had this function been held on normal days all these roads would have been chock-a-block with people. Millions of people would have come to Ayodhya to witness this historic event," Pandit Hari Mohan, of Nageshwar Nath Temple said.

The Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust, which is the main organiser, has sent invitations to just 175 people. The Prime Minister is among the 175 people who will be present at the ceremony. He will share the dais with just four other people - RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat, trust chief Nriytra Gopaldas Maharaj, Uttar Pradesh Governor Anandiben Patel and CM Yogi Adityanath. In keeping with Covid-19 norms, seating arrangements have been made in a way that all invitees will sit at a distance of six feet.

Champat Rai said that the invitees include 135 religious leaders from 36 spiritual traditions across the country.

Iqbal Ansari, a litigant in the decades-old temple-mosque dispute, was the first person to be invited. "I will certainly attend it. The dispute is over now after the court verdict," Ansari said.

His father Hashim Ansari, the oldest litigant in the case, died in 2016.

The Ram Temple will be built after years of dispute over the 2.77 acre site where the 16th century Babri mosque stood before it was razed in 1992 by Hindu activists who believed it was built on the ruins of an ancient temple marking the birthplace of Lord Ram.

In November, the Supreme Court said the site would be handed over for the building of a temple and an alternative five-acre site would be given to Muslims.

MODI TO STAY FOR 3 HOURS ...

From Lucknow he will take an IAF chopper to reach Ayodhya at 1130 hrs and will land at Saket college grounds.

The PM will directly go to Hanumangarhi temple from the Saket college after worshipping there for 10 minutes and will leave for Ram Janambhoomi at 1200 hrs. Thereafter for 10 minutes he will be at the Ram Lalla temple where he will offer prayers and plant a sapling.

At 1230 hrs, he will join the Bhoomi Pujan programme and after staying there for around 90 minutes Modi will depart for Saket college ground and will leave for Lucknow at 1420 hrs.

Meanwhile, RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat along with Bhaiyyaji Joshi and Uma Bharati reached Ayodhya on Tuesday.

FOUNDATION STONE WAS LAID IN 1989...

"We believe that this massive effort is not only to build one more temple. This campaign is in fact for the establishment of 'Ramatva' in the whole world for Ram

FROM PAGE 1

Rajya. This cannot be achieved only by the Government and all sections of the society but every individual will have to join this mission," he said.

The VHP president said that there was no poverty and sickness during the rule of Shri Ram. "The Ramatava will descend by establishing a harmonious society based on equality where every person will be treated with dignity. Everyone would be assured with the food, clothing and shelter along with education and gainful vocations. The family values will be respected and everybody would have the opportunity to elevate himself to realise the Supreme Goal."

"For this purpose, with the cooperation of Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP) more than one lakh 'Ekal Vidyalayas' function in the country. The VHP shall speed up the spread of education, sanskar, sanitation, organic agriculture and self-sufficient villages through the 'Ekal Vidyalayas,' he said.

The VHP shall in particular amongst the Schedule Castes and Scheduled Tribes speed up the efforts for better education, health and income generating pursuits. The VHP shall, for this purpose, act as a 'bridge' between the Government welfare schemes and the beneficiaries, Kumar stressed.

The VHP president said that Lord Ram, during his wanderings in the forests, saw the havoc caused by the terrorist demonic activities and unsuitable alien culture. He had vowed to end the terrorists from the earth. VHP will consolidate the power of the good to free the country from all forms of terrorism, he said.

The VHP will also work to strengthen the traditional family system of Bharat wherein the families will become the centers of inculcation of human values and love towards each other. This would rid the problems of loneliness and depression, he said. He said VHP will also work for the development of the cow and its progeny, cow-based products and organic agriculture. For this purpose, the VHP will strengthen the training infrastructure for Gau-Palaks and farmers.

The VHP working president also said that Maryada Purushotam Shree Ram had constantly strived for social harmony in his 14 years of exile. He had bare-foot visited all sections of the people, gave them his love and consolidated the society. VHP is tirelessly working on the same ideals to bring about harmonious society. We shall build a Bharat which will embrace with love and friendship of the Ahalayas, Shabris and Nishadras and will remove the fallacies of high and low. We shall have a society where there would be no appeasement or exploitation.

"We are confident that with our collective efforts, we shall establish a self-confident and self-reliant Bharat to perform its mission of peace and happiness in the world," he added.

BIHAR SUGGESTS CBI PROBE

Kumar's announcement also did not go down well with the ruling coalition in Maharashtra which claimed it encroached upon the rights of the State Government. Bihar Director General of Police

(DGP) Guptaeswar Pandey, however, defended the State Government's decision in view of the "inaction" of Mumbai Police.

"What was Mumbai police doing these 50 days. They were not cooperating with our police. When Bihar home secretary phoned his Maharashtra counterpart, he would not answer the call. All channels of communication were blocked. We doubt your (Mumbai police's) intentions," he said.

The development came a day before the Supreme Court is slated to hear a petition by Rhea Chakraborty seeking transfer of the case to Mumbai, where an investigation in the matter is already on.

The State Governments of Bihar and Maharashtra have already filed separate caveats in the top court seeking to be heard before any order is passed on Chakraborty's plea. The father of the late actor has also filed a caveat in the apex court.

AADITYA SLAMS 'DIRTY POLITICS', SAYS HE HAS NO ROLE IN CASE

"At a time when Maharashtra is waging a determined battle to defeat coronavirus, those who are unable to stomach the success and popularity of our Government are indulging dirty politics over Rajput's death. They are maligning me and Thackeray family members over Rajput's suicide. Their acts are an offshoot of a failure and political jealousy.

"They are making political capital out of a death which is a blot on humanity. I do not have even the smallest connection with the entire episode. The film industry is Bollywood. Bollywood is an important ingredient of Mumbai. Thousands of people are depending on this industry for livelihood. Yes, I know many people from Bollywood. That is no crime," Aaditya said.

"Rajput's death is both unfortunate and shocking. The Mumbai police are going deep into the case. The Maharashtra police have an international reputation. Those who do not believe in rule of law are making baseless allegations and in the process they are trying to derail the investigations," the Sena leader said.

"As the grandson of late Shiv Sena chief Bal Thackeray, I would like to say I would not do any such thing that would come as a blot on the prestige of the Shiv Sena and Thackeray family," Aaditya said.

Aaditya went on to say, "All those who are making baseless allegations should hand over whatever information they have (about Rajput's suicide) should hand it over to the police so that they investigate the case in that direction. I am still conducting myself with a lot of patience. You should not remain in illusion that I would keep quiet if you continue to defame the State Government and Thackeray family." Meanwhile, Rane created a sensation by claiming that both Sushant was "murdered" while his ex-manager Disha was "raped" and "murdered."

Addressing a news conference here on Tuesday, Rane indirectly targeted Aaditya, by demanding to know, "Who all were there in the parties that were held on June 8 and June 13? Find them out." He suggested that a Maharashtra Minister too was in these parties.



Commuters wade through a waterlogged street during heavy rain in Mumbai on Tuesday

AP

Western and Central Railway networks, while the Harbour Line remained paralysed between Kurla and Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus (CSMT). After the crash of two houses at Santa Cruz in north-west Mumbai, a woman Rekha M Kakade and her 18-month-old infant daughter Jahnavi were washed away in a swollen nullah. Her second daughter Shivanya was rescued safely, while a third daughter is still missing. In the second incident, a 15-year-old boy — identified as one Rakib A Mandal — was electrocuted and died on the spot when he touched a livewire of street-light pole

along Thane's Ghodbunder Road. A man was washed away in swollen floods in Navi Mumbai. A landslide that took place along the Western Express Highway in Kandivali slowed down the movement on the arterial road, while traffic moved at a snail's pace in the Eastern Express Highway.

The Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) deployed six JCBs to clear the debris and stones. Heavy inundation was witnessed in chronic water-logging spots of Sion, Hindmata, King's Circle, Dadar, Postal Colony, Andheri and Malad subways, Jogeshghwari, Dahisar.

