

OPINION 6
DON'T MESS WITH FARMERS

WORLD 8
QATAR RULES OUT NORMALISATION OF ISRAEL TIES FOR NOW

SPORT 12
INDIA BEAT AUS BY 11 RUNS IN 1ST T20

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ROLES SHOULD INTRIGUE ME: ADIL HUSSAIN 10 VIVACITY



Farmers call for Bharat Bandh on Dec 8 if talks fail

Kisans from western UP, U'khand stay put at Capital's Ghazipur border; traffic jam in Delhi, Noida

SHEKHAR SINGH ■ NEW DELHI
The farmers on Friday called for "Bharat Bandh" on December 8 to mark their protest against the new farm laws if their talks with the Centre fail. Thousands of farmers remained at the national Capital's border points amid heavy police deployment.

"The Government has to revoke these laws in a meeting scheduled for December 5, otherwise we have decided to give 'Bharat bandh' call on December 8 and we will also occupy toll plaza and all vehicles will be passed through them without any payment. On December 7, awards will be returned back to Government by sports persons and on December 5, effigies of the Narendra Modi Government and corporate houses will be burnt across the country," said Harinder Singh Lakhwal, Bharatiya Kisan Union general secretary.

Bharatiya Kisan Union leader Rakesh Tikait on Friday said the farmers are hoping that the Government will meet their demands during the fifth round of talks scheduled for December 5, failing which they will continue their protests against the new farm laws.

"We have also decided to close all roads connecting to Delhi if demands are not met

soon. In the meeting tomorrow our main agenda will be to know if the Government is rolling back laws or not. The protests are going on country-wide against the law, even in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana and this protest is just not limited to northern States but across the country," said Ranjeet Singh Raju from Rajasthan.

Farmers from western Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand stayed put at Ghazipur border (UP Gate) to mark their protest. Following which the National Highway-9 remained closed from Ghaziabad to Delhi on the second consecutive day. Commuters taking alternate route faced long queues of traffic on their route. The farmers on Friday also tried to block the Bhupura and Apsara border but later the security forces persuaded the farmers and the traffic movement resumed.

However, traffic in the national Capital remained in chaos on Friday as Delhi Police and Noida Police issued advisory for route diversion.

The Singhu, Tikri, Ghazipur, Jharoda Lampur, Auchandi, Safiabad, Piao Maniyari, and Saboli and Chilla border remained closed for traffic movement.

A meeting of farmers union took place on Friday and



Farmers shout slogans during their protest against the new farm laws at Delhi-Haryana Singhu border on Friday
Ranjan Dimri | Pioneer

in a Press conference the farmers said in their meeting held on December 3, they clearly told the Government to roll back the farm laws and pointed out to nine flaws in them.

"If Government does not agree to our demands, the further course of action will be decided tomorrow and we will intensify our protest," said Gurnam Singh Chaduni.

Continued on Page 2

Centre hopeful of resolution, ready for amendments: Tomar; talks today

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Ahead of the fifth round meeting on Saturday, the Centre is hopeful of resolution of the standoff with agitating farmers and may be ready to "bring amendments," said Union Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar.

"The Government's intention towards Minimum Support Price (MSP) is very clear. I assure you that there will be no change in MSP. Discussions are going on and both sides have agreed on some points. We will meet again on Saturday. I am sure we will get a solution," Tomar told a news channel.

"Continuous discussions are going on, both have agreed on some points. Government of India is in talks with kisan unions and the meetings are on positive note," Tomar said. He urged political parties not to politicise the whole movement.

Tomar said the Government has no ego and it has an open mind.

Continued on Page 2

Trudeau's barbs can damage ties, India tells Canadian envoy

Unwarranted comments encouraged gatherings of 'extremist activities' in front of our missions in Canada, says MEA

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Stepping up its protest against Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's remarks about ongoing farmers' stir in the country, India on Friday said these comments could have a "seriously damaging impact" on ties between the two countries.

India issued this stern message after summoning Canadian High Commissioner to India Nadir Patel here. The External Affairs Ministry said the comments by the Canadian Prime Minister, some Cabinet Ministers and Members of Parliament on issues relating to Indian farmers "constitute an unacceptable interference in our internal affairs."

This strong statement came after Trudeau recently said, "We're all very worried about family and friends. We believe in the importance of dialogue and that's why we've reached out through multiple means directly to the Indian

authorities to highlight our concerns."

The External Affairs Ministry said these comments have encouraged gatherings of "extremist activities" in front of our High Commission and Consulates in Canada that raise issues of safety and security.

"We expect the Canadian Government to ensure the fullest security of Indian diplomatic personnel and its political leaders to refrain from pronouncements that legitimise extremist activism," the statement added.

On Tuesday too, a day after Trudeau's statement, India had denounced the Canadian Prime Minister's remarks on the farmers' agitation as "ill-informed" and "unwarranted."

"Such comments are unwarranted, especially when pertaining to the internal affairs of a democratic country," the Ministry spokesperson Anurag Srivastava had said.

On Friday, New Delhi also said, "Comments by Canadian leaders on Indian farmers constitute an unacceptable interference in our internal affairs. Such actions, if continued, will have a seriously damaging impact on bilateral ties."

Continued on Page 2

Covid vaccine in a few weeks, price affordable: Modi

1 crore health workers to get shots first, says Health Ministry

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Centre plans to give vaccine shots to nearly one crore health workers in the first phase of the vaccination drive whenever a Covid-19 vaccine is approved for use in India.

After this, nearly two crore frontline workers, including policemen, security personnel, municipal workers and other essential workers will receive the vaccination, the Health Ministry told an all-party meeting chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi here on Friday.

About 27 crore senior citizens will receive the vaccine on priority basis in the third phase of the vaccination drive.

Addressing the floor leaders of Opposition parties while reviewing Covid-19 situation in the country, the Prime Minister quoted scientists saying that a vaccine for coronavirus would

be "available in the next few weeks".

Without giving away the price of the vaccine, Modi said it will be decided keeping in view the "public interest in mind", suggesting it may not be high-priced.

"Experts expect that the vaccine will be ready within the next few weeks. Once scientists approve it, the nationwide vaccination drive will be started in India. Our scientists are very confident of succeeding in their endeavour of making the Covid-19 vaccine. The world is keeping a watch on the cheapest and safe vaccine," the PM said during the meeting which was attended by about 12 leaders from prominent political parties.

Modi, who, last week visited India's top vaccine hubs to personally review the development of coronavirus vaccine and the manufacturing process also assured that the country has the necessary infrastructure to manufacture the vaccine at a large scale. Nearly eight vaccines are at different stages of trial with their manufacturing assured in India, he said.

Continued on Page 2

Clean chit to Serum Institute, Bharat Biotech vaccine trials

Adverse events in volunteers have no link to clinical trials, says DCGI

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The country's top drug regulator on Friday gave clean chit to Serum Institute of India (SII) and Bharat Biotech, which are facing allegations of serious adverse events (SAE) in the clinical trials.

Drug Controller General of India (DCGI) VG Somani hint-

ed that the trials are progressing as the SAEs reported have no causal link to the trials of these vaccines. He was replying to queries of reporters at a webinar.

"It has been found that things are going on as per processes," Somani told the media, referring to the two incidents of SAEs.

Compensation is given when the causality of serious adverse event is found to be related to the trial, he said.

An SAE is any untoward medical occurrence during the trial that may result in the volunteer getting hospitalised, suf-

fers disability, or death. But the causality on whether the SAE is related to the clinical trial has to be established by an expert committee of DCGI for the compensation.

Somani also said that compensation of ₹12 crore has been awarded for injuries, deaths caused during clinical trials in last 3 years.

The SII has brushed aside allegations of SAE by the Chennai volunteers claiming that its Covishield vaccine is safe and immunogenic and did not cause the neurological serious adverse effect in the 40-year-old participant.

Covid-19 IN INDIA

TOTAL

CASES: 96,06,810

DEATHS: 1,39,700

RECOVERED: 90,56,668

ACTIVE: 4,08,122

STATES	TOTAL CASES	DEATHS	RECOVERED
Maharashtra	18,42,587	47,599	17,10,050
Karnataka	8,90,360	11,834	8,53,461
Andhra Pradesh	8,70,675	7,020	8,57,233
Tamil Nadu	7,87,554	11,762	7,64,854
Kerala	6,25,768	2,359	5,61,874
Delhi	5,86,125	9,497	5,48,376
Uttar Pradesh	5,51,179	7,877	5,20,637
West Bengal	4,96,522	8,628	4,63,849
Odisha	3,20,394	1,813	3,14,665
Rajasthan	2,76,420	2,389	2,49,713
Telangana	2,72,123	1,467	2,61,830
Chhattisgarh	2,43,997	2,956	2,21,690
Haryana	2,40,841	2,539	2,23,973
Bihar	2,37,968	1,287	2,31,108
Gujarat	2,15,819	4,049	1,97,092
Assam	2,13,505	987	2,08,964



Hyderabad municipal polls: TRS bags 55, but BJP leaps to 48

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Voters of Hyderabad have thrown a "hung verdict" in the GHMC elections, the results of which were announced on Friday. None of the parties could secure the magic figure of 76 out of 150 seats.

However, the ruling TRS has emerged as the single largest party bywinning 55 seats out of total 150 seats it had contested. TRS tally came down to 55 from 99 seats it won in 2016.

The BJP which has given a tough fight to TRS right from the beginning of the polls, stood second by winning 48 seats out of 149 seats it had contested. The BJP had just 4 seats in 2016.

The AIMIM, which stood third by securing 43 seats proved yet again that it remains unbeatable in its strong hold Old City. The Congress failed miserably, it won just 2

Detailed report on P5

MVA romps home in MLC elections, BJP loses bastion

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Within days of it completing its first year in office, the ruling Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) consolidated its position in Maharashtra on Friday, as it handed out a humiliating drubbing to the Opposition BJP by winning four out of five Maharashtra Legislative Council seats in the biennial elections.

The BJP, which lost to power to the Shiv Sena-led MVA Government in November last year, found itself licking its wounds, as it lost its traditional bastion of Nagpur where the Congress' Abhijit Wanjari defeated the BJP's Sandeep Joshi in the Nagpur Division Graduates' constituency, by a comfortable margin of 18,910 votes.

Detailed report on P5

CAPSULE

ED SEIZES MALLYA'S ₹14-CR FRENCH ASSETS
New Delhi: Businessman Vijay Mallya's property worth ₹14 crore located in France has been seized under the anti-money laundering law, the Enforcement Directorate said on Friday. It said the action was undertaken by French authorities "on the request of the Enforcement Directorate" and the property bears the address: 32 Avenue FOCH in France.

DELHI AIR 'VERY POOR'; SEVERE IN NOIDA, GZB
New Delhi/Noida: Delhi's air quality remained "very poor" on Friday and no significant change is predicted soon. The average air quality plunged to "severe" level in Ghaziabad, Noida and Greater Noida, while it was "very poor" in Faridabad and Gurgaon in the NCR, a Government agency data said.

RBI keeps interest rates unchanged, projects positive GDP growth in Q3

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Friday left interest rates unchanged for the third straight time amid persistently high inflation and said the economy was recuperating fast and would return to positive growth in the current quarter.

The six-member Monetary Policy Committee unanimously decided to keep the repo rate — the rate at which RBI lends to commercial banks — at 4 per cent. Since January, RBI has reduced rate by 115 basis points before hitting the pause button in August on concerns on inflation.

Detailed report on P9

IS IT OUR FAULT?

The only allegation against Sahara India Pariwar is that our repayments to the esteemed investors are getting delayed. Of course we are also paying the interest of delayed period.

Nobody is writing the reason.

The reason is -

Owing to the embargo imposed for the last 8 years by the Hon'ble Supreme Court, any money generated through selling or mortgaging our assets of the entire group (including Co-operatives) or from joint ventures will be deposited in the Sahara-SEBI account, as per the directives of Hon'ble Supreme Court. Out of this, we cannot use even a single rupee for organizational work. Not even for repayment to the esteemed investors.

On the other hand, till date, approximately ₹22,500 crore including interest (which will surely come back to us as per Hon'ble Court's order) has been deposited in the Sahara-SEBI account. Whereas, despite giving four rounds of advertisements in 154 newspapers by SEBI in the last 8 years across the country, SEBI has repaid only ₹106.10 crore to the esteemed investors (means only 0.5% payment has been done) and there is no claimant anymore.

Now Sahara should not be required to deposit more money in the Sahara-SEBI account. The embargo on us should be lifted now and the order of verification should come. But all these decisions will be taken by the Hon'ble Supreme Court. On the other hand, due to COVID-19 for the last 10 months, we haven't been able to get a date from the Hon'ble Supreme Court.

We hope that we will soon get a date and everything will be good.

We are working on various sources of money. Everybody's money is totally safe. You are getting the interest of the delayed period.

Do have some patience. We shall all emerge victors by 31st March 2021.

SAHARA INDIA PARIWAR

Delhi reports 4,067 Covid cases

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The national Capital reported 4,067 coronavirus cases on Friday and the positivity rate stood at 4.78 per cent while 73 more fatalities pushed the death toll to 9497. These cases came out of the record 85,003 tests conducted in last 24 hours including 40,191 RT-PCR tests, according to the latest bulletin issued by the Delhi Health Department.

Delhi health minister Satyendar Jain on Friday said that the Covid-19 positivity rate have come down to less than

five per cent which is a sign of relief as it points to perpetual declining of the effect of the pandemic in Delhi.

Jain said that more than 65 per cent beds in general wards and more than 40 per cent ICU beds remain vacant. If this rate of positivity stays for a consecutive five days, it will be indicative of the fact that Delhi has contained the virus.

According to Delhi Government's live app, there are 18,700 beds in totality out of which, more than 12,000 are vacant and 6,658 beds are occupied. Total ICU beds are 5029.

Out of which 2013 beds are vacant. This is indicative of the situation getting better gradually," he said.

Jain further said, "We have the infrastructure to roll out the vaccine to the entire population of Delhi in a few weeks. We have facilities like Mohalla Clinics, poly clinics dispensaries to facilitate application of the vaccine. This vaccine is stored in thermocol boxes with dry ice. So storage of vaccine will not be a problem"

The number of COVID-19 containment zones in Delhi rose to 5909.



Maha records 5,229 new Covid cases, 127 deaths

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

In a marginal increase in the Covid-19 infections and fatalities, Maharashtra on Friday recorded 5229 new infected cases and 127 deaths in the state.

A day after the state logged 115 deaths and 5,182 fresh infections, the deaths went up by 12 to touch a tally of 127 while the infections rose by 47 taking the infected cases to 5229.

With 5229 fresh infections, the total infections in the state climbed from 18,37,358 to 18,42,587. Similarly, with new 127 deaths, the Covid-19 toll rose from 47,472 to 47,599.

As 6,776 patients were discharged from the hospitals across the state after full recovery, the total number of people discharged from the hospitals since the second week of March

this year rose to 17,10,050. The recovery rate in the state rose marginally from 92.7 per cent to 92.81 per cent.

Of the 127 deaths, Pune accounted for a maximum of 25 deaths, followed by 16 in Ahmednagar, 14 in Mumbai, 9 in Nagpur, 8 each in Thane, Sangli and Osmanabad, 5 in Aurangabad, 4 each in Satara and Bhandara, 3 each in Nashik, Solapur, Jalna, Chandrapur and Gadchiroli, 2 each in Parbhani, Latur and one death each in Raigad, Ratnagiri, Hingoli, Akola, Amravati, Yavatmal, and Buldhana.

With 14 fresh deaths, the Covid-19 toll went up in Mumbai from 10,931 to 10,945, while the infected cases rose by 813 to trigger a rise in the total infections from 283,696 to 284,509.

Meanwhile, the number of "active cases" total cases in the state dropped from 85,535 to 83,859. The fatality rate in the state stood at 2.58 per cent.

Pune district, which continued to be the worst-affected city-district in Maharashtra, saw the total number of cases increase from 3,55,698 to 3,56,501 while the total number of deaths in Pune increased from 7507 to 7532.

Thane district remained in the third spot --after Pune and Mumbai -- after the total number of infections rose from 2,42,509 to 2,43,147, while the total deaths climbed from 5334 to 5342.

Of the 1,11,32,231 samples sent to laboratories, 18,42,587 have tested positive (16.55 per cent) for COVID-19 until Friday. Currently, 5,47,504 people are in home quarantine while 5567 people are in institutional quarantine.

Serial killer arrested in Gurugram

STAFF REPORTER ■ GURUGRAM

A joint team of the crime units of Palam Vihar and Sector-40 of the Gurugram police arrested a dreaded serial killer in Gurugram on Thursday.

The killer had carried out consecutive murders on the night of November 24, 25 and 26, the police said on Friday.

The arrested accused has been identified as Muhammad Razi (22) of Araria district in Bihar. With the arrest of the dreaded criminal the police have also claimed to solve three blind murder mysteries which the accused had done in a span of just three days.

According to the police, during his interrogation, the accused confessed to his involvement in the three murder cases committed in Gurugram.

"The culprit was arrested from the Iffco Chowk on Thursday after specific inputs received by the investigation team. The accused has admitted that on the night of 23, 24 and 25 November, he had brutally murder three youths in Gurugram," said Preet Pal Sangwan, ACP (Crime).

The police said that on November 24, a body was found in the Sector-29 police station area. On the evening of November 25, another dead body was recovered from the

park near the Jharsa village on the Delhi-Jaipur highway.

The body was later identified as 29-year-old Akhilesh, a resident of Kanpur district of Uttar Pradesh and on 26 November a headless body of a youth was found in the bushes of Sector-47 area. The deceased was identified as 26-year-old Rakesh Kumar, a resident of Aligarh district of Uttar Pradesh.

During questioning the accused disclosed that he used to search his targets and insisted them to drink liquor with him. After that, he used to murder his targets with the intention of robbing their belongings.

During police interroga-

tion, the accused also stated that he slit Rakesh's throat with a knife and he died after some time. After death, it robbed the deceased's mobile phone and other items.

"The accused had hid the deceased head so that no other person could identify the deceased, and later he had thrown the deceased head in the bushes at Kanhai village in Gurugram and rode away from the spot. The police recovered the victim's head on Friday," Sangwan said.

The accused was produced before a local court on Friday which sent him on police remand for further investigation, the police said.

Centre... From Page 1

As per the tone and tenor of the Government, it is open to making some key changes to the farm Acts, and would consider ways to strengthen mandis, create a level-playing field with proposed private markets, and freedom to approach higher courts for dispute resolutions in a bid to address the concern raised by protesting farmers' groups. The Government also assured that procurement at MSP will continue.

Farmers fear the reforms could pave the way for the Government to stop buying staples at federally fixed minimum support prices MSPs, erode their bargaining power and leave them at the mercy of private buyers.

Trudeau's barbs can...

From Page 1

On Monday, speaking at an event to mark the birth anniversary of Guru Nanak, Trudeau had spoken in support of farmers in India and weighed in on the right to peaceful protest. "Canada will always be there to defend the rights of peaceful protest," said the Canadian Prime Minister.

Trudeau's remarks were echoed by other Canadian leaders, including Conservative

party leader Erin O'Toole, who called the right to peacefully protest "fundamental" to democracy. Trudeau was the first world leader to comment on the farmers' stir.

The Indian demarche on Friday was tougher as compared to Tuesday's response. On that day, New Delhi refrained from naming the Canadian Prime Minister.

Taking exception to his remarks, Srivastava on Tuesday

had said the comments were "ill-informed" and "unwarranted". The spokesperson also said, "We have seen some ill-informed comments by Canadian leaders relating to farmers in India. Such comments are unwarranted, especially when pertaining to the internal affairs of a democratic country. It is also best that diplomatic conversations are not misrepresented for political purposes."

One more case of forced conversion registered in UP

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

While a case of love jihad was reported to the Sitapur police for forcing a minor to convert her religion, the cops in Mau district registered a case against 14 people under the ordinance against forced religious conversions after a woman eloped with her lover belonging to a different religion.

The police said that the man was already married and had cheated the woman.

Police in Mau claimed on Friday that the incident was reported from Molnalganj village under Chiraiyakot police station recently.

The FIR has been registered under sections 366, 506 and 3/5 of Uttar Pradesh law against forced religious conversions. The police have started taking action after registering the case.

The youth, who was allegedly married, eloped with a girl from a different faith before her marriage on November 30. As soon as the family members came to know about the matter, they informed the police.

The police said the complainant alleged that his 30-year-old daughter was kidnapped by a person he identified as Shabab Khan aka Rahul, for religious conversion.

He filed the complaint against Shabab Khan and 13 of his acquaintances, stating that the wedding of his daughter had been scheduled for November 30 but on the eve of the marriage Khan kidnapped her with the intent of converting her religion.

"Three teams have been

POLICE IN MAU CLAIMED ON FRIDAY THAT THE INCIDENT WAS REPORTED FROM MOLNALGANJ VILLAGE UNDER CHIRAIYAKOT POLICE STATION

deployed to arrest all the accused and recover the woman. We will soon get a breakthrough as we have some important clues," Ghule, the Superintendent of Police of Mau, said.

Speaking on the issue, ASP Tribhuvan Nath Tripathi said that the youth was already married and a case under sections 366, 506 and 3/5 Uttar Pradesh law against forced conversion was registered.

The couple are yet to be found and police are on search.

In Sitapur, a man hailing from Tambaur locality contacted the local police and alleged that one Zibraiel had lured his minor daughter and eloped with her about a week back. He said that the accused was harassing his daughter and forcing her to convert her religion for marriage.

The cops at Tambaur claimed to have registered a case for forced conversion and arrested two of the family members of the accused.

Teams were also formed and raids were conducted to nab the accused and rescue the victim from his clutches.

Farmers call...

From Page 1

Meanwhile, hundreds of farmers stayed put at the Noida-Delhi border for the fourth day on Friday leading to the shutdown of the roads for traffic movement.

The protesters, including some women, are camping at one carriageway of the Delhi-Noida Link Road at the Chilla border, while some are demonstrating at the nearby Dalit Prerna Sthal near the Mahamaya Flyover.

Rakesh Tikait, Bharatiya Kisan Union leader said if there is no conclusion in the meeting scheduled for December 5, they will continue their protests against the new farm laws.

Noida Traffic Police in its advisory on Thursday night suggested alternative routes instead of the Chilla road for hassle-free commutation. However, the alternative routes, Delhi-Noida Direct expressway and Kalindi Kunj, witnessed more than usual traffic that led to snarls during peak morning hours on Friday.

"The Delhi-Uttar Pradesh border on NH-24 at Gazipur remains closed for traffic from Ghaziabad to Delhi on Friday, too," Delhi Traffic Police said.

The Delhi Traffic Police tweeted, "People are advised to avoid NH-24 for coming to

Delhi and use Apsara/Bhopra/DND instead."

The Delhi Traffic Police suggested people to avoid the Noida Link road for coming to Delhi and use the DND flyway instead. As farmers remained unyielding on their demand for scrapping the new farm laws, the police kept the Delhi-Haryana border at Singhu, Tikri, Jharoda Lampur, Auchandi, Safiabad, Piao Maniyari, and Saboli closed for traffic movement.

"Border points at Dhansa, Daurala, Kapashera, Rajokri, NH-8, Bijwasan/Rajghera, Palam Vihar and Dundaheera are open for travel between Delhi and Haryana. Badusarai border is open only for light motor vehicles like cars and two wheelers. Jhatikara border is open only for two wheeler traffic," said the Delhi Traffic Police. The closure of borders led to diversion of traffic from Mukarba and GT-Karnal road that led to traffic jams on alternative routes. Traffic in Ghaziabad too was hit.

District Magistrate Dr Ajay Shankar Pandey and Senior Superintendent of Police, Kalaindhi Naithani, said route diversion has been done for those coming from Ghaziabad to Delhi. "Apart from this, CCTV cameras have also been installed around the venue of the movement to monitor the situation," said the official.