AFGHAN PRISON ATTACK

Kerala doctor among ISIS suicide bombers

Kabul/New Delhi: Of the 11 ISIS suicide bombers involved in the Afghanistan prison break terror attack that left 39 people dead on Monday, one was a doctor from Kerala.

Official sources told IANS that the ISIS suicide bomber has been identified as Kallukettiya Purayil Ijas, a physician and resident of Kasargod in Kerala.

On Sunday evening, as per official sources in Kabul, 11 ISIS terrorists stormed the Jalalabad prison to break free their cadres, killing 39 people. In a fierce gun-battle which lasted for almost 24 hours, the Afghan security forces killed all the 11 attackers.

Ijas, according to the National Investigation Agency (NIA) which has been investigating his case, went to Afghanistan to join the Islamic State's Khorasan Province branch of Daesh, the global Islamist terror group, in 2016.

As per the NIA chargesheet in the case, Ijas had gone to Afghanistan along with his pregnant wife Refeela. While Ijas at the time was 33 years old, his wife was 26. Sources said Refeela and their child are in the



custody of Afghan authorities.

In July 2016, a parent from Kasargod had lodged a police complaint, stating that his 30-year-old son Abdul Rashid was missing along with his wife Ayisha (Sonia Sebastian) and child for almost two months after they had gone to Mumbai.

Around the same time, 14 other cases of missing people, including Ijas, were registered by their parents and relatives in the police station of the same area. Preliminary inves-

tigation revealed that the missing persons had left India to join the ISIS.

During the investigation by Kerala Police, the role of 29-year-old Yasmeen Mohammad Zahid, a resident of Batla House in Jamia Nagar, New Delhi, but originally from Sitamarhi district in Bihar, as a co-conspirator of Abdul Rashid was revealed.

She was arrested on August 1, 2016, after she got inter-cepted at the Indira Gandhi

International Airport in New Delhi while attempting to flee India for Afghanistan along with her child.

As per the Kerala police, Yasmeen was actively aiding Abdul Rashid in his activities, including raising funds to support the ISIS. The case was handed over to the NIA after she was arrested.

The NIA investigation revealed that Yasmeen "was highly influenced and radicalised with the pro-jihadi

ideology" and recruited the main accused Abdul Rashid. She "compelled her husband to divorce her and upon her compulsion, her husband pronounced third talaq in the month of Ramadan, 2015. Immediately after the third talaq, she had left her place of work at Kollam and gone to the house of Ijas at Kasargod for attending the secret, pro-ISIS classes conducted by Abdul Rashid," the NIA chargesheet said.

The NIA investigation revealed that Abdul Rashid, Yasmeen and others were involved in activities to further the objectives of the ISIS in Kerala and other places of India. Fifteen people, including Ijas, had fled from Kerala to join the terror group in Nangarhar province in Afghanistan.

Though the NATO and Afghan forces claim to have killed most ISIS members in Nangarhar, sources said many escaped from the area unscathed. In the chargesheet, the NIA listed Ijas, a resident of Hamsa Sagar, Thekkepuram, near the government hospital in Padana, Kasargod, as an accused and absconder in the case.

IANS

UK lawmakers urge sanctions over Hong Kong police violence

London: British lawmakers investigating rights violations by Hong Kong police have urged the UK Government to sanction the city's leader for allowing "excessive police violence" toward humanitarian workers helping those injured in pro-democracy protests.

Tuesday's report from the bipartisan All Party Parliamentary Group on Hong Kong said first aid workers, as well as doctors and nurses, have been subjected to intimidation, threats, physical violence and arrests during months-long clashes between police and protesters that began in the city last year.

"The Hong Kong Police Force's treatment of humanitarian aid workers and their interference within hospitals have resulted in injured protesters not receiving the required medical care in time or at all," the report said.

Lawmaker Alistair Carmichael, who co-chairs the parliamentary group, said the violence was "not the actions of a few rogue officers" and was



"clearly a systematic and quite deliberate" change that aligned more with policing in mainland China.

The report's authors said they drew their conclusions after receiving over 1,000 pieces of written evidence and hearing many firsthand experiences from witnesses.

It called for Britain to urgently impose sanctions on Hong Kong leader Carrie Lam and the city's police commissioner.

The semi-autonomous city has seen its most violent anti-government protests in the past year, as demonstrations against a proposed law that would allow suspects to be extradited to China grew into a much wider protest movement. **AP**

Lankans to vote in parliamentary election today

Colombo: Sri Lankans will vote in the twice-postponed parliamentary election on Wednesday with the powerful Rajapaksa family-run party expected to gain control of the assembly that could allow them to amend the Constitution to restore presidential powers.

Over 16 million people are eligible to vote to elect 196 out of a total of 225 lawmakers for the next five years. Twenty-nine others will be named from a national list according to the number of votes received by each party.

The counting would take place only on the following morning - a departure from the practice of counting the ballots from 8 pm on the election night. President Gotabaya Rajapaksa hopes for a two-thirds majority for the Sri Lanka People's Party (SLPP) in the general election so that he can amend the Constitution to restore presidential powers curbed by a 2015 constitutional change. His older brother and former president Mahinda Rajapaksa, who is seeking reelection as prime minister, is assured of a sweeping victory as the main Opposition is badly divided. **PTI**

China accuses US of 'outright bullying' over Tiktok

Beijing: China accused the United States on Tuesday of "bullying" over popular video app TikTok, after President Donald Trump ramped up pressure for its US operations to be sold to an American company.

In the latest diplomatic spat between the world's two biggest economies, Beijing hit back after Trump gave TikTok six weeks to arrange a sale of its US operations -- and said that his government wanted a financial benefit from the deal.

"This goes against the principles of the market economy and the (World Trade Organization's) principles of openness, transparency and non-discrimination," said foreign ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin.

The app has been under formal investigation on US national security grounds, and Trump said that Microsoft was

in talks to buy TikTok.

He has given ByteDance until mid-September to strike a deal, a tactic that is almost unheard of.

"It's got to be an American company... it's got to be owned here," Trump said on Monday. "We don't want to have any problem with security."

The US and China have clashed over various fronts recently, essentially barring Chinese telecoms company Huawei from the US market and waging a global campaign to isolate the company over national security concerns.

Beijing slammed the latest move as "political manipulation". Wang told a regular press briefing Tuesday: "The US, without providing any evidence, has been using an abused concept of national security... unjustifiably suppressing certain non-US companies."

AFP

Malaysia police raid Al Jazeera's office, seize 2 computers

AP ■ KUALA LUMPUR

News broadcaster Al Jazeera said Malaysian police raided its Kuala Lumpur office Tuesday, calling it a "troubling escalation" in a government crackdown on media freedom.

Police opened an investigation last month into an Al Jazeera documentary on the treatment of undocumented migrants after officials complained it was inaccurate and biased. Seven Al Jazeera staff members have been grilled by police as part of the probe for alleged sedition, defamation and violating the Communications and Multimedia Act.

Al Jazeera, a Qatari-state owned broadcaster, said in a statement that police seized two computers during Tuesday's raid, which it called "an attack on press freedom as a whole." It urged Malaysian authorities to cease the criminal investigation.

Pak court appoints 3 senior lawyers as amici curiae in Jadhav's case

Islamabad: A top Pakistani court has named three senior lawyers as amici curiae in the case of Kulbhushan Jadhav as it ordered the Pakistan government to give "another chance" to India to appoint a counsel for the death-row prisoner.

Jadhav, the 50-year-old retired Indian Navy officer, was sentenced to death by a Pakistani military court on charges of espionage and terrorism in April 2017.

India approached the International Court of Justice against Pakistan for denial of consular access to Jadhav and challenging the death sentence.

The Hague-based ICJ ruled in July 2019 that Pakistan must undertake an "effective review and reconsideration" of the conviction and sentence of Jadhav and also to grant consular access to India without further delay.