उत्तराखण्ड प्रशासनिक कार्यपालिका
UPP विधि निविदा आमंत्रण सूचना
 अनुसूची क श्रेणी कार्यकारी संस्थाओं/आपूर्तिकर्ताओं से विद्युत पारेषण मंडल, ग्रेटर नोएडा के अन्तर्गत निम्न कार्य हेतु ई-निविदाई ई-पोर्टल etender.up.nic.in पर एवं दो भागों में निविदा खोलने की दिनांक को 12.00 बजे तक आमंत्रित की जाती है।

1. निविदा संख्या टी-100/2020-21: विद्युत पारेषण खण्ड, हापुड के अन्तर्गत 220 केवीओ उपकेंद्र, सिमावली का वार्षिक आधार पर अनुस्वाण का कार्य। घरोहर राशि ₹9,00,000/- (नविदा प्रपत्र शुल्क ₹0 1,770/- (कर सहित)। खुलने की दिनांक 26.12.2020।
2. निविदा संख्या टी-101/2020-21: विद्युत पारेषण खण्ड, हापुड के अन्तर्गत 132 केवीओ उपकेंद्र, हापुड का वार्षिक आधार पर अनुस्वाण सम्बन्धित कार्य। घरोहर राशि ₹0 10,00,000/- (नविदा प्रपत्र शुल्क ₹0 1,180/- (कर सहित)। खुलने की दिनांक 26.12.2020।
3. निविदा संख्या टी-102/2020-21: विद्युत पारेषण खण्ड, बुलन्दशहर के अन्तर्गत 220 केवीओ उपकेंद्र, रूडी (स्थाना) का वार्षिक आधार पर परिपालना का कार्य। घरोहर राशि ₹0 15,00,000/- (नविदा प्रपत्र शुल्क ₹0 1,770/- (कर सहित)। खुलने की दिनांक 05.01.2021।
4. निविदा संख्या टी-103/2020-21: विद्युत पारेषण खण्ड, बुलन्दशहर के अन्तर्गत विभिन्न 132 केवीओ साईडों का वार्षिक आधार पर अनुस्वाण का कार्य। घरोहर राशि ₹0 9,00,000/- (नविदा प्रपत्र शुल्क ₹0 2,000/- (कर सहित)। खुलने की दिनांक 05.01.2021।
5. निविदा संख्या टी-104/2020-21: विद्युत पारेषण खण्ड, बुलन्दशहर के अन्तर्गत 220 केवीओ उपकेंद्र, सिन्दनबाद हेतु सामग्री की आपूर्ति। घरोहर राशि ₹0 2,000/- (नविदा प्रपत्र शुल्क ₹0 590/- (कर सहित)। खुलने की दिनांक 07.01.2021।
6. निविदा संख्या टी-105/2020-21: विद्युत पारेषण खण्ड, हापुड के अन्तर्गत 132 केवीओ उपकेंद्र, गडमुकेरवर पर अनुस्वाण सम्बन्धित कार्य। घरोहर राशि ₹0 2,00,000/- (नविदा प्रपत्र शुल्क ₹0 590/- (कर सहित)। खुलने की दिनांक 07.01.2021।
7. निविदा संख्या टी-106/2020-21: विद्युत पारेषण खण्ड, हापुड के अन्तर्गत 132 केवीओ उपकेंद्र, डासना हेतु सामग्री की आपूर्ति। घरोहर राशि ₹0 2,00,000/- (नविदा प्रपत्र शुल्क ₹0 590/- (कर सहित)। खुलने की दिनांक 07.01.2021।
8. निविदा संख्या टी-107/2020-21: विद्युत 400 केवीओ उपकेंद्र खण्ड, ग्रेटर नोएडा के अन्तर्गत विद्युत 400 केवीओ उपकेंद्र, ग्रेटर नोएडा हेतु सामग्री की आपूर्ति। घरोहर राशि ₹0 2,00,000/- (नविदा प्रपत्र शुल्क ₹0 590/- (कर सहित)। खुलने की दिनांक 07.01.2021।
9. निविदा संख्या टी-108/2020-21: विद्युत पारेषण खण्ड, हापुड के अन्तर्गत 132 केवीओ उपकेंद्र, डासना हेतु सामग्री की आपूर्ति। घरोहर राशि ₹0 2,00,000/- (नविदा प्रपत्र शुल्क ₹0 590/- (कर सहित)। खुलने की दिनांक 07.01.2021।

कृपया विस्तृत जानकारी, डाउनलोड, अन्य संशोधनों एवं ई-निविदा प्रस्तुत करने के दिनांक तक विस्तार आदि के सम्बन्ध में कृपया etender.up.nic.in पर लॉग ऑन करें। **अखिल अभियन्ता, विद्युत पारेषण मण्डल, उत्तराखण्ड/काठवाड, 400 केवीओ उपकेंद्र, पत्तो, ग्रेटर नोएडा।** पत्रांक-1899
 नियामक/ग्रेडिंग/T-100 to 107/2020-21 दिनांक 01.12.2020 "सम्बन्धित में ऊर्जा वचारी"।

From Page 1
The Prime Minister said

the center is talking with the States on the price of the vac-

cine. This is the second meet that the Prime Minister held with the

OFFICE OF THE PRINCIPAL, LALA LAJPAT RAI MEMORIAL MEDICAL COLLEGE, MEERUT
 Tender Notice No.: PC/2020/9475 e-Tender Notice Dated: 23-11-2020
 The online e-Tenders are invited for supply and installation of instruments from the reputed manufacturer /Authorized Distributor. The tender can be downloaded from the UP Govt. e-Procurement portal <https://etender.up.nic.in> from 05-12-2020 to 25-12-2020 upto 05:00 and technical bid will be opened on 26-12-2020 at the office of Principal LLRM Medical college Meerut. The Tender fee and EMD will be submitted via NEFT in e-tender account of Principal LLRM medical college, Meerut.

S.N.	Department	Name of Equipment	Quantity	Tender fee	EMD
1	Microbiology	Automated identification & Drug sensitivity system	01	3,180/-	36,000/-
2	Blood Bank	Fully Automated Elisa Processor	01	4250/-	48,000/-

All the condition, terms and requirement is mentioned in the tender document will be considered the integral part of the notice. The Principal as aforesaid has sole discretion of accepting/rejecting any tender and reserves his right to cancel partly or wholly. In case of legal dispute the legal jurisdiction shall be court of law at Meerut.

Principal
Lala Lajpat Rai Memorial Medical College Meerut
 U.P.: 157491, Date: 03.12.2020
 विज्ञापन वेबसाइट www.up.gov.nic.in पर उपलब्ध है।

Protesting farmers camp at Gazipur border

STAFF REPORTER ■ GHAZIABAD

Farmers from western Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand stayed put at Gazipur border (UP Gate) to mark their protest against the newly introduced farms Bills. The National Highway-9 remained closed from Ghaziabad to Delhi on the second consecutive day. The commuters taking alternate route also faced long queues of traffic on their route. The farmers on Friday also tried to block the Bhupra and Apsara border but later the security forces persuaded the farmers and traffic movement was started again. District Magistrate Dr Ajay

Shankar Pandey and Senior Superintendent of Police, Kalanidhi Naithani reached the spot and took stock of the situation.

Both officials said that route diversion has been done for those coming from Ghaziabad to Delhi. "Apart from this, CCTV cameras have also been installed around the venue of the movement to monitor the situation," said the official.

On the ninth day of the agitation, farmer leader Rakesh Tikait said that they are waiting till December 5. "Negotiations have already been held with the government and if they will not agree then after 5 December, farmers will

plan ahead with the leaders and their movement will remain peaceful. This movement belongs to the farmers of the

whole country and it will be fought peacefully," said Tikait. At the UP Gate, the farmers also brought paddy straw in

their tractors and they have also built temporary tents below and above the flyover.

Govt providing essential amenities to farmers: Jain

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Government is providing full support and basic amenities including health camp, ambulances and 24 hour water supply to the farmers, Delhi Health Minister Satyendar Jain said on Friday after reviewing the facilities made available for farmers by the Delhi Government during their peaceful revolution at Singhu border.

The Health Minister said that instructions have been issued to the authorities to make more arrangements for fire and water proof tents. Commenting on the amenities made by Delhi Government, he said, "We have provided for



more than 300 toilets, 40 tankers of water, ambulances and health teams are available. The only problem we are facing is that toilets across the barricades are not seeing water supply since yesterday. I will appeal to the police to allow for providing water in those toilets. Instructions have been issued

to make arrangements for adding fire and water tents"

The Minister also said that Captain Singh and the BJP Government are working in union to harass the farmers. Captain Singh has been attending meetings with Amit Shah but neither has he met with the farmers, nor is he being vocal about the decisions he's making.

"I want to say that the farmers are the backbone of the nation and they have been forced to travel kilometres. They are being harassed by Captain Amrinder Singh and BJP, who have joined forces. If they wanted, a solution could have been devised for their demands," he said.



Govt raises monthly DA for various categories of workers

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Government has enhanced monthly Dearness Allowance (DA) for its unskilled, semi-skilled, skilled and other category workers, Delhi Deputy Chief Minister and Labour Minister Manish Sisodia said on Friday.

It is pertinent to note that for regular Government employees, in consonance with the directions of the Ministry of Finance, Government of India, the DA points have been frozen from January 2020 to June, 2020 due to the impact of Covid-19 on the economy. Sisodia, however, states that DA for workers placed in the bottom of the hierarchy cannot be frozen, who are generally provided only the minimum wage, especially during the corona crisis.

Accordingly, the new minimum wages after including 'Dearness Allowance' will be applicable to unskilled, semi-skilled and skilled categories in all scheduled employments. These revised wages will be applicable from October 1, 2020 as

Sisodia has directed to ensure payment to all workers

and employees at an increased rate. "For unskilled workers the wages have been fixed at monthly Rs 15,492 (daily Rs 596), for semi-skilled workers it is fixed at Rs 17,069 (daily Rs 657) and for skilled workers it is fixed at Rs 18,797 (daily Rs 723)," a statement released by the deputy chief minister reads.

Additionally, the minimum wage rates for clerical and supervisory staff employees have also been increased. Of these, non-matriculation will get monthly wages of ₹17,069 (₹657 daily), matriculates but non-graduate to get monthly Rs 18,797 (daily ₹723), and graduates and above to get monthly ₹20,430 (daily ₹786), it said.

Sisodia has informed that the Labour Department fixes Dearness Allowance after adjustment of the average All India Consumer Price Index Number.

"Due to the prevailing COVID-19 situation and economic hardship the 'Dearness Allowance' could not be revised in April this year but the price hike of that period has been taken into account while revising the allowance now," Sisodia added.

City air quality deteriorates, AQI recorded at 364

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Air quality in Delhi deteriorated on Friday with overall Air Quality Index (AQI) being recorded at 364 and thus falling under very poor category on the National Ambient Air Quality Index (NAAQI). As per the short range forecast, AQI is likely to improve on December 7th.

According to System of Air Quality and Weather Forecasting And Research (SAFAR), the values of Suspended Particulate Matters (SPMs), PM 10 and 2.5 were recorded- 348 and 203 respectively.

SAFAR in its air quality weather forecast said that overall air quality deteriorated as forecast from Thursday condition. "Surface-level winds are calm. Boundary layer wind

direction is not favorable for Stubble fire-related transport. A stubble fire count from SAFAR-multi-satellite products is around 302 and percent share is negligible," "Air quality is likely to deteriorate further during the day and may touch the Severe category for a short



time and likely to improve marginally Saturday evening within the higher end of Very Poor owing to calm wind condition."

"AQI is likely to marginally improve further on 6th and 7th December due to better ventilation," it said.

Govt launches forum for successful implementation of EV policy

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Government on Friday launched the 'Delhi EV Forum' as a platform for continuous engagement with stakeholders in the Electric Vehicle ecosystem for the successful implementation of the Delhi electric vehicle policy.

The Dialogue and Development Commission will host the Delhi electric vehicle (EV) Forum with the support of RMI India on behalf of the Delhi Government.

The Delhi Government notified its landmark EV policy on 7th August, aimed at having an EV market share of 25 per cent across all new vehicle sales in Delhi by 2024.

The policy lays out a comprehensive strategy to enable rapid transition to EVs in the national capital centered on five key pillars - targeted financial incentives, non-financial incentives, enabling charging infrastructure, raising public awareness and building a green economy.

Speaking on the occasion, Jasmine Shah, Vice Chairperson of DDC said



"Realizing the vision of chief minister Arvind Kejriwal's vision to make Delhi a EV capital of India requires participation of all stakeholders - OEMs, fleet operators, charging station energy operators, experts and various government agencies. Delhi EV Forum will provide the platform for much needed conversations among all the stakeholders."

"Since the launch of Delhi's EV policy, we have received enthusiastic response from several stakeholders - EV manufacturers, fleet operators keen to launch complete EV fleets in Delhi, charging station operators etc. Their concerns and suggestions are important and discussing them transparently at the Delhi EV forum is the best way to chart a joint roadmap for the successful implementation of Delhi EV policy," he said.

One arrested for ATM card fraud in Gurugram

STAFF REPORTER ■ GURUGRAM

An accused was overpowered by the victim, for allegedly exchanging the ATM card of the victim and withdrew ₹10,000 from his account, the police said on Friday.

The arrested accused was identified as Sharfuddin of Palwal, while his accomplices who fled the spot were identified as Parvez and Toufiq.

According to the police, the victim Raj Kumar, stated in his police complaint that on Thursday around 12.00 O'clock he had visited an ATM booth located on the Mehrauli-Gurugram Road near Sukhrali village in Gurugram and withdrew ₹500 from his account.

"During this a youth came inside the ATM kiosk and asked him to insert the ATM card and then press the cancel button. The victim replied that

he had already pressed the cancel button. Thereafter, two more youths came inside the ATM in turn and again asked him if there was a scheme and insisted him to press the cancel button after inserting his PIN number on the ATM machine," the victim told the police.

Soon after one of the accused took the victim's card and handed it over to the victim and told him that it had been cancelled and left the spot.

The victim felt something fishy and approached his bank where the bank employee informed him that it was not his card and in between the victim received Rs 10,000 withdrawal message.

"The bank employee informed the victim that the money was withdrawn from Sector-17A market. The victim immediately reached the Sector-17A market where the accused trio while seeing the

victim had tried to flee the spot but one of the accused overpowered the victim with the help of passersby," the victim told the police.

Later the nabbed accused disclosed his accomplices name and confessed that they had withdrawn Rs 10,000 from the victims account from an ATM installed at Sector-17A market.

Thereafter the accused returned ₹20,000 in the victim's relative account and when the

victim asked him why he transferred Rs 20,000 instead of Rs 10,000 in his account the culprit could not give satisfactory answer and he was handed over to the police.

"The case was registered under relevant sections of the IPC at Sadar police station. Further probe is on to get information about the absconding culprits, said Subhash Boken, spokesperson of the Gurugram police.

'We are committed to protect every citizen from risk of viral hepatitis'

Sisodia hails ILBS for its role

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia said that the Delhi Government is committed to protecting every citizen from the risk of viral hepatitis.

Speaking on the occasion of 23rd Hepatitis Day, he said that with the onslaught of corona pandemic, health has become an even more serious concern, and that we need to be more health conscious.

"We also need to ensure serious efforts are being taken to deal with hepatitis like diseases. Hence, it would be useful to include it in the school curriculum to bring health awareness since childhood, and pay special attention to our body and mind' along with physical and economic matters," Sisodia said.

Hepatitis Day's virtual event was organised today at the Delhi Secretariat. In addition to doctors and medical staff from various hospitals, 700 children from 31 schools took part online. The Institute of Liver and Biliary Sciences organised the event on behalf of the Ministry of Health, Government of Delhi. The staff of ILBS's Vasant Kunj campus also attended it virtually.

Sisodia extended his compliments to Director ILBS Dr Shiv Kumar Sarin and ILBS team for their untiring efforts towards prevention, cure and creating mass awareness on Viral Hepatitis.

"The Health Department and the team of ILBS have fought vigorously against hepatitis for 23 years. For this, phase-1 of HEPiSCHOOL Programme in cooperation



with the Education Department was launched last year to further spread awareness in schools, through various health talks. Due to this, many lives have been saved," Sisodia said. At the event, Phase-2 of the HEPiSCHOOL Campaign was launched to further intensify awareness in schools.

Sisodia also congratulated ILBS on their persistent fight in the ongoing Covid crisis. At the virtual event, Delhi Health Minister Satyendar Jain talked about how the liver, being a major organ of the body, needs special care but negligence often causes liver damage giving way to severe illnesses.

Jain also congratulated the ILBS team for setting up the world's first plasma bank in Delhi, joining them in fighting the corona crisis.

Chief Secretary and Chairman, ILBS Vijay Kumar Dev, Principal Secretary, Health and Finance Department Sandeep Kumar, and Family Welfare Director Dr Monica Rana were also present at the virtual event.

Delhi Chief Secretary Vijay Kumar Dev complimented the students and stated that they have been the biggest force in getting various campaigns of social welfare successfully implemented over the years.

Two held for cheating people

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Economic Offences Wing (EOW) of Delhi Police has arrested two directors of a company for allegedly cheating people by alluring them to invest in a housing project in Haryana which was not approved by the Government.

The accused have been identified as Ajay Kumar and Hem Raj Singh, directors of Ganga Associates in Dwarka area.

According to P O P Mishra, the Joint Commissioner of Police, EOW, the complainant Ashok Kumar and others alleged that Ganga Associates in Dwarka through its directors Vijender, Dalip Kumar, Ajay Kumar, Hem Raj and Rajvir Singh offered to

sell land and plots in their upcoming project "Ganga City Colony" at Gubhana Kheri in Haryana's Bahadurgarh.

"The directors represented that all the necessary approvals from government authorities have already been taken. Believing the inducement of them, around 24 persons paid Rs. 50 lakhs to them but subsequently, it was discovered that the company did not have any Govt. approvals for development of the project," said the Joint CP.

"A case was registered at EOW police station and investigation taken up. During investigation the duo accused Ajay Kumar and Hem Raj Singh were arrested," said the Joint CP.

CBI arrested BJP councillor in bribery case: AAP

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Senior Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader Sand chief spokesperson Saurabh Bhardwaj on Friday said that the 'Central Bureau of Investigation' (CBI) has arrested Manoj Mehlaawat, BJP leader and an elected councillor from Vasant Kunj in connection with a bribery case. The AAP leader demanded the BJP to explain who gets the benefit of such massive financial loot.

"The BJP councillor got arrested red-handed for the charges of bribery. The CBI found that he was taking a bribe of Rs.10 lakh. When this person got arrested, a massive chaos reported in the area and the CBI got to know later that this person is a BJP councillor. The BJP ruled central government came down heavily on the CBI therefore, the CBI did not

mention the arrest in their press release," he said.

Bhardwaj said, "The building mafia work as a team and to protect these mafias, the BJP ruled MCD has developed the building bylaws in Delhi. These bylaws are highly complicated and to build a house following these bylaws are next to impossible."

"If someone does not like to take any kind of illegal means to build their house then his or her house will never see the light of the day. Without bribing the BJP ruled MCD officials in Delhi you cannot build your own house because the bylaws are such. I am a concerned MLA of Delhi and telling you that not a single citizen of Delhi has any option but bribing the BJP ruled MCD officials to build his or her own house," he said.

"The collection of money by the BJP

ruled MCD happens in a very coordinated manner. Every area of Delhi has different rates defined by the BJP ruled MCD and the builder mafia. I come from the Greater Kailash area of Delhi so if anyone wants to build a house at GK1 then per lenter you will need to pay around ₹2.5 lakh. So for four lenter you will pay ₹10 lakh to the MCD," he alleged.

"This money goes from the bottom to top in the BJP ruled MCD. It starts with the beldar which means the local level workers who are associated with the BJP ruled MCD. This money reaches to the mayor starting from the local councillor also the officials of the BJP ruled MCD like engineers. If this money is not given then the person concerned will get notices from the BJP ruled MCD and his or her house will be sealed," he added.

DMRC to assist Noida Metro in expansion of corridor

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Metro Rail Corporate Limited (DMRC) on Friday signed an agreement with Noida Metro Rail Corporation Limited (NMRC) under to provide services to NMRC as 'General Consultants' (GC) or 'Project Management Consultants' (PMC) for its Phase - II project from Noida Sector - 51 to Greater Noida Sector -2.

The agreement was signed by P K Garg Director of Business Development, DMRC and Praveen Mishra, Executive Director of NMRC and ACEO of Noida authority.

As per this agreement, DMRC will assist and guide NMRC in preparation of complete bid documents for various system packages, contract award process, and management of system contracts and proper integration of all new line systems with the existing Aqua Line (N-GN) Metro systems.

DMRC will also be responsible for construction supervision and independent Quality and Safety Monitoring (IQSM) of all Contract Packages (Civil, E&M, and System Contracts), besides testing and commissioning of the entire systems works and equipment and guiding for regulatory clearances for systems

contracts.

The Phase - II project of NMRC will be an extension of the Aqua Line from Sector 51 to Greater Noida Sector 2. This corridor is 9.605 kms long consisting of five (05) elevated stations namely Noida Sector 122, Noida Sector 123, Greater Noida Sector 4, Ecotech 12 and Greater Noida Sector 2.

NMRC is currently operating the 29.07 kms long Aqua Line from Noida Sector 51 to Greater Noida Depot which consists of 21 elevated stations. The Aqua Line began its passenger services from 26th January 2019.



ED attaches Mallya's assets in France



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Friday has seized fugitive businessman Vijay Mallya's asset in France worth 1.6 million Euros. "On the request of Directorate of Enforcement (ED), a property of Vijay Mallya located at 32 Avenue FOCH, France has been seized by the French Authority. The value of the seized asset in France is 1.6 Million Euros (approx. ₹14 crores)," the agency said in a statement.

bank account of Kingfisher Airlines Ltd. (KAL).

The ED had earlier initiated investigation under PMLA based on FIR registered by CBI against Kingfisher Airlines Ltd. (KAL), Vijay Mallya and others on January 25, 2016.

Provisional Attachment Orders have been issued wherein properties worth ₹11,231.70 crore (Market value at time of attachment) have been attached which was also confirmed by the Adjudicating Authority. A Prosecution Complaint (chargesheet) has been filed against Mallya, UBHL, KAL, bank officials and others.

An application was also moved before the designated

Declare family members of Iqbal Mirchi fugitive, ED requests court

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The (Enforcement Directorate) ED on Friday moved an application before the PMLA court in Mumbai to declare family members of Iqbal Mirchi as fugitive under the Fugitive Economic Offenders Act, 2018 (FEOA). The agency has sought declaration of Junaid Iqbal Memon, Asif Iqbal (both sons of Iqbal Mirchi) and Hazra Memon (wife of Mirchi) as fugitive economic offenders.

In its plea before the court, the ED has sought confiscation of their assets as envisaged under FEOA. "In the first phase, prayer has been made for confiscation of 15 Indian properties including 3rd and 4th Floor of Ceejay House and having market value 96 crore (approx.) & 6 Bank accounts having balance Rs 1.9 Crore. Prayer has also been made for allowing ED to file supplementary applications under FEOA," the agency said in a statement.

In this case, the ED has provisionally attached assets to the tune of ₹798 crore (approximately) in India and

abroad under the provisions of Prevention of Money Laundering Act.

On the basis of Prosecution Complaint (chargesheet) filed by ED before the Special PMLA Court, Open Ended Non Bailable Warrants have been issued against Asif Memon, Junaid Memon and Hajra Memon.

Till now, these three accused have been evading their presence before the Special Court and the NBWs remain unexecuted, it said adding, further investigation is under progress.

Mallya was sent to UK and the Westminster's Magistrates court has ruled for extradition of Mallya on charges of money laundering on December 10, 2018.

In its order, the court has observed that a clear evidence

of dispersal and misapplication of the loan funds and prima facie, found that accused Vijay Mallya was involved in a conspiracy to launder money. Appeals of Mallya to UK High Court and later Supreme Court have been rejected.

No stubble burning, but Delhi's air still very poor: Javadekar

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Stubble burning has stopped Snow but Delhi's air pollution situation remains serious, Union Environment Minister Prakash Javadekar on Friday said adding that the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) has issued a notice to the State Government to take strict and swift action on the complaints forwarded to it about activities causing toxic air in Delhi and the National Capital Region.

In a message from his residence here, Javadekar said the CPCB has received several complaints that activities like biomass and garbage burning, improper waste disposal, violation of construction and demolition waste rules, unpaved roads and dust, which cause pollution, are still being carried out in the national capital and NCR.