A two-member bench of the Islamabad High Court (IHC) comprising Chief Justice

Athar Minallah and Justice Mianqul Hassan Aurangzeb appointed the three lawyers on Monday as it held a hearing of the petition filed by the Pakistan government to appoint a lawyer for Jadhav.

Amicus Curiae is a lawyer appointed by a court to assist in any matter or case.

The court also ordered a larger bench to be set up for the case. It also directed the registrar of the court to fix the proceedings at 2 pm on September 3 before a larger bench.

"We appoint Mr Abid Hassan Manto, Mr Hamid Khan, Senior Advocates of the Supreme Court and former presidents of the Supreme Court Bar Association, and Mr Makhdoom Ali Khan, Senior Advocate Supreme Court and former Attorney General of Pakistan, as amici curiae for our legal assistance in general and, in particular, to ensure that the judgement of the International Court is effectively implement-

ed," the court said in its order.

The Pakistan government in its petition has claimed that Jadhav refused to file a review petition or an application to reconsider the verdict against him by the military court.

"We feel that in order to ensure the effectiveness of the review and reconsideration of the conviction and sentence of Commander Jadhav, a reasonable opportunity ought to be extended to the latter and the Government of India to arrange legal representation and to file a petition.

"We, therefore, at this stage restrain ourselves from appointing a counsel on behalf of Commander Jadhav and advise the Government of Pakistan to extend an opportunity to Jadhav and the Government of India for arranging legal representation in terms of Article 32(1)(c) of the Convention and in accordance with the applicable laws," the court order said. **PTI**

UK suspends digital visa processing tool amid allegations of racism

London: The UK government on Tuesday said that it will be suspending the use of a digital tool to process visas amid a legal challenge that claimed it amounted to "racism" as the computer algorithm discriminated against applicants on the basis of nationality by design.

The Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants (JCWI) and digital rights group Foxglove, which had initiated the Judicial Review challenge against the system in the High Court in London in June, celebrated the suspension of the artificial intelligence (AI) based Streaming Tool, which will take effect from Friday.

"We have been reviewing how the visa application streaming tool operates and will be redesigning our processes to make them even more streamlined and secure," a UK Home Office spokesperson said.

"We do not accept the allegations Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants made in their Judicial Review claim and whilst litigation is still ongoing it would not be appropriate for the department to comment any further," the spokesperson said.

From Friday, the current Streaming Tool will no longer be used, with a redesign expected to be in place in a few months' time by autumn.

In the interim period, the Home Office said the streaming or sifting of the "overwhelming majority" of visa applications will take place by reference to person-centric attributes, such as evidence of previous travel, and nationality will not be taken into account.

The Streaming Tool is said to have used a traffic-light system to grade every entry visa application to the UK since 2015. **PTI**

money

Sensex snaps 4-day losing streak with 748-point leap

RIL, HDFC BANK LEAD CHARGE

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Equity benchmarks made an emphatic comeback on Tuesday after four straight sessions of losses as market heavyweights Reliance Industries and HDFC Bank saw robust buying amid firm global cues.

The BSE Sensex soared 748.31 points or 2.03 per cent to close at 37,687.91, while the NSE Nifty rallied 203.65 points or 1.87 per cent to 11,095.25.

Reliance Industries was the top gainer in the Sensex pack, surging 7.10 per cent, after reports said the company was close to inking a deal to acquire the retail assets of Future Group.

HDFC Bank jumped 3.94 per cent after the RBI approved the appointment of insider Sashidhar Jagdishan as the next

MD and CEO of the bank. He will take over from Aditya Puri in October this year.

Maruti, Axis Bank, HDFC, ICICI Bank and Bajaj Finance also finished with gains.

On the other hand, Tech Mahindra, IndusInd Bank, HCL Tech, UltraTech Cement and Infosys were among the laggards, shedding up to 2.75 per cent.

According to traders, stock-specific action in index-heavyweights drove the markets higher.

Further, strong foreign fund inflows and positive cues from global markets cheered investors.

Exchange data showed that foreign institutional investors purchased equities worth ₹ 7,818.49 crore on a net basis on Monday. "Reliance led the day's show for the bulls and we saw support in late afternoon trade from key pivots like HDFC Bank and Maruti as Mcap to GDP rose to around 78 per

cent.

"Key highlight of today's trade was good participation in the broader market with smart money finding its way into select midcaps across sectors," said S Ranganathan, Head of Research at LKP Securities.

BSE energy, finance, realty, bankex, auto, healthcare and metal indices rallied up to 5.60 per cent, while IT and tech ended in the red.

Broader BSE mid-cap and small-cap indices jumped up to 1.23 per cent.

Asian markets closed higher, tracking gains in Wall street following better US manufacturing data.

Stock exchanges in Europe were also trading on a positive note in early deals as investors shrugged off escalating US-China tensions and rising coronavirus cases.

Global oil benchmark Brent crude was trading 1.61 per cent lower at USD 43.44 per barrel.

Coronavirus fallout a rising risk for Indian ABS, says Moody's

IANS ■ NEW DELHI

The fallout of the coronavirus pandemic is raising risks for Indian asset-backed securities, rating agency Moody's Investors Service said on Tuesday. However, the agency said that recent structural changes and the credit enhancement build-up has partially offset the growing credit challenges.

"The high take-up of coronavirus-related payment moratoriums and the economic downturn triggered by the pandemic are disrupting the cash flow of ABS transactions and as a result, are raising liquidity risks," Dipanshu Rustagi, a Moody's Assistant Vice President and Analyst, said in a statement.

Accordingly, for Indian auto ABS that Moody's rates, and are mostly backed by commercial vehicles, 70-100 per

cent of underlying loans are currently on payment moratoriums, as are 55-65 per cent of loans in Indian micro, small and midsize enterprise (MSME) loan ABS.

"Meanwhile, the economic downturn is increasing risks for borrowers and consequently likely to trigger a deterioration in asset quality at least through the remainder of the year," Rustagi said.

Specifically, slowing growth is dampening demand for freight transport for commercial vehicle operators, while also weighing on the earnings and profitability of most MSMEs. As per the statement, a further risk lies in the financial deterioration evident at many Indian financial institutions that sponsor ABS deals, since the credit quality of Indian ABS is dependent on sponsors' ongoing servicing of securitised portfolios.

Minimum ₹500 cr net worth must for licence to sell petrol, diesel to retail, bulk users

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Government on Tuesday said any entity with a net worth of at least ₹500 crore is eligible for obtaining the liberalised licence to sell petrol and diesel to retail and bulk consumers.

Clarifying on the November 2019 liberalised fuel licensing regime, the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas said any entity with a net worth of ₹250 crore can get a licence to retail petrol and diesel to either bulk or retail consumers. For those seeking authorisation for both retail and bulk should have a minimum net worth of ₹500 crore at the time of application, it said in a statement.

Last year, the Government had relaxed norms for retailing of auto fuels, allowing non-oil companies to venture into the business -- a move that could help private and foreign firms to enter the world's fastest-growing market.

Prior to that, a company had to invest ₹2,000 crore in

either hydrocarbon exploration and production, refining, pipelines or liquefied natural gas (LNG) terminals to obtain a fuel retailing licence in India.

In the statement, the ministry said the government had on November 8, 2019, notified simplified guidelines for grant of authorisation for bulk and retail marketing of motor spirit (petrol) and high-speed diesel (diesel).

"The simplified guidelines aim at increasing private sector participation in the marketing of petrol and diesel," it said. "An entity desirous of seeking authorisation for either retail or bulk must have a minimum net worth of ₹250 crore at the time of making an application -- ₹500 crore in case of authorisation for both retail and bulk."

Applications, it said, may be submitted in the prescribed form directly to the ministry.

"For retail authorisation, the entity is required to set up at least 100 retail outlets," the statement said adding that the new policy has opened up the marketing sector of petroleum

products by removing the strict conditions applicable earlier.

The other requirements as per the November 2019 notification include the need for companies to install facilities for marketing of at least one new generation alternative fuel, such as CNG, LNG and biofuels, or electric vehicle charging within three years of the start of operations.