"The situation of air pollution in Delhi is still serious. Stubble burning has stopped but Delhi's air quality index still remains in 'very poor' category," Javadekar said.

"CPCB's 50 teams inspect Delhi and NCR every day and submits the complaints and observations from those visits to the agencies concerned. Yet, some work is done, some not. Hence, the CPCB has issued a notice to the Delhi government," he said.



In its notice, the CPCB has directed the Delhi government to ensure immediate action on complaints and take strict action against industrial activities including tyre pyrolysis, burning of tyre and other wastes.

As per the forecast on the Indian Meteorological Department, air quality is likely to remain in very poor category owing to unfavourable meteorological conditions for disposal of the pollutants for the next few days, the notice said.

"Incidences of stubble burning (are) almost coming to an end, and air quality continuing to remain in very poor category, it is important that local sources are dealt with effectively. Based on feedback received from 50 teams deployed in the fields since October 15, sources are open

dumping of garbage, construction/demolition activity, unpaved roads/pits, and resuspension of road dust," said the notice.

It said the main areas of concern are pollution hotspots — Narela, Anand Vihar, Mundka, Dwarka and Punjabi Bagh in Delhi and Faridabad, Jhajjar, Noida and Bhiwadi in the NCR.

"As per the analysis and number of complaints received, south, south-west district, north, north-west, and north east districts of Delhi and Jhajjar, Bhiwadi, Gurugram north, Gautam Buddha Nagar and Noida in NCR are the areas that need to take actions to control air pollution due to construction/demolition activities, open dumping of garbage, road dust and industrial emissions," the notice said.

Plea in SC seeks removal of protesting farmers as commuters face hardship



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

A petition was filed in the Supreme Court on Friday seeking direction to the authorities to immediately remove farmers, who are protesting at several Delhi border points against the new farm laws, saying commuters are facing hardship due to the road blockades and the gatherings might lead to increase in COVID-19 cases.

The plea has sought the apex court directions to the authorities to open the roads at Delhi borders, shift these protesters to allotted place and provide guidelines on social distancing and use of mask at the protest place to contain spread of COVID-19 cases.

The petition, filed by law student Rishabh Sharma, has claimed that Delhi Police had on November 27 allowed these protesters to hold demonstration peacefully at Nirankari ground at Burari here but despite that they have blocked the borders of Delhi.

"Because of the ongoing protest at the Delhi borders, the roads have been blocked by the protesters and closed border points, which have affected vehicular traffic and people

who are travelling to and from Delhi to get medical treatment in reputed government/private hospitals situated in Delhi are also affected," said the plea, filed through advocate Om Prakash Parihar.

It referred to the October 7 verdict, delivered on a petition against blockade of a road in Shaheen Bagh area here by those protesting against Citizenship Amendment Act, in which the apex court had said that public spaces cannot be occupied indefinitely and demonstrations expressing dissent have to be in designated places alone.

Referring to COVID-19 guidelines issued by the Government, the plea has said that despite the advisories not to hold large gathering amid the pandemic, lakhs of farmers have gathered on Delhi borders and this might lead to increase in the number of coronavirus cases.

It is pertinent to note that in view of the prevention of the community spread of the pandemic disease Coronavirus (COVID-19), it is very necessary to remove the gathering and this protest is further blocking.

Beant Singh killing: SC asks Centre about delay in proposal to commute Rajoana's death sentence

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Friday questioned the Centre over delay in sending proposal to the President for commuting the death sentence of Balwant Singh Rajoana, convicted in the 1995 assassination case of former Punjab Chief Minister Beant Singh.

A bench headed by Chief Justice S A Bobde asked the Centre to apprise it as to when the authority would send the proposal in this regard to the President under Article 72 of the Constitution.

The article deals with power of President to grant pardon, suspend, remit or commute sentences in certain cases.

The apex court noted that a letter was sent from the Ministry of Home Affairs to Punjab chief secretary on



September 7 last year intimating that a proposal would be sent to the President to commute the death sentence of Rajoana.

The bench, also comprising Justices A S Bopanna and V Ramasubramanian, asked Additional Solicitor General K M Nataraj, appearing for the Centre, as to why the proposal has not been sent till now.

The top court was hearing Rajoana's plea seeking direction for expeditious disposal of MHA's proposal to commute his death sentence.

Rajoana, a former Punjab Police constable, was convicted for his involvement in an explosion outside the Punjab civil secretariat that killed Beant Singh and 16 others in 1995.

SC stays HC order dismissing ED's plea to revoke approver status of Rajiv Saxena in chopper scam

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Friday stayed the verdict of the Delhi High Court which had dismissed the plea of Enforcement Directorate (ED) to revoke approver status of businessman Rajiv Saxena in the Agusta Westland VVIP chopper scam.

A bench headed by Chief Justice S A Bobde issued notice to Saxena seeking his response on the appeal filed by ED against the high court's June 8 judgement.

"Issue notice. In the meantime, there shall be stay of operation of the impugned order," said the bench, also comprising

Justices A S Bopanna and V Ramasubramanian.

Dubai-based businessman Saxena was extradited to India on January 31 last year in connection with the Rs 3,600-crore scam case relating to the purchase of 12 VVIP helicopters from Agusta Westland.

During the hearing conducted through video-conference on Friday, Additional Solicitor General Aman Lekhi, appearing for the ED, told the bench that there was a "clear error" on the part of high court as it had said that pardon can be revoked only after he deposes as witness.

"There is a provision in the CrPC that pardon can be with-

drawn if he fails to give any evidence," the bench observed.

The high court, in its verdict, had said that ED's plea before the trial court for revoking the approver status was not maintainable as his statement under section 306 (4) of the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC) had not been recorded.

Section 306 (4) of CrPC provides for recording of statement of an accomplice who has been granted pardon.

The high court had further said that once his statement under section 306 (4) of CrPC is recorded, the ED can again move an application for revoking Saxena's approver status.

NIA to probe Nagrota encounter

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) will probe the recent encounter at Nagrota in the Jammu region in which four terrorists of the banned Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM), a Pakistan-based outfit, were killed by police.

The anti-terror probe agency took over the case following a notification issued by the Centre.

The terrorists were killed on November 19 in Jammu and Kashmir's Nagrota area in a swift operation by the police.

The NIA probe will try to ascertain the planning and final objective of the four JeM



terrorists and the people with whom they were in touch with in Jammu and Kashmir for execution of the failed terror plot.

The agency's team had visited the encounter site at Ban Toll Plaza on November 19

after the incident.

The NIA is already probing an encounter that took place on January 31 this year in which three JeM terrorists were killed by the security forces.

CBI files case against Delhi-based private firm

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has registered a case on a complaint from State Bank of India (SBI) against a Delhi-based private company, Jay Polychem India Ltd. (borrower company) including its director, guarantor, unknown public servants and unknown private persons on the allegations of causing a loss of about ₹1,800.72 crore to the public sector bank and other

consortium banks.

It was alleged in the complaint that the accused had cheated the State Bank of India-led consortium banks to the tune of ₹1,800.72 crore (approximately) by way of diversion / siphoning off bank funds, fictitious transactions, cheating, forgery and criminal conspiracy among others.

Searches were conducted on Friday at three locations in Delhi at the office and residential premises of the borrower



company and other accused, the CBI said adding investigation is continuing in the case.

Important to have large basket of Covid-19 vaccines: DBT Secy

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Noting that there are at least 30 Covid-19 vaccine candidates being developed in India, Department of Biotechnology (DBT) Secretary Renu Swarup on Friday said that it was important to have a large basket of Covid-19 vaccines as it is really difficult to know which one is going to be the best among the lot.

She said the vaccines that are being developed indigenously are on different platforms and each has its own benefits and challenges. "The DBT has an expert committee to track the development related to COVID-19 vaccine," she said at a webinar.

"It is important to have a large basket of vaccines as we move forward because we really don't know which one is going to be the best. It is not necessary that the first one is the best, you may have one coming later which is going to be better but it is difficult to say right now," Swarup said.

There are 30 vaccine candidates which are being developed within the country.



There are 30 vaccine candidates which are being developed within the country

Five vaccine candidates are under different phases of clinical trials in India with the Serum Institute of India conducting phase-3 trial of the Oxford-Astrazeneca COVID-19 vaccine, while the indigenously developed vaccine by Bharat Biotech in collaboration with the ICMR has already started the phase-3 clinical trial.

Another indigenously-developed vaccine by Zydus

Cadila has also completed phase -2 clinical trial in the country. Dr Reddy's Laboratories and the Russian Direct Investment Fund (RDIF) on Tuesday announced the start of adaptive phase 2 and 3 clinical trials for COVID-19 vaccine Sputnik V in India.

Also, Biological E. Ltd has started early phase 1 and 2 human trials of its COVID-19 vaccine candidate.

Stressing that vaccine development is a complex process, DBT Secretary said a lot of effort has gone in the development of the vaccine like building capacity for clinical trials and in making it.

Lakshadweep administrator Sharma passes away due to lung-related complications

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Administrator of Lakshadweep and former Intelligence Bureau Chief Dineshwar Sharma (66) passed away on Friday due to lung-related complications.

The decorated police officer was the interlocutor in Kashmir before becoming Administrator in Lakshadweep in October 2019. The suave 1979 batch IPS officer from Kerala cadre headed many counter insurgency operations and served the Intelligence Bureau for more than two decades.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah condoled the death of Sharma. "Administrator of Lakshadweep Shri Dineshwar Sharma Ji made long lasting contributions to India's policing and security apparatus. He handled many sensitive counter terror and insurgency ops during his policing career. Anguished by his demise. Condolences to his family. Om Shanti," Modi tweeted.

In his tweet, Shah said:

Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla said Sharma played an important role in strengthening the policing system and skill development of the police forces

"Deeply anguished to learn about the passing away of Administrator of Lakshadweep Shri Dineshwar Sharma ji. He served the nation with utmost devotion as a dedicated officer of the Indian Police Service. My heartfelt condolences to his family in this hour of grief. Om Shanti". Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla said that Sharma played an important role in strengthening the policing system and skill development of the police forces.

Thalassaemia, cancer patients suffer blood challenge during Covid-19

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

From shortage of blood in blood banks to unavailability of transportation and transfusion facilities, thalassaemia patients, cancer patients and dialysis recipients among others, who need regular blood transfusions, have been facing multiple challenges in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Added to their agony has been the Central and State governments' failure to give priority to their needs, lamented an advocacy group as they shared their views at a Webinar "Illness to Wellness" organised by ASSOCHAM on International Day for Persons with Disabilities 2020 marked on Thursday.

"On our own, with the help of organisations like Life Savers, Khoon and Giving Is Living in addition to support from Indian Red Cross Society, have been organizing blood camps during the pandemic. However, the State governments did not do much to spread awareness around blood donation" rued Anubha

Taneja-Mukherjee, Member Secretary, TPAG (Thalassaemics Patients Advocacy Group).

It is estimated that there are about 65,000-67,000 thalassaemia patients in the country with around 9,000-10,000 cases being added every year.

Anubha also alleged disparity in rules for the sector pointing out that currently the Drug and Cosmetic Act regulates blood while National Blood Transfusion Council (NBTC) guidelines are voluntary. Similarly, National Health Mission (NHM) is responsible for thalassaemia while NACO is responsible for BTS. There is too much confusion, she said.

In the long run, the Government should consider having a consolidated blood regulation separate from the Drugs and Cosmetics Act that does not give adequate power to NBTC, she suggested.

The experts also deliberated on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act 2016 and how its implementation can ensure availability and safety of blood transfusion services, the demand which was backed by Anil Rajput, Chairman,

ASSOCHAM CSR Council.

The panel also included Dr Pawan Kumar Singh, Head of Oncology, Organ Transplant, Hematology Hematopoietic Stem Cell Transplant Department, Artemis Hospital, Dr Amita Mahajan, Senior consultant, Pediatric Hematology & Oncology Indraprastha & Apollo Hospitals, Delhi, Chetan Manchegowda, Founder, Khoon; Rajesh Mittal, President, Rotary, Deepak Chopra, President-Thalassaemics India, George Contantinou, Board member of Thalassaemia International Federation.

Dr Sunil Gupta, Additional Director General, Blood Transfusion Services at NACO, said that a Committee is considering whether there should be a separate body and legislation even as the experts called for timely availability of medicines, accessibility of generic drugs at a cheaper cost and bringing down the cost of stem cell and bone marrow treatment so that more and more thalassaemia patients can be benefited.

GHMC polls throw hung verdict

No party secures magic figure of 76 out of 150 seats; TRS emerges as single largest party with 55 seats; BJP stands second at 48, AIMIM third at 44, Cong fourth with 2

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Voters of Hyderabad have thrown a 'hung verdict' in the GHMC elections, the results of which were announced on Friday. None of the parties could secure the magic figure of 76 out of 150 seats.

However, the ruling TRS has emerged as the single largest party by winning 55 seats out of total 150 seats it had contested.

The BJP which has given a tough fight to TRS right from the beginning of the polls, stood second by winning 48 seats out of 149 seats it had contested. The TRS suffered huge losses in GHMC polls this time. TRS tally came down to 55 from 99 seats it won in 2016. Contrary to this, the BJP's tally witnessed steep rise to 48 seats against just 4 seats it won in 2016. The AIMIM, which stood third by securing 43 seats, proved yet again that it remains unbeatable in its strong hold Old City.

It retained its 44 seats out of 51 it had contested against 44 it won in 2016. The Congress failed miserably in GHMC polls yet again. It won just 2 seats out of 146 it had contested. Congress won just 2 seats even in 2016.



TRS worker celebrate in Hyderabad on Friday



BJP State president Bandi Sanjay celebrates in Hyderabad on Friday

The TDP which contested 106 seats suffered even more humiliating defeat by failing to retain even the deposit in any of the seats it had contested.

As none of the parties could secure magic figure of 76 seats out of 150 in GHMC polls, it became imperative to bag Mayor post by striking a political deal.

TRS suffered the jolt in two ways. It cannot bag Mayor post on its own either on its own strength of winning 55 seats or can bag Mayor seat with the help of its 31 ex-officio members who comprises of party MLAs, MPs, MLCs, who have voting right to elect Mayor. A total of 45 ex-officio members from TRS, Congress, BJP have enrolled for GHMC

Mayor voting this time.

If these 45 ex-officio members are included in Mayor voting, the magic figure to bag Mayor seat will increase from 76 to 98.

Out of 45 ex-officio members, TRS alone has 31 members. However, TRS strength will increase to only 86 seats, which is short of magic figure 98. It still requires 12 seats to bridge this gap.

Nizamabad MLC and CM KCR's daughter K Kavitha is yet to enroll as ex-officio member. If she enrolls, TRS requires 11 more seats. This makes TRS to depend essentially on other party to bag TRS post. TRS has no other option except to bank on AIMIM, its 'friendly party' for this purpose.

AIMIM too has no other option except to tie up with TRS as it cannot join hands with BJP. AIMIM with 44 seats can easily ensure Mayor post for TRS. However, both the parties have to strike a 'deal' for this similar to Congress-AIMIM deal in 2009 GHMC polls when hung verdict was given. Congress and AIMIM shared Mayor post for two-and-a-half year each with Congress claiming the post first and AIMIM later. Both the parties will now have to work out similar formula.

Since the tenure of present GHMC Council is until February 10, 2021, both TRS and AIMIM have ample time of two months to strike a deal on Mayor, Deputy Mayor Posts.

For BJP, it's not possible to bag Mayor post as it has just two ex-officio members. Its strength will only increase to 50. For AIMIM too, it's not possible to bag Mayor post on its own as it has just 10 ex-officio members, with which its strength will increase to 54 seats. The Congress has just one ex-officio member, due to which its strength will increase to 3. These three members cannot alter the Mayor election even if TRS lures them into its fold in the next two months.

MAHARASHTRA COUNCIL POLLS

Big jolt for BJP, MVA bags 4 out of 5 seats

BJP loses its bastion Nagpur to Congress

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Within days of it completing its first year in office, the ruling Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) consolidated its position in Maharashtra on Friday, as it handed out a humiliating drubbing to the Opposition BJP by winning four out of five Maharashtra Legislative Council seats in the biennial elections.

The BJP, which lost power to the Shiv Sena-led MVA Government in November last year, found itself licking its wounds, as it lost its traditional bastion of Nagpur where the Congress' Abhijit Wanjari defeated the BJP's Sandeep Joshi in the Nagpur Division Graduates' constituency, by a comfortable margin of 18,910 votes.

The BJP's debacle in the Nagpur Division Graduates' constituency should be seen in the light of the fact that it was represented in the past by senior party Minister and Union Minister Nitin Gadkari and former Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis's father Gangadhar Fadnavis in the past. Gadkari, it may be recalled, had won this seat for four terms since 1989 before he contested successful-



NCP leader Supriya Sule greeted by her party workers outside NCP office in Mumbai on Friday

ly the 2014 Lok Sabha election from Nagpur.

The three other seats that the MVA won were: Pune Division Graduates' seat, Aurangabad Division Graduates' seat and Pune Division Teachers' seat. While the NCP's Arun Lad defeated Sangram Deshmukh of the BJP in Pune Division Graduates' seat, the NCP's Satish Chavan trounced the BJP's Shirish Boralkar to bag the Aurangabad Division Graduates constituency seat.

In Pune Division Teachers' constituency, Jayant Aagaonkar of the Congress trounced sitting MLC and Independent Dattatraya Sawant.

The BJP's debacle in Nagpur and Pune Division Graduates' seat came as an

embarrassment for the BJP, as the poll results were personal setbacks for former chief minister Devendra Fadnavis and State party president Chandrakant Patil respectively.

However, the Shiv Sena — which leads the MVA in the State — suffered a defeat in Amravati Division Teachers' constituency seat, its candidate Shrikant Deshpande was defeated by an Independent Kiran Sarnaik there.

The State Council biennial elections had been necessitated by the end of the tenure of the five sitting members in July this year, but the polls were postponed due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Meanwhile, the only consolation that the BJP derived on

a day it fared badly in the biennial elections was that its nominee Amrith Patel won the by-election to Dhule Nandurbar Local Bodies seat. Patel had given up the seat, after he quit the Congress and joined the BJP, which necessitated the by-election.

In the State Council, the BJP has a strength of 22 members, while the seat tallies of other parties are: Shiv Sena-14, NCP-nine, Congress — eight, RSP, PWP and Lok Bharati Party — one seat each and Independents: four.

With the elections to five seats from the teachers' and graduates' quota and one seat from the local body constituency over, what is remaining is the nomination of 12 members from the Governor's quota. The MVA has already recommended its nominees, including Bollywood actress Urmila Matondkar, for the 12 vacant seats.

NCP president Sharad Pawar hailed the MVA's victory, saying: "The result is a reflection of the MVA Government's performance in the last one year". Reacting to his party's poor performance in the polls, former Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis said, "The results that have merged are not as per our expectations. We had expected more seats. Our calculations went wrong".

Lucknow police stops interfaith wedding

Lucknow: Days after the Uttar Pradesh Government promulgated a stringent anti-conversion law, police here stopped an interfaith wedding, saying the couple did not complete legal formalities. The families of the bride and the groom were called to Para police station and informed about the new law. They decided to defer the wedding and follow the norms laid for an interfaith marriage under the Special Marriage Act, the police said.

For an interfaith marriage, a couple may get married without changing their religion by registering themselves under the Special Marriage Act. But if anyone wishes to convert to another religion, they will have to submit a declaration at least 60 days in advance to the respective district magistrate or additional district magistrate as per the recently promulgated Uttar Pradesh Prohibition of Unlawful Conversion of

Religion Ordinance, 2020.

After receiving information about the wedding on Wednesday, a police team reached the venue in Para area's Duda Colony, Additional Deputy Commissioner of Police (ADCP), south, Suresh Chandra Rawat said on Friday.

It was found that preparations were underway to solemnise the marriage of Raina Gupta (22), a chemistry post-graduate, and Mohammad Asif (23), a pharmacist, with the consent of their families, he said. Both the families were called to Para police station and informed about the new law.

"The families were told that the new ordinance has provisions to check religious conversions carried out through allurement, coercion, force, fraud, or marriage. Both the families have now decided to follow the proper process for interfaith marriages," Rawat said.

DDC POLLS

Voter turnout over 50.53% in 3rd phase

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

The third phase of District Development Council (DDC) polls recorded a voter turnout of over 50.53 per cent on Friday.

The voting process across 33 constituencies passed off peacefully but a DDC candidate was injured after a firing incident was reported in Sagam area of Kokernag in south Kashmir's Anantnag district.

According to official sources, unidentified gunmen fired at Anees ul Islam, Apni Party candidate during the day. His condition was stated to be stable as he had received bullet injury on his arm.

Significantly, the South Kashmir districts of Pulwama, Shopian and Anantnag recorded a marginal increase in voter turnout compared to the second round

of polling. Kulgam, Bandipora and Budgam continue to record high voter turnout showing great enthusiasm towards strengthening grass roots democracy.

State Election Commission KK Sharma said, "In the third phase an overall 50.53 per cent voter turnout was recorded with Kashmir division witnessing 31.61 per cent voter turnout and Jammu division recorded 68.88 per cent voter turnout.

The border districts of Rajouri, Poonch recorded the highest voter turn of over 72 per cent while Samba and Kathua districts reported 70.15 per cent and 62.18 per cent voter turnout in Jammu region. The hilly districts of Kishtwar, Doda and Ramban too recorded high voter turnout 70 per cent, 59.5 per cent and 64.79 per cent.



West Pakistani refugees celebrate after casting their votes during the third phase of DDC election, at Chak Jatar village in Jammu, on Friday

Mamata calls up farm leaders, sends O'Brien to Delhi

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

A day after asking the Centre to repeal the contentious farm laws or face a nationwide stir Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Friday sent one of her most trusted lieutenants Derek O'Brien to Haryana and Punjab borders near Delhi with a strong message of solidarity.

She also spoke to the protesting farm leaders telling them how she launched a 26-day fast near Singur in the interest of farmers in 2006, ruling Trinamool Congress sources said.

The TMC chief also directed two of her party leaders and Ministers Becharam Manna and Purnendu Basu to stage a sit-in demonstration in Kolkata from December 8 to 10 and promised to join the dharna on the last day of sit-in prompting immediate reaction from State BJP president Dilip Ghosh who attacked Banerjee for looting the farmers of Bengal.

Senior party leader and MP Kakoli Ghoshdastidar said that the Chief Minister held tele-

phonic conversations at least four times with the agitating farm leaders.

Besides sending O'Brien the Chief Minister made at least four calls to different farmers' groups from Haryana and Punjab, the MP said, adding "They reiterated their demands in their talks with the Chief Minister and thanked her for her solidarity."

O'Brien on the other hand met the farm leaders of several unions at Singhu border (near Delhi) and conveyed Banerjee's message, said another TMC leader and Minister adding "the result of Singhu movement will be no different from the one led by Mamata Banerjee at Singur... while after Singur movement the Left Front went from power and there at Singhu BJP will lose its power."

Farmers from Punjab, Haryana, UP, Bihar and elsewhere were protesting in Delhi against the enacting of the Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Bill, 2020; the Farmers (Empowerment and

Protection) Agreement of Price Assurance and Farm Services Bill, 2020 and the Essential Commodities (Amendment) Bill, 2020 passed by the Centre.

Referring to the Singur movement where then opposition leader Banerjee led a conclusive movement against the forcible acquisition of 1,000 acres of land for the Tata Nano car factory the Chief Minister on Friday tweeted, "14 years ago on 4 Dec 2006, I began my 26 day hunger strike in Kolkata demanding that agricultural land cannot be forcefully acquired. I express my solidarity with all farmers who are protesting against draconian farm bills passed without consultation by Centre."

The BJP which has recently emerged the main challenger in Bengal preparing to capture power in the State in 2021 Assembly elections immediately hit back saying in Bengal only 10-12 per cent of farmers could access MSP while the rest had to go for distress selling of their crops.

"By backing the false farm movement incited by vested

interests the Chief Minister too is showing her true colours," Ghosh said attacking former BJP ally and Siromani Akali Dal leader Parkash Singh Badal and NCP chief Sharad Pawar for "baking their respective breads in the farm movement."

Addressing a public meeting Ghosh said "the farm laws brought by Prime Minister Narendra Modi has directly hit Rs 5,000 crore interests of the Badals which is why they are supporting the movement."