The retailers will necessarily have to set up five per cent of the total outlets in rural areas within five years.

The new policy liberalises fuel retailing by increasing private sector participation, including foreign players. "It will also encourage dispensing of alternate fuels and augmentation of retail network in remote areas and ensure higher levels of customer service," the statement added.

The Central Government had last set fuel marketing conditions in 2002 and the November 2019 change was based on the recommendation of a high-level expert committee.

GDP seen contracting, NITI Aayog suggests ways to boost demand

IANS ■ MUMBAI

With the economy going through a slowdown, the NITI Aayog is of the view that India's GDP may contract around 5.1 per cent in the current fiscal.

In a recent presentation to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the Finance Ministry, it has suggested ways to boost demand, specifically in the key sectors of automobiles and real estate.

As per NITI Aayog, the long-awaited scrappage policy should be brought in to help the automobile sector. It has also recommended removal of cess on automobiles.

In a bid to revive demand in the realty sector, it has suggested reinstatement of the subvention scheme which was disallowed last year.

Further, the think tank has also recommended Government spending as private expenditure and invest-

ment is likely to take a backseat in the current scenario.

NITI Aayog, in its presentation, also noted that manufacturing sector growth and capacity utilisation was severely low even before the nationwide lockdown was implemented.

Among several other recommendations, the think tank also recently suggested the creation of a Dak Bank -- postal bank -- by merging the regional rural banks, among other

recommendations to the government. The NITI Aayog has suggested the over 1.5 lakh post offices in the country should be made outlets for the proposed Dak Bank, sources said.

Further, it has also suggested easier norms for granting bank licenses. In another major recommendation, it has suggested privatisation of three banks - Punjab & Sind Bank, UCO Bank and the Bank of Maharashtra, said people in the know.

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The worst seems to be over and the agriculture sector will provide a cushion for the coronavirus-hit economy this fiscal as there are prospects of good monsoon, finance ministry said in a report on Tuesday.

India is well on the path of recovery from a trough in April, ably supported by proactive Government and Central Bank policies, the

Macroeconomic Report for July, released by the Economic Affairs Department said.

"With India unlocking, the worst seems to be over for the economy as high-frequency indicators recovered in June 2020 from unprecedented troughs in April; however, risks on account of rising COVID-19 cases and intermittent State lockdowns remain," it said.

It further noted that the rise in Covid-19 cases and subsequent intermittent lock-

downs make the recovery prospects fragile and called for constant and dynamic monitoring. Pinning hopes on the farm sector, the report said, agriculture is set to cushion the shock of the Covid pandemic on the Indian economy in 2020-21. "With the forecast of a normal monsoon at 102 per cent of long-period average (LPA), agriculture, which contributes about 15 per cent of total gross value added, is set to cushion the shock of COVID

pandemic on the Indian economy in 2020-21," it said.

Timely and proactive exemptions from COVID-induced lockdowns to the sector facilitated uninterrupted harvesting of rabi crops and enhanced sowing of kharif crops, it said, adding, a record procurement of wheat has enabled a flow of around ₹ 75,000 crore to the farmers which will boost private consumption in rural areas.

The final dates for the Common Law Admission Test 2020 (CLAT) have been declared and will be conducted on August 22, 2020. The exam is an aptitude-based exam where the intent is to test the student's interest towards law and not their knowledge of law. A degree in law has got huge popularity since many decades, and the reason which makes it a favourable choice for students is primarily that the course is neutral to all the streams whether commerce or engineering. Further, it has huge scope in terms of career and respect in the society.

Keeping this intent in mind, the CLAT consortium has come up with a new pattern wherein they also plan to extensively test the student's reading and comprehending skills as they feel that these skills are imperative for the budding law aspirants. Hence, the approach that was best suited for the old pattern of CLAT, may not be the same for CLAT 2020.

CLAT comprises five sections, namely English Language, Current Affairs, including General Knowledge, Legal Reasoning, Logical Reasoning and Quantitative Techniques, each section requiring a different approach. However, one thing that stays uniform throughout the five sections is your Reading and Comprehension skills.

Section wise strategy

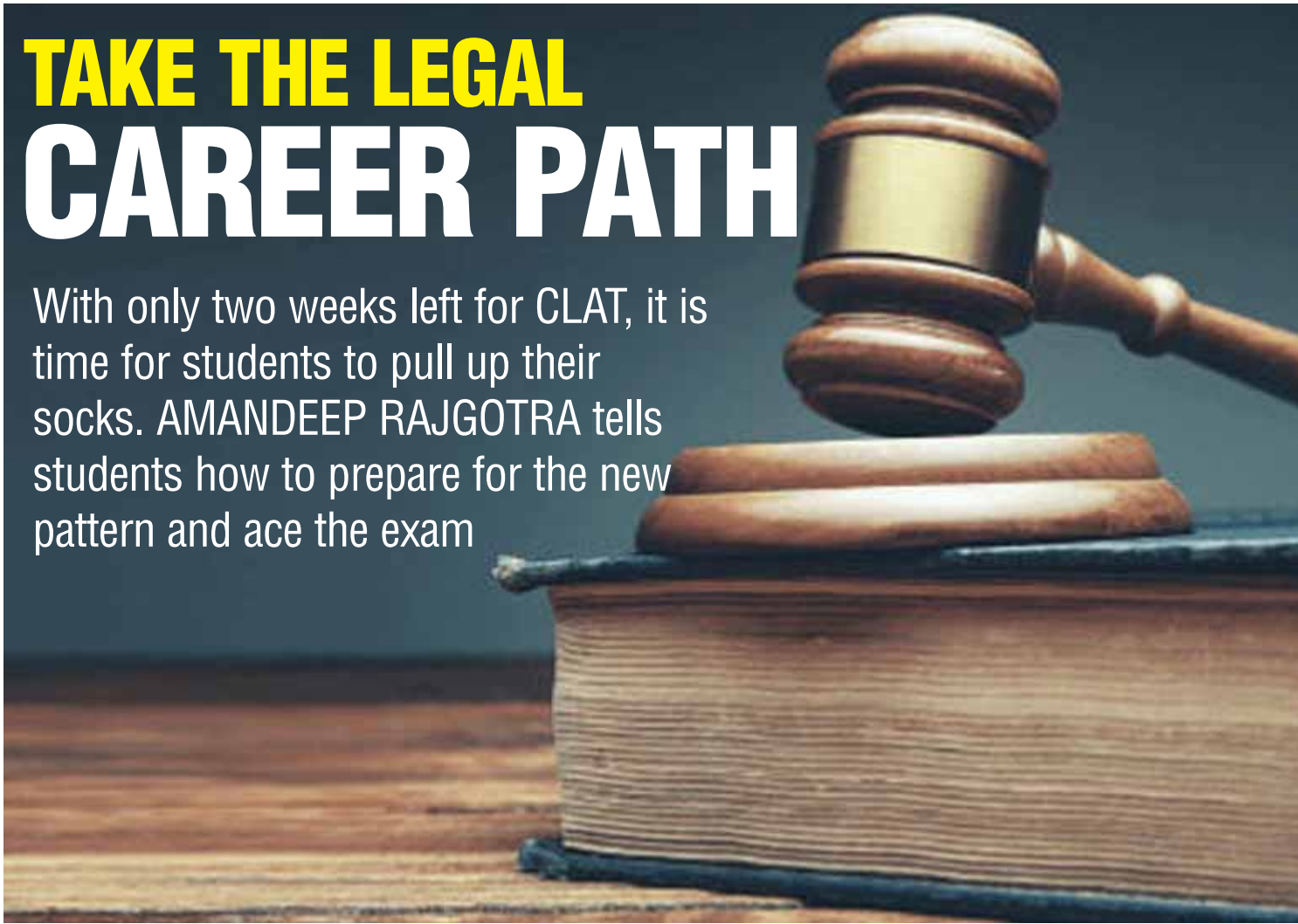
It is recommended that one should develop a reading habit. Read editorials and newspapers daily and focus more on burning Socio Legal issues among other things from reputed media houses. If that is something you have not been doing already, it is recommended to create a depository of the important editorial articles from the last one year and go through them thoroughly. It will definitely help you at this stage.

There'll be a lot of passages this year, (up to 450 words each) so one must develop a habit of sitting, reading and solving problems for more than 2 hours at a stretch. Go through the sample papers and analyse the type of questions that are asked in these exams. Also don't forget to go through the previous year papers. Though there is a new pattern this year, the previous years question papers will help you to understand the basic concepts and the approach to such an exam. This has also been reiterated by the CLAT consortium in their notifications/tweets.

■ **Current affairs:** As per the CLAT website, the passages will be derived from news, journalistic sources and other non-fiction writing. The questions may include an examination of legal information or knowledge discussed in or related to the passage,

TAKE THE LEGAL CAREER PATH

With only two weeks left for CLAT, it is time for students to pull up their socks. AMANDEEP RAJGOTRA tells students how to prepare for the new pattern and ace the exam



but would not require any additional knowledge of the law beyond the passage. To understand the topics and kinds of questions important for the exams, one should go through the previous year papers. Identify the topics on which questions are asked. Read editorials/opinions on burning socio-legal news that took place between May 2019 to present.

■ **English language:** Practise reading comprehensions on a daily basis and make sure you are used to solving reading comprehension questions at a stretch because you'll have to do the same while appearing for the exam. Practise solving Reading Comprehension on screen to replicate the experience that you'll face in the exam.

■ **Quantitative techniques:** As per the official website, "Quantitative Techniques section of the UG-CLAT 2020 will include short sets of facts or propositions, graphs, or other textual, pictorial or diagrammatic representations of numerical information, followed by a series of questions." The best way to solve this section is through practise. The more

Practise reading comprehensions on a daily basis and make sure you are used to solving reading comprehension questions at a stretch because you'll have to do the same while appearing for the exam. Practise solving Reading Comprehension on screen to replicate the experience that you'll face in the exam

you practice, the better you'll get.

■ **Logical reasoning:** One should expect Verbal Reasoning questions dominating the section. As per the official website there'll be multiple short paragraphs based on which questions would be asked. If you are good at critical reasoning, you'll have a great advantage.

■ **Legal reasoning:** The passages may relate to fact situations or scenarios involving legal matters, public policy questions or moral philosophical enquiries. One will benefit from a general awareness of contemporary legal and moral issues to better apply general principles or propositions to the given fact scenarios.

The best part is that the preparation for Current Affairs and Legal Reasoning go hand in hand. Read about the socio legal issues prevalent in the country. One should also expect Principle Fact based questions in their CLAT 2020.

It is clearly mentioned on the official website that through the paragraph, one would have to identify and infer the rules and principles set out in the passage and apply such rules and principles to various fact situations. So, make sure you are conceptually clear when it comes to Torts, Contract, Criminal Law or The Indian Constitution.

The ideal way to practice questions and assess your preparation is through the help of Mock Tests. Prepare for all these sections and attempt as many mocks as possible. One should analyse their mocks post their attempt.

One must identify the grey areas as soon as possible. Identify your strong and weak subjects. Don't categorise a subject as your strong or weak based on how much you enjoy studying it, but on the basis of how much you score in them. The sample size should be good to determine this and should not be based on just a mock or two.

Once identified, allocate more time to your weak areas without totally avoiding your strong sections. Just follow the above mentioned and stay positive. All the best!

The writer is National Product Head Law, Pratham Test Prep

QUOTE OF THE DAY

Our care of the child should be governed, not by the desire to make him learn things, but by the endeavor always to keep burning within him that light which is called intelligence.

— Maria Montessori

Drug discovery science

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The University of Sheffield, UK invites applications for MSc Drug Discovery Science course starting in September 2021. The course will help the students to find out how scientists discover chemical candidates for new pharmaceuticals. Students will learn how to meet the pharmaceutical industry's increasing demands for drugs that can treat illnesses safely and more effectively, overcome antibiotic resistance, and be produced at a lower financial and environmental cost.

This course covers the drug discovery and design techniques used in the pharmaceutical industry. Students will learn study topics such as pharmacology, toxicology and genomics as they learn how drug-like molecules to treat

specific diseases are identified, characterised and optimised for potential clinical trials.

Student's training will cover the fundamental chemistry and biology of protein interactions, their role in disease and how drugs affect the human body.

Duration: One year full-time

Eligibility: A 2:1 honours degree, or equivalent in chemistry, biology, pharmacy or another relevant subject. Applicants with relevant work experience and good academic potential are also encouraged to apply.

Overall IELTS score of 6.5 with a minimum of 6.0 in each component, or equivalent.

How to apply: Log on to <https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/postgraduate/taught/courses/2020/drug-discovery-science-msc>.

Free online crash course

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Edvizo, an IIT alumnus startup, has initiated a free online crash course in an attempt to serve more students amid the lockdown and ease them to deliver a final touch to their preparations for the forthcoming JEE-Advanced 2020. IIT-JEE Top rankers intend to utilize their best time by helping out the budding aspirants to crack the entrance exams for 40 days long. The last date to apply for this opportunity is August 6, 2020.

Ravi Nishant Founder Edvizo said: "The initiative will help young students who are at the crucial juncture of their lives in Class XII when regular

classes and coaching initiatives usually cater to these aspirations being put off due to the lockdown. This will help mitigate the impact that institute closures may have on students & learning process. This will also ensure that students can study from the safety of their own homes, and there is a continuity in their study schedule at the last moment."

The registered students will get 125 hours of training, spanning all the four key subjects — physics, chemistry and mathematics. The classes will be held from 5 pm to 9 pm every day except Sunday. Students will be provided recordings of all classes for better revision.

A different approach to education

In these unprecedented time, technology and digitisation will play an enormous role in making learning for the differently-abled more accessible and inclusive, says PRASHANT AGARWAL

While the world has been speaking of the sudden break and the challenges that COVID-19 has put forth for various sectors, one can sense a major impact of this on the education and skilling sector which had most of its functionalities congregating with face-to-face interactions. Touching is believing, what was once a necessity has slowly shifted to strictly being driven by Digitisation in the education sector.

Career choices and opportunities are now integrated through online platforms where one such example is virtual trainings and internships which are being implemented by leading companies across the globe. However, while many institutions and organisations have developed and integrated technology in their regular functionalities, what do we see as a scope for the differently abled and how do they fit the bill in these challenging times within the mainstream career opportunities.

Before COVID-19 where the focus to impart education for the differently abled was through art and therapy, a lot has changed since then. There has been a massive shift where the differently abled were first considered to be restricted with the jobs they were recruited in and the career opportunities were also limited. However, with technology in place and post COVID-19 massive changes in the entire foundation



of functionality newer opportunities have been cropping up for the differently abled to explore.

Adaptive technologies that would help the differently abled in all senses have been implemented by multiple organisations such as On-screen boards, text-to-speech synthesizers, magnification applications, screen readers, electronic pointing devices, alternative keyboards, computers with visual output and voice output and many more. The Government also has laid various training and skilling programs exploring Digital Literacy for the differently abled under the PMKVY Scheme by introducing Skill Council for Persons with Disability (SCPwD). The organisation was inception with a

National Vision of skilling Persons with Disability and offering them meaningful industry relevant skill based training.

■ **EdTech applications:** Content accessibility plays an important role in imparting knowledge and skilling the differently abled. Content that is easily accessible through applications that are developed to be user friendly have proven to be great sources of education. Institutions both in urban and rural areas can utilise the bandwidth connectivity and impart skill trainings through online platforms and content that can be easily delivered through videos, online lectures and various applications.

■ **E-libraries:** While most of the content that is available online

curriculum that is up-to date as per industry standards is a must. E-libraries and their access with added text to speech technology can help the differently abled students to access their curriculum from anywhere.