He also said that the family of the NCP chief too was involved in a profitable business of Rs 10-12,000 crore in farm produce which was why his party was supporting the farm movement.

Attacking the Bengal Chief Minister for raising the "outsider" bogey alleging the BJP was bringing outside leaders to Bengal to win elections Ghosh said, "The Chief Minister is calling Amit Shah, JP Nadda and other leaders outsiders but she is silent on Shah Rukh Khan and PK who are being used by her to win elections."

Quit or shun fear of Central agencies, Didi tell rebels

PNS ■ KOLKATA

A statement apparently directed at rebel Trinamool Congress leader Suwendu Adhikari the Bengal ruling party on Friday said those who wanted to quit the outfit should do so immediately and those who wanted to remain in it should shun fears of Central agencies and continue its struggle against the BJP.

Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee who held an organisational meeting of the party reportedly told veteran party leader, MP and East Midnapore district TMC president Sisir Adhikari to crack the whip on the TMC men involved in anti-party activities. Sisir Adhikari, a former Union Minister, is the father of Suwendu Adhikari.

"Those who want to quit the party please do it now," Banerjee reportedly said in the meeting adding "those who will choose to remain in the party will have to shun the fear of central agencies and work selflessly descending on the streets here and now to fight against the BJP... we are not afraid of the central agencies which are being used to frighten many of our leaders... similarly you should also not be frightened of them."

Banerjee apparently was meaning Adhikari whose name have figured in both Narada pay off case and chit fund scams allegedly making it easy for the BJP to coerce him into rebel against the ruling outfit.

Meanwhile, Adhikari was likely to make his press statement in the coming days during which he would make known his future political plans. His close associates said that a number of BJP leaders were in touch with him.

PFI attack on ED officials during raid points grave situation in State: Dr Thomas

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

Thursday night's untoward incidents in Kerala's Kozhikode and Malappuram districts where officials of the Enforcement Directorate came under attack by marauding crowds point towards grave situation in the State, warn leading civil rights lawyer K Ramkumar and former whistle blower Dr Jacob Thomas who recently laid down office as the Chief of Vigilance and Anti Corruption Bureau. "It is a serious crime and has deep implications," Dr Thomas told The Pioneer while reacting to Popular Front of India activists waylaying the ED officials on

Thursday night.

The team of ED officials who inspected the offices and residences of OMA Salam, chairman, PFI, P M Abdul Gafour, national vice-president, Nasaruddeen Elamaram, Karamana Ashraf Moulavi and P Koya in the districts of Kozhikode, Malappuram and Ernakulam were prevented from leaving the premises after inspection by crowds shouting "Allahu Akbar". The ED officials were whisked away by additional units of CRPF deployed by the local office. According to sources in ED, they were analysing the antecedents of the PFI crowd before initiating legal action.

This is a new trend in Kerala, a place known for communal peace and harmony. Any attempt by mobs to threaten and attack Government of India officials who were discharging their duties should be handled sternly lest the State becomes another haven for extremists," said Ramkumar, the octogenarian lawyer who is the State's leading civil rights activist. He said institutions like the Enforcement Directorate, DRI, Customs and NIA were above politics and represent the unity, integrity and security of the nation.

According to Ramkumar, the resistance by mobs against ED inspection smack of conspiracy. But Dr Jacob Thomas

was more blunt in his assessment of the situation. "This needs to be nipped in the bud. Let politicians play their game. Officials of ED or Vigilance and Anti Corruption Bureau who have Constitutional roles to perform should never be targeted or attacked," said Dr Thomas, who is full time into anti-corruption activism post his retirement from the Indian Police service.

The former DVAC boss said there were enough provisions in the Criminal Procedure Code against those who threaten or attack officials engaged in their responsibilities. "It is for the ED officials to file cases against the perpetrators of such crimes. There is a rule of law in this land

and all of us are bound to obey that. Keep politics, communalism and casteism out of this," said Dr Thomas who had a running battle with the present government in Kerala because of his uncompromising stance against corruption.

The PFI bosses in Kerala said Thursday night's raids were part of the Central Government's efforts to victimise the leaders because of their support to the ongoing farmers' agitation and the Hathras rape incident. "Simultaneous raids at the houses of PFI leaders across the country by the ED are politically motivated. The Modi government is using investigating agencies as a weapon to silence polit-

ical opponents," said Mohammed Shakif, national secretary, PFI.

But Sreejit Panicker, cyber security expert based in Thiruvananthapuram said the ED raids were the culmination of a process which began in 2010. "The then UPA Government in New Delhi and the UDF Government in Kerala have filed enough number of cases against PFI for money laundering, VS Achuthanandan, the then CPI(M) chief minister himself is on record stating that PFI is engaged in anti national activities. The PFI leadership is trying to divert attention from the public by spreading falsehoods," said Panicker.

Met dept withdraws red alert for 7 Kerala districts as Cyclone Burevi weakens

PTI ■ THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

In a relief to Kerala, the Met department has withdrawn the red alert issued for cyclone Burevi and rain in the seven southernmost districts of the State as the deep depression is likely to weaken further into a depression.

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) had in a late night bulletin issued on Thursday withdrawn the red alert and issued a yellow alert for 10 districts of the State.

In a bulletin released on Friday morning, the IMD said the deep depression is likely to move slowly west-southwestwards and cross Ramanathapuram and adjoining Thoothukudi districts in Tamil Nadu during the next six hours with wind speed of 50-60 gusting to 70 kmph.

"It is very likely to weaken further into a depression (wind speed 45-55 kmph gusting to



65 kmph) during next 12 hours," IMD said. It has issued yellow alerts for the districts of Thiruvananthapuram, Kollam, Pathanamthitta, Alappuzha, Kottayam, Ernakulam, Idukki, Thrissur, Palakkad and Malappuram.

Meanwhile, the Thiruvananthapuram International Airport has rescheduled nine flights scheduled for Friday. "The operations of the airport have been suspended till 6 PM today and all the flights were rescheduled," CV Ravindran, Airport Director, told PTI.

IMPORTANT NOTICE

This is notified for the information of rail passengers that the timings of the following Special Trains will be revised as under:-

Revised Timings of 02431 Thiruvananthapuram Central - Hazrat Nizamuddin Rajdhani Special Superfast Train					
Train No.: 02431		STATIONS			
ARR.	DEP.	↓			
04:14	04:15	KASARAGOD			
23:48	23:50	THIRUR			
22:20	22:25	ERNAKULAM JN			

Revised Timings effective from : 02431 from Thiruvananthapuram Central from 31.12.2020.

Revised Timings of 02691 KSR Bengaluru - New Delhi Rajdhani Special Superfast Train					
Train No.: 02691		STATIONS			
ARR.	DEP.	↓			
07:05	07:15	SECUNDERABAD JN			

Revised Timings effective from : 02691 from Secunderabad Jn from 05.12.2020.

Revised Timings of 02465 Madhupur Jn - Anand Vihar (T) Special Superfast Train					
Train No.: 02465		STATIONS			
ARR.	DEP.	↓			
----	12:15	MADHUPUR JN			
12:40	12:42	JASIDIH JN			

Revised Timings effective from : 02465 from Madhupur Jn from 05.12.2020.

Revised Timings of 02434/02433 Hazrat Nizamuddin - Chennai Central - Hazrat Nizamuddin Rajdhani Special Superfast Train					
Train No.: 02434		STATIONS		Train No.: 02433	
ARR.	DEP.	↓		ARR.	DEP.
08:00	08:05	BALHARSHAH		17:45	17:50
11:14	11:15	WARANGAL		14:13	14:14
14:30	14:40	VIJAYAWADA JN		11:38	11:48
20:45	----	CHENNAI CENTRAL		----	06:05

Revised Timings effective from : 02434 from Hazrat Nizamuddin from 30.12.2020 and 02433 from Chennai Central from 01.01.2021.

Train No. 09415 from Ahmedabad Jn will depart at 17:20 hrs. instead of 17:40 hrs. on 06.12.2020 & 09.12.2020.

For any other information such as arrival/departure of above special trains stations enroute and frequency etc., passengers are requested to contact Railway Enquiry No. 139 or may visit Indian Railways website <https://enquiry.indianrail.gov.in> or NTPS App.

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No Hyderabad blues

The BJP gets a booster shot of a win in the city's municipal polls and is looking to get Telangana in 2023



Whatever the numbers are and whatever be the criticism about its undue hyping up of the Hyderabad municipal elections as a national prestige fight, the fact is the BJP has proved its point. That it can grow roots and sprout green shoots in a hostile terrain with a mathematical formula regardless of its status as a Central party or its cultural divergence. And that it can do without its one-time federal supporter as a prop. Yes, the ruling Telangana Rashtra Samithi (TRS) may be the largest party yet in the Corporation but crashing from 99 seats and losing over 40 per cent of them have a sharper sting than defeat. And by nudging the

All-India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen (AIMIM) off its comfortable perch despite the consolidated vote of a Muslim-dominated city, the BJP showed that its counter-polarisation can work anywhere in India, enough to separate strands of a blended culture in Nizami Hyderabad. Finally, by gobbling up the entire Opposition space, vacated by the lacklustre Telugu Desam Party (TDP) and the Congress, and winning almost over ten times the seats it had last time, it has undoubtedly emerged as the challenger to the TRS. And by 2023, it hopes to supplant the regional party, riding the anti-incumbency wave, and acquire a southern State beyond Karnataka. It can use Hyderabad as a toehold to pry the door open. Significantly, the city's municipal limits include as many as 24 Assembly constituencies and touch upon parts of Lok Sabha seats, so no time would be better than now to lay the foundational bricks. And by treating the civic polls with as much seriousness as it would a general election, the top BJP leadership, which parked itself in the city intensely over a week or so, proved that it was committed to and valued each of its local units. That each State is important in its ultimate dream of "one party, one nation." While every political pundit thought that Mission Bengal or defeating Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee would top its agenda in 2021, the BJP's laboratory culture is at work to reap dividends whenever it matters. In 2016, the BJP could win just four wards, against the TRS' 99 and the Asaduddin Owaisi-led AIMIM's 44. Even during the 2019 Lok Sabha election, it won four of the 17 seats. Perhaps the conversion rate between 2014 and 2019, from one to four seats, and its recent bypoll victory in the Dubbaka Assembly seat gave the BJP enough reason to hope and plan ahead. Dubbaka is adjacent to the seat that Chief Minister K Chandrashekar Rao (KCR) won from and the BJP wants to encash the symbolism of it closing in on him. But more than everything else, it is what Hyderabad represents that is up for grabs. First, as a cyber hub, Hyderabad is cosmopolitan and is next only to Bengaluru in the I-T sweepstakes. Seen largely as a north Indian, heartland party that is given to the template of the cowbelt politics of caste, the BJP now wants to be seen as a party of the classes and not just the masses. To that extent, it needs the endorsement of the knowledge economy, echo the "digital citizenry" as it were. Besides, Hyderabad's largely Muslim character and the Nizami hangover have held out against the BJP's kind of Hindutva, which is about reviving ancient glory before the "history of the invaders." After the Ram Mandir at Ayodhya — whose impact is largely confined to North India — it needed an ideological conquest in the south. Hence the call to rename the city as Bhavanagar, which, according to the BJP's narrative, was its original name, derived as it was from the Bhagyaxami temple. The fact that it is located near the Charminar, a monument that defines Hyderabad, unmistakably harks back to the party's core temple politics. Most importantly, the BJP wants to get rid of Owaisi, who crafted his political survival by undercutting secular forces, that they shortchanged Muslims on real issues, earning him the tag of being a vote-splitter and the BJP's B-team. Now that his appeal is no longer confined to Hyderabad and is expanding to Maharashtra, Bihar and Bengal, the BJP doesn't want a counter-polarisation to happen pan-India among Muslim voters, who may look up to him as their true representative and not want to be traded for votebank politics. The BJP now wants to cut Owaisi to size. This is apparent from its leader Tejasvi Surya's statements calling Owaisi an avatar of Mohammad Ali Jinnah and attributing his Bihar win to his clout in Hyderabad.