■ **Knowledge mobility:** While many companies have been adopting ways through which they can contribute to the social cause of imparting education to the differently abled, it is suggested that they must offer affordable smartphones to students studying in rural areas. This would accelerate affordable smartphone ownership, and strengthening supply of contextualised and engaging content directly to students.

In these unprecedented times, technology and digitisation will play an enormous role in making learning for the differently abled more accessible and inclusive. However, technology can alone not achieve these aspects unless there is a positive participation and communication across all stakeholders to equally contribute for making learning more accessible through effective and efficient delivery channels. With strong emphasis on technical education, the National Education Policy also suggested that the new school curriculum should involve vocational and technical education from class VI.

The writer is President of Narayan Sava Sanshtan

CHANGE IS CONSTANT

Organisations that will embrace the digital transformation quickly and more comprehensively are more likely to survive as compared to those who are resistant, says DR NARENDRA SHYAMSUKHA

The COVID-19 pandemic has turned out to be the most significant disruptive event witnessed by this generation. From mainstreaming remote working, cutting global travel to a comprehensive digital shift, the outbreak has changed the way businesses are executed. This transformational effect is not momentary; it is significant and is here to stay.

One of the most notable elements of this transformation is the way organisations have been forced to embrace digital marketing to be able to survive the crisis. As traditional marketing strategies stand curtailed due to the pandemic, businesses have moved quickly to embrace digital marketing and transform the way they attract and engage customers and clients.

As people stay indoors, malls and roads stand deserted there has been a shift to a space where businesses and customers interact less physically and more through the online route. Digital services providers will tell you how there has been a surge in organisations seeking to create new websites or update existing ones, creating elaborate social media campaigns and launching new e-commerce channels. Truth be told, organisations that embrace this transformation quickly and more comprehensively are the ones that are more likely to survive as compared to those who are resistant to change.

Here are some more changing phases of entrepreneurship that are adjusting to the new normal:

■ **The age of webinars:** As live conferences and face to face engagement activities take a backset, organisations are working out new ways to engage with customers. Webinars have emerged



as a very popular way of achieving digital thought leadership and getting quality leads. At the same time, customer engagement is also taking place with these digital discussions. That's why there is a sea of webinars everywhere to spread the message. Even when the crisis ebbs, people are likely to continue to conduct a part of their thought-leadership events through webinars as more and more people realise that they serve the same purpose at a fraction of the cost. Webinars that have now filled the gap of traditional conferences are likely to become a mainstream marketing strategy in the new normal.

■ **Increased usage of data analytics:** In a digital age, data analytics has always been a valuable proposition. However, as organisations increase their digital presence, the importance of creating useful databases has only increased. With more people spending longer time on social media, their chances of seeing ads on such platforms or coming in touch with content marketing blogs are greater. This is why organisations now need to create valuable databases,

analyse them and use this information intelligently to reach out to the target audience. Tracking pattern of consumer behavior, tracking online traffic patterns, analysing which content retains the customer, and getting a break up of which products are enticing what type of customers are essential elements of data analytics that organisations need to use more to boost their online sales.

■ **Content is the king:** Businesses must focus on expanding social media presence by creating intelligent and attractive content. With the shift from outbound marketing to inbound marketing, it becomes essential to engage consumers in subjects they might find interesting. However, it is important to understand that content distributed on social media should not be totally promotional in nature as it kills consumer interest. Your content must be knowledge and awareness-based. It must engage consumers emotionally rather than blatantly promoting your product.

The writer is Founder & Chairman, ICA Edu Skills

AAP all set to launch job portal

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi minister Gopal Rai on Sunday said the AAP Government will launch a special programme to generate more employment opportunities in the city, a move aimed at reviving the Capital's economy, which was affected due to the lockdown.

The labour and employment minister told PTI that as part of the special programme, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal will launch a job portal in the next few days, where the companies looking to hire and job seekers can register themselves.

The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP)

Government will soon come out with a slew of reforms to revive the national Capital's economy, which has been adversely affected due to the coronavirus-induced lockdown, he said, adding that many migrant workers have moved out of Delhi and several people have lost their jobs due to the shutdown.

"We have decided to aggressively run a special programme to generate more employment opportunities."

After the launch of the portal, people will not need to apply for jobs at several places. The government will ensure that maximum applicants get employment," Rai said.

Scindia School signs MoU with NYIF

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Scindia School and the New York Institute of Finance (NYIF), a global leader in professional training for financial services and related industries, have entered into an agreement.

As per the agreement NYIF will annually allocate two full scholarships of 100 per cent tuition fee waiver for their G2020 & Young Finance Scholar Programmes (one for a high school student and the other for a middle school student). NYIF will also deliver in-demand skills-based training, and organise relevant webinars for students and teachers.

Commenting on the same, Dr Madhav Deo Saraswat, Principal, Scindia School,

said: "We are delighted to be collaborating with NYIF to launch innovative and industry-relevant, programmes. The NYIF program, is more future-focused with a flexible curriculum, teaching leadership skills in the latest emerging and disruptive technologies. In my view, this is the first unique programme for school education and it offers all our students the opportunity to develop both the technological skill sets and business mind-set they will need to thrive in tomorrow's workplace."

NYIF is 100 years old international professional training company dedicated to financial and business education. They provide the highest standards of training, certificates, and cross-border learning programs to individuals and enterprise clients

worldwide.

The programme aims to train the next generation scholars and leaders globally. The G2020 and Young Finance Scholar programmes aim to nurture emerging and future change-makers globally to address, identify, and implement innovative solutions for business, financial, and sustainable development challenges.

The 'G2020 Young Finance Scholar (YFS)' International Programme is a tailor-made academic enrichment and long-term leadership-training programme for talented 15-18 year olds (senior school) and YFS – middle school for talented 11-14-year-old young scholars. The fees being waived for the programme — middle school: \$1850 & senior school: \$2100.

Meritnation students shine

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

With the announcement of CBSE Class X and XII results 2020 last week, a whopping 300 per cent students enrolled with Indian Edtech major Meritnation, a part of Aakash Edutech Pvt Ltd, have recorded an impressive percentage of over 90 per cent in their respective examinations. The students are enrolled in premium courses.

According to Class XII CBSE results, 54 per cent students secured over 95 per cent marks in Maths. 60 per cent students scored more than 95 in Physics and these numbers were 67 per cent and 66 per cent for Chemistry and Biology respectively.

While for the Class X results, 68 per cent of students have scored over 95 per cent in Mathematics and so on.

PAK SET FOR ENGLISH TEST

We're very well prepared: Azhar

IAN S ■ MANCHESTER

England will be wary of the unpredictable Pakistan side when the two teams clash in the first Test of the three-match series at the Old Trafford beginning Wednesday.

This will be the visitors' first appearance in an international match since coronavirus stoppage while for the hosts, they will look to bring their form and confidence over from the recently-concluded three-Test series against West Indies.

In the World Test Championship (WTC) points table, England moved up to third position following a 2-1 series win over Jason Holder's troops. The hosts have a chance to leapfrog Australia to second place, while Pakistan can overtake New Zealand to fourth position.

For this series, England have named the same squad that clinched them the Wisden Trophy and it will once be interesting to see what will be their bowling combination for the first Test.

A lot has been said about veteran fast-bowlers Stuart Broad and James Anderson playing together. They started just one of three matches in the last series together and showed in the final Test why they remain England's best bet in home conditions.

"Jimmy and Broady go together like Morecambe and Wise or Bonnie and Clyde," former England spinner Graeme Swann was quoted as saying by mirror.co.uk.

"They have formed one of the most successful bowling double acts Test cricket has known. Why



PAKISTAN-ENGLAND IN TESTS				
Venue	Tests	Eng won	Pak won	Drawn
In Eng	53	23	12	18
In Pak	24	2	4	18
In UAE	6	-	5	1
Total	83	25	21	37

would you want to chuck it out before its sell-by date?" "can understand the attraction of 90mph pace, and both Jofra and Woody are huge assets. But I'm sorry, you don't discard blokes with 500 Test wickets lightly" he added.

Not to forget talismanic all-rounder Ben Stokes, who recently displaced West Indies captain Jason Holder from the top of the ICC all-rounders' list. He will once again

HIGHEST INNINGS TOTALS	
England in England: 589-8 dec in 152.2 overs at Manchester 2016	
England in Pakistan: 546-8 dec in 189. overs at Faisalabad 1983-84	
Pakistan in England: 708 in 220.3 overs at The Oval 1987	
Pakistan in Pakistan: 636-8 dec in 156.2 overs at Lahore 2005-06	

LOWEST INNINGS TOTALS:	
England in England: 130 in 59.3 overs at The Oval 1954	
England in Pakistan: 130 in 79.2 overs at Lahore 1987-88	
Pakistan in England: 72 in 39.3 overs at Birmingham 2010	
Pakistan in Pakistan: 158 in 70 overs at Karachi 2000-01	
England's lowest total against Pakistan is 72 in 36.1 overs at Abu Dhabi in 2012	

England in England: 589-8 dec in 152.2 overs at Manchester 2016

have a huge say in the outcome of the series.

As for the visitors, they lack proper match practice going into the first Test but head coach Misbah-ul-Haq has stated players have done well to acclimatise themselves with the tough English conditions.

"When you play after a long gap there is bound to be some sort of nervousness but that is natural. As soon as the players step on the field, it will go away," Misbah said. "The players are fresh and anxiously waiting for the series to begin."

Pakistan will also be pinning their hopes on young fast-bowling duo Shaheen Afridi and Naseem Shah to shine in the bowler-friendly

SQUADS:

England: Joe Root (C), James Anderson, Jofra Archer, Dominic Bess, Stuart Broad, Rory Burns, Jos Buttler, Zak Crawley, Sam Curran, Ollie Pope, Dom Sibley, Ben Stokes, Chris Woakes, Mark Wood, James Bracey, Ben Foakes, Jack Leach, Dan Lawrence

Pakistan: Azhar Ali (C), Babar Azam, Abid Ali, Asad Shafiq, Faheem Ashraf, Fawad Alam, Imam ul haq, Imran Khan, Kashif Bhatti, Mohammad Abbas, Mohammad Rizwan, Naseem Shah, Sarfaraz Ahmed, Shadab Khan, Shaheen Shah Afridi, Shan Masood, Sohail Khan, Usman Shinwari, Wahab Riaz, Yasir Shah.

IAN S ■ LONDON

Pakistan Test captain Azhar Ali said that the players are raring to go after their long break enforced by the coronavirus pandemic. Pakistan take on England in a three-match Test series starting on Wednesday. This will be followed by a three-match T20I series and the team has been in the country since late June.

"All players are excited to play the series. COVID-19 is there and for the moment we have to carry on with it," Azhar told reporters on the eve of the first Test which will be played at Old Trafford.

"We are lucky that we will be playing cricket which is what we love the most. A lot of talk is going on about cricket happening in these tough times but I feel that the best thing is that we wanted to play and we are now getting to that. Credit to ECB (England and Wales Cricket Board) and PCB (Pakistan Cricket Board) for arranging this series."

"We have prepared very well with whatever facilities we had with us and ensured that no player gets left behind and gets frustrated. We enjoyed the camp a lot."

Azhar said the team is motivated by their Test performances in recent years in England. Pakistan have not lost a Test series in England since 2010.

"Challenges is something you have to take as a cricketer and England tours are always difficult with or without Covid. But we have performed well in our last few series here and that is a big source of motivation. We will be looking to repeat and upstage that," he said.

The 35-year-old admitted that the visitors' pace battery may be inexperienced but is confident of them performing well considering the talent that they have.

"Our fast bowling attack is inexperienced but you have seen their talent and how they have bowled in the last few series. I think of myself as very lucky as a captain that we got bowlers like these who can threaten any team in Test cricket. You can't buy experience, that comes with playing matches but there is a lot of capability there."

"Our batting experience is better. There is Shan Masood, Asad Shafiq and I have all played a lot. Babar Azam has gained a lot of experience now. As a team our combination is pretty good."



Dhoni is one of a kind: Rohit

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India's prolific opener Rohit Sharma feels Mahendra Singh Dhoni is "one of a kind", playing down recent comparisons of his leadership style and composure with the two-time World Cup-winning former captain.

In a Super Over podcast, out-of-favour India batsman Suresh Raina called Rohit the "next MS Dhoni for the Indian cricket team".

Rohit, who is the vice-captain of India's limited overs teams and also leads Mumbai Indians in the IPL, reacted to his leadership style being likened to Dhoni.

"Yes, I heard about that comment from Suresh Raina," Rohit said in a twitter video he posted in reply to a fan question.

"MS Dhoni is one of a kind and nobody can be like him and I believe comparisons should not be made like that, every individual is different and has his strengths and weaknesses."

Raina is impressed with Rohit's record of leading Mumbai Indians to a record four IPL title triumphs, one more than Dhoni at Chennai Super Kings.

Rohit has also led India to title wins at the Nidahas Trophy (T20I format) in Sri Lanka and the



Asia Cup (50 overs) in 2018 while standing in for Virat Kohli.

Overall, he has led India in 10 ODIs and 19 T20Is, winning eight and 15 of them respectively.

"I have seen him, he is calm, he likes to listen...I have played under him when we won the Asia Cup in Bangladesh," Raina had said.

"MS Dhoni was brilliant. He (Rohit) has won more (IPL) trophies than MS, but they both are very similar. Both of them, as captains, like to listen."

"When your captain is listening, you can solve a lot of problems, you can solve the mental aspects of the players. So in my book, they both are wonderful."

Agarwal must have learnt a lot from NZ tour

IAN S ■ NEW DELHI

Former Indian pacer Ashish Nehra feels opening batsman Mayank Agarwal has shown a lot of promise in the initial days of his international career and will only get better and score a lot of runs in the days to come.

Agarwal has so far played 11 Tests for India in which he has scored 974 runs, including three hundreds and four half-centuries.

"He (Agarwal) has done really well in domestic games and India-A and that's how he got his chance. He is not somebody who has been playing domestic cricket for one or two years and suddenly he comes to the scene. He has scored a lot of runs and I am sure with time he will get better and better," Nehra said while speaking on Star Sports' Cricket Connected show.

The 29-year-old however wasn't able to perform to his potential on the New Zealand tour. In the two-Test series which India lost 0-2, he could manage scores of 34, 58, 7 and 3.

However, Nehra said New Zealand is the "most difficult" place to bat in the world and that's why after playing there, Agarwal would have gathered a lot of experience.

"It takes time and New Zealand is not an easy place. With my experience, for batters, the most difficult place on this planet when it comes to cricket-playing nations is New Zealand. New Zealand has always been tough, so Mayank Agarwal, I am sure has learnt a lot from the New Zealand tour," said the former left-arm pacer.



Starc does not regret missing IPL

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

Left-arm Australian pacer Mitchell Starc doesn't regret giving the IPL a miss this year, saying he is comfortable training for the upcoming summer season.

Starc had pulled out of the lucrative T20 event to focus on the T20 World Cup in Australia which was postponed last month due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

"I know hindsight is a wonderful thing and now the IPL is on at a different time but no, I wouldn't change it," the 30-year-old, who played for Royal Challengers Bangalore for two years, was quoted as saying by Cricket.Com.Au.



"I'm happy to spend that time when the blokes are at the IPL in September I'll be getting ready for a summer."

"The IPL will be around next year and if I feel the urge or people want me around I'll definitely consider it, but as of this year I'm very comfortable with the decisions I've made."

Starc was bought by Kolkata Knight Riders in the 2018 IPL auction but was ruled out of the season due to an injury and was eventually released in November. The lanky pacer is currently training with his NSW state teammates and waiting for a confirmation for Australia's white-ball tour of the UK.