Of course, civic issues have been drowned out with the floods that swamped the city this year. The BJP has diverted attention from the encroachment of catchment areas and buffer zones around water bodies that has made the city particularly vulnerable to extreme weather events. And its weathervane is all about changing directions of the political current. Will Chief Minister and TRS Chief KCR be able to reclaim his political stock, now that the BJP has become his worst foe, by taking up real issues? There was a time when he could claim advantages by tacitly supporting the BJP helping it in the passage of crucial Bills in Parliament and staying neutral on controversial issues. But the mammoth Lok Sabha verdict of 2019 means the national party doesn't really need him as an ally and would rather have its own man in the State. KCR is gradually losing his tradeable ware and now Hyderabad has shown that being a local leader is just not enough to dim brand Modi. So he needs to rebuild himself as a leader who birthed the State, remind people he is its original creator and has led a social rather than a religious movement, championed their rights that no outsider can ever understand. KCR must realise that the BJP still has trouble ousting Trinamool Congress in Bengal or couldn't dislodge the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) in Delhi because both have mobilised people's movements and made it their own, the former on land rights in Singur and the latter on clean governance. So he must avoid falling into the Hindu-Muslim trap set by the BJP and revive the social causes he stood for, something which he has ignored recently. He must rebrand himself as a State leader and not a leader who uses his State to transact his importance at the Centre.

Acting Presidential

Even if Trump fails at doing so, his predecessors remind Americans and the world what they are missing



Former Presidents of the United States, Bill Clinton, George W Bush and Barack Obama or as they call themselves 42, 43 and 44, denoting which order on the line of succession they were, have volunteered to be among the first to take the vaccine for COVID-19 as they become available. This is not just a smart way to jump the queue, which anyway as a former member of a very select club they would have been at the head of, but also to give a vote of confidence for the vaccine. In that regard they are acting very Presidential, which the current occupant of the White House, for the next 45 days, President Donald Trump, certainly has not been. Far from it.

Unfortunately, the US has a significant number of conspiracy theorists who are called "anti-vaxxers", people who believe that vaccinations will harm rather than heal. This number includes several celebrities, once including Hollywood comedy star Jim Carrey, although he has recanted his views. These celebrities, who have an outsized influence, have convinced many Americans that the vaccine will not work and unsurprisingly many of them are leading the anti-mask campaign as well. Partially some of this comes back to the "Live Free or Die" motto that many Americans live by. The last few years have actually seen the re-emergence of some diseases such as measles, which have even led to some fatalities. Clinton, Bush and Obama, with different political views, have realised that America is suffering immensely from misinformation and a trust deficit with those in power. They realise that in the past four years America has drifted towards chaos and it needs an injection, literally, of trust. Taking the vaccine first and demonstrating to Americans that the vaccine is safe will help the US economy and healthcare system to return to normal. It should also be a huge vote of confidence for vaccinations in general.

Don't mess with farmers

They have come to Delhi not with a begging bowl but to present the pitfalls of an unplanned farm liberalisation agenda. Listen to them, build trust



INDRA SHEKHAR SINGH

The fate of India and our food system rests with a peaceful army of farmers besieging Delhi. They have blocked borders and are constantly sending envoys seeking justice. Medieval fears have gripped citizens as food and vegetables prices are already shooting up and hoarders (no longer illegal post farm Acts) are celebrating an early Christmas. Meanwhile, police in riot gear are anxious to lathicharge their own brethren. They have set up unnecessary road blocks all around the city, delaying and immobilising traffic.

Yet, in the freezing cold, our *annadattas* brace up for the water cannons and tear gas. And in distressed times, they have given up self-preservation and stand united as ever, demanding fair prices and resisting a "neo-Company Raj." For this has indeed turned into a war between the big agricultural corporations, who are reassuring the public with their propaganda through the corporate media, and the farmers, who anyway are struggling with input costs higher than the Minimum Support Price (MSP) and now see the rates being driven down by the inevitable competitive pricing in an open market. They have some legitimate and practical concerns that need transitional hand-holding that the Government is not quite doing.

While the farmers' agitation trends on Twitter, the Government uses an old strategy of "divide and rule" to break the unions, whose representatives have so far even refused Government hospitality during the talks. The Government has so far called "32 Punjab-based unions," leaving out others outside the negotiating room. Howard Zinn sniggers at us, as despite his work exposing the American "robber barons" and their modus operandi, the land of Gandhi is falling prey to them.

The Government may now play favourites, choosing one union leader over the other, and present a turbid discourse, buying itself time to incriminate dissenting leaders, and in the final stage may even bring in "strike-breakers" or pro-establishment farmers' groups and corporate farmers to sign an accord and end the matter. But in case the matter gets out of hand, one shouldn't be surprised to hear rumours of the resurgence of the "Khalistan movement" in Punjab and how farmer



unions are sympathetic to it. Attempts have already been made to classify the agitation as a sectarian uprising.

But back to the deadlock, the farmers want MSP for crops and the Government says it can't do that. And one doesn't expect the Government to promise something it is powerless to execute. If it introduces MSP as a legal right, it would automatically overturn the three farm Acts as farm majors won't buy into a protectionist market. Additionally, how will the Government implement the MSP at the rural market or local level is a big question. If, since its inception (1960s), the MSP has only covered a small percentage of farmers, what is different in 2020? Hence the Government can never make MSP a legal right. It may try to trick the farmers with the "grading" jargon, stating that the MSP would only be given for graded produce, but by accepting this deal, Indian farmers would be destroyed the same way American farmers were. Corporatisation of agriculture in the US, where factory farming birthed an uninterrupted chain of "farm to fork," has wiped out rural communities. It all began in the 1970s with the dream of becoming big enough to command the world's food market with industrialised processes, merging of lands and shifting priorities to commodity crops. But in no time there was a glut due to over-production; farmers could never get the commensurate prices and were driven to debts. They had no option but to foreclose and sell out. Now farmers do not even make up a quarter of the total US agricultural production. Buying into the

THIS HAS INDEED TURNED INTO A WAR BETWEEN THE BIG AGRICULTURAL CORPORATIONS, WHO ARE PEDDLING THEIR PROPAGANDA, AND THE FARMERS, WHO ANYWAY ARE STRUGGLING WITH INPUT COSTS HIGHER THAN THE MSP AND NOW SEE THE RATES OF THEIR CROPS BEING DRIVEN DOWN BY COMPETITIVE PRICING IN AN OPEN MARKET

promise of "making it big," they stretched their resources and were subsumed by food giants.

Barring Punjab and Haryana, MSP is already a distant dream for farmers. Even if some States make MSP the legal right, corporations have the choice of bulk buying from States that don't do so. What happens to the farmers in that case?

Farm life is tough. Imagine waking up at the crack of dawn, running to the fields each morning or any odd hour when the irrigation and electricity supply are selectively guaranteed. The farmer's day passes with weeding, ploughing, seeding and carefully guarding his crop for the season while debts and bills burden the family. When the harvest arrives, it brings more losses in the absence of remunerative prices. If it is the middleman now, it would be the corporations later. Effectively, he has no negotiatory power either way. When he can't earn enough, he drinks pesticides or commits suicide. More than 300,000 debt-burdened farmers have committed suicide in over a decade. So farmers are not misled or ill-informed, they live the hard reality. As Pepsico sued them in Gujarat and they are still struggling to reclaim their dues for sugar, they know how corporatisation hasn't changed their fortunes and required Government intervention in the end. And as their resilience is breaking, city people flippantly discount them as rustic, mock their intelligence and yet we dare not face their answer. The policy makers can't answer their questions. Let's go back to the ₹2.5 lakh crore *dal* scam of 2015 when consumers paid the price by buying *arhar dal* at ₹210/kg. It was reported that a cartel of agri-business companies was responsible by buying *dal* at low prices through the supply chain network, storing it overseas and then creating artificial scarcity. It profited immensely by selling it back to Indians at high prices. The Government used the power of the Essential Commodities Act

(ECA) to bust hoarders and recover 75,000 metric tonnes of *dal*. But ECA limits on hoarding and stocking have been done away with in the new Acts except for some emergency scenarios.

Let's take the example of apples from Himachal Pradesh, which make for a huge cash crop for local farmers. In two decades, three big Indian agri-business giants have consolidated the markets. They store almost all the apples coming out of the State, dictate the prices and have established an oligopoly. Small traders outside their network exist but they are marginal.

Up against a techno-militaristic juggernaut, one feels that the farmers and their leaders know their vulnerabilities — talks are futile and their fate is sealed. They know that this movement will be their final sacrifice, a mass suicide to awaken the conscience of our nation. They have come to Delhi not with a begging bowl but to present the pitfalls of an unplanned farm liberalisation agenda. And one doesn't doubt that they will be misjudged and hunted. But for them it's their moral imperative to rebel, for the sake of their children, their ancestral lands and our civilisation. If the Indian civilisation has to survive we need our farmers to be treated fairly. For without them, we are sowing a new corporate disease that shall further destroy India. In the words of Gandhi, "Strength does not come from physical capacity. It comes from an indomitable will." Our farmers are possessed by this will and we better listen to them.

(The author is Director, Policy and Outreach, National Seed Association of India)

SOUNDBITE

On the first day I'm inaugurated, I'm going to ask the public for 100 days to mask. Just 100 days. Not forever.

US President-elect — Joe Biden



The Government is not paying bills of those who carried out developmental activities in villages during the TDP regime.

TDP General Secretary — Nara Lokesh



As citizens of this country, we must all do our bit to constantly bring debates about inclusivity and equality to the fore.

Actor — Rani Mukerji



The shirt is heavy...When I put it on, something entered my body that I can't explain. I felt that a goal would come. Diego is unique.

Argentina football star — Carlos Tevez



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Money can't buy all

Sir — This refers to the editorial, "Vaccine tourism", published in *The Pioneer* on December 4. It is laughable that affluent people from India are actually thinking that they can go and get their COVID-19 vaccines from the UK. Do they not realise that the Government of the UK will obviously prioritise its own people, just as the Indian Government will, once we have the vaccine, too? Maybe this is the first time in their lives that the privileged will find out that others not as well-heeled can get priority over them, too.

The unscrupulous travel agents are leading these people down the garden path by designing "vaccine packages." Getting a COVID shot is not something that is in people's hands, no matter how many "deals" they offer to airlines and hotels and how many "pacts" they make with hospitals. This pandemic is a great equaliser and for once money can't buy everything.

Ashmit Aaron Noida

Support for farmers

Sir — There is a strong support for the farmers protesting

An eagle eye on police through CCTVs

This refers to the editorial, "A probing eye", published in *The Pioneer* on December 4. When you have police officers who abuse citizens, you erode public confidence in law enforcement agencies. That makes the job of good police officers unsafe. The Supreme Court's recent order directing the installation of CCTV cameras within six months with night vision cameras in each police station, besides the offices of Central probe agencies such as the CBI, the ED and the NIA, is a much-awaited reform which must be welcomed by all citizens.

Even in a world where there is so much awareness about human rights, custodial torture and death appear to be the norm. The data showing five custodial deaths everyday in the country is mainly due to the fact that the police are not trained enough in modern interrogation techniques and the use of forensic science to gather evidence to prove the guilt of the accused during trial. They often find it easier to use third-degree torture to extract a confession from the accused even though it may not withstand judicial scrutiny.

Now, the top court has said that the footage/data from the CCTV cameras should be preserved for at least six



months and the victim has the right to have the same secured in case of violation of his/her human rights. Once implemented, it would herald a paradigm shift in policing, pushing the police towards scientific investigation. Ideally, such a move should have come from the Government, which often cries foul about judicial overreach. Now, the Government must implement the ruling in letter and spirit as it concerns the right to life and liberty guaranteed under the Constitution.

N Sadhasiva Reddy Bengaluru

nario, the Central Government, led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, must do all it can to defuse the situation. The Centre must offer middle ground immediately and bridge the trust deficit.

Bhagwan Thadani Mumbai

A meaningful gesture

Sir — It is to the credit of the representatives of the 32 farmers' groups that they refused luxurious meals with Central Government Ministers and others during the meeting to discuss the three farm reforms and their problems with the Acts. This was their way of showing displeasure with the Government, keeping their self-respect intact and expressing solidarity with their peers. They also signalled that they cannot be bought or lured with hand-outs.

The best part about the ongoing farmers' agitation is that they have kept it apolitical and taken a united stand.

Raghu Singh Delhi

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

FIRST COLUMN

Time to use drones effectively

An application-based solution can spur