"It's still very much up in the air which is the way of the world at the moment. It's changing day by day. We're having weekly meetings about the challenges of the tour and where this all sits. We've got another one on Thursday to see if there's any progressions on that," he said.

"All the players are preparing to play and planning to go. It's now up to Cricket Australia and the government on both sides as to whether we jump on that plane. In terms of the cricket, we'll just get ready for the series."

Australia's tour of England comprising three T20s and as many ODIs is scheduled to begin on September 4, pending clearance.

Aus-WI postpone T20 series

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

Cricket Australia on Tuesday said it has put on hold a three-game T20I series against the West Indies which was scheduled to be held in October.

Matches of the T20 series were slated to be held in Townsville, Cairns and the Gold Coast on October 4, 6 and 9 respectively.

It was supposed to be a warm-up series ahead of the T20 World Cup but with the show-piece event being postponed last month due to the global health crisis, the two cricket boards decided to postpone it.

"Together with @windiescricket, we have agreed to postpone the Twenty20 series originally scheduled for Queensland in October," Cricket Australia said in a tweet.

"Serving as warm-ups for the ICC T20 World Cup, the series will now coincide with the rescheduled T20 World Cup in Australia, in either 2021 or 2022."

Top players from both the countries will now take part in the rescheduled 13th IPL, which will be held in the UAE from September 19 to November 10.

Australia's ODI series against Zimbabwe, which was scheduled to begin on Sunday, has already been postponed.

Australia's next assignment is a limited-overs tour of England in early September but it remains to be seen if it actually goes ahead.

Last week, South Africa indefinitely postponed their tour of West Indies in September as their players will be busy with the IPL.

West Indies were hoping to host South Africa for either two Tests or 5 T20Is in September.

Tennis resumes with no handshakes

AP ■ PALERMO

Tour-level tennis resumed after a five-month enforced break on Monday, and players at the Palermo Ladies Open had to handle their own towels and not shake hands of opponents.

The strict rules because of the coronavirus included no showers on site, and no autographs or photos with fans. Players in the singles main draw come from 16 European countries and Argentina.

A limited number of fans were allowed into the 1,500-seat stadium court and had to follow social distancing measures.

They watched sixth-seeded Donna Vekic of Croatia beat Arantxa Rus of the Netherlands 6-1, 6-2 in windy conditions in the first official match - for men or women - since early March.

"I'm definitely happy I didn't forget how to play tennis, how to play matches, how to win," Vekic said in a video conference.

"It's a huge relief so I'm really happy right now. It was definitely a bit

strange. I was really nervous yesterday, even more today, but after the first few games I just kind of relaxed and I was focused."

Vekic sealed a place in the second round on her second match point, breaking for the sixth time in the match when Rus hit a forehand wide.

Vekic will next face Italian teenager Elisabetta Cocciaretto, who beat Polona Hercog of Slovenia 7-6 (1), 6-3 for her first victory over a player ranked in the top 50.

But beyond this week Vekic has little idea if her plans could change as the pandemic continues to affect events worldwide.

Vekic is hoping to compete in the U.S. Open, where she reached the quarterfinals last year, and the French Open as well as Rome.

"Things are changing every week so I think we just have to take it week by week and try to adapt as best as we can, and hope to play as much as we can," Vekic said.

"The uncertainty gives everyone a lot of anxiety." The U.S. Open is

scheduled to begin Aug. 31, and the French Open from Sept. 27.

Laura Siegemund of Germany also eased through in straight sets, beating Irina-Camelia Begu of Romania 6-3, 6-4.

Siegemund next faces either fourth-seeded Anett Kontaveit or Patricia Maria Tig.

It was harder for Sara Errani, the only previous champion in the draw. The 2012 winner took nearly three hours to secure a 7-5, 1-6, 6-4 success over Sorana Cirstea of Romania.

The Italian next faces Kristýna Plíšková or third-seeded Maria Sakkari.

A third Italian is also through to the second round after Jasmine Paolini rallied from a set and a break down to beat Daria Kasatkina of Russia 5-7, 6-4, 6-4.

In other results: eighth-seeded Ekaterina Alexandrova also recovered from a set down to beat Kristina Mladenovic 5-7, 6-0, 6-1, and seventh-seeded Dayana Yastremska triumphed 6-3, 6-4 over Sara Sorribes Tormo.



AP ■ MADRID

Former Spain and Real Madrid goalkeeper Iker Casillas officially announced the end of his playing days on Tuesday, more than a year after his last match.

The 39-year-old Casillas was with Portuguese club Porto but hadn't played competitively since a heart attack in May last year.

"What is important is the path you travel and the people who accompany you, not the destination to which it takes you," Casillas said on Twitter.

"With hard work, you will always arrive where you want. I

can say, without a doubt, that it has been the path and the destination that I've always dreamed about." Casillas said announcing his retirement was one of the "hardest" and "most difficult" days of his career.

His contract with Porto ended after the team defeated Benfica last weekend to win the Portuguese Cup. He didn't play but celebrated with his teammates and lifted the trophy.

Casillas joined Porto in 2015 after helping Real Madrid win five Spanish league titles and three Champions League trophies. He also helped Spain win one World Cup and two European Championships.

Real Madrid called Casillas "one of the biggest legends of our club and of world football" and "the best goalkeeper in the history of Real Madrid and Spanish football."

"Today one of the most important footballers in our 118 years of history calls it a day as a professional player, a player we love and admire, a goalkeeper who has made the Real Madrid legacy bigger with his work and exemplary behavior both on and off the pitch," Real Madrid said in a statement.

"He was formed here and defended our shirt for 25 years, becoming one of our most emblematic captains of all time."

DC welcome decision to conduct IPL in UAE

Captain Shreyas Iyer and Co-Owner Parth Jindal believe the team will miss its fans, but can make it a season to remember

PNS ■ NEW DELHI



Looking forward to the new season of the Indian Premier League with excitement, JSW and GMR co-owned franchise Delhi Capitals on Monday welcomed the IPL Governing Council's decision to organize the 13th edition of the IPL in the United Arab Emirates, owing to the COVID-19 situation in India. The tournament will be held between September 19 - November 10, and across 3 venues in the UAE - Dubai, Sharjah and Abu Dhabi.

Speaking on the commencement of the new season, team co-owner and Chairman Mr. Parth Jindal said, "There is no doubt that the news of the IPL taking place has come as a breath of fresh air for all of us. The fact that the IPL is going to be conducted amidst such challenging times is another testament to the BCCI and to IPL's global standing as one of the top leagues amongst all sports in the world."

The number of people who have expressed delight is remarkable and we all at DC are looking forward to giving it our all for our fans to bring the trophy to Delhi this season. IPL truly has the power

to lift the morale of our country as we fight the COVID pandemic and I for one am delighted that IPL 2020 is being conducted.

To our Delhi Capitals fans, I would like to stress on how important your support is going to be for our team, even though you will not be able to make it to the stadiums this year it will be our endeavor to keep you engaged remotely throughout the tournament in the best and most innovative way possible. Do keep the love and support coming in from the safety of your homes, I can assure you it's going to go a long way in bringing the best out of our players."

Dhiraj Malhotra, CEO, Delhi Capitals, said he believes the upcoming edition will be

a significant one. "It's never an easy decision to have to host an Indian Premier League outside India. However, given the current circumstances, I believe this is going to be a very significant edition of the tournament, not just for the league, but the sport of cricket itself."

The UAE has played host to some IPL matches earlier, and I'm sure that experience will come in handy, even though the challenges will be very different this time around. I'm confident all measures will be taken for 100% safe conduct of the tournament," he said.

Shreyas Iyer, who captained the side to a creditable third place finish in what was a memorable 2019 said, "In the challenging times that our world is going through, there's no doubt that the news of the IPL happening is one of the best things we've all heard in a long time."

We're definitely going to miss our Delhi fans in the stadium, they were a crucial part of our success last year. I can't wait to assemble with my teammates soon, especially those who are new to the Delhi Capitals side, and give our very best in making the upcoming season a truly memorable one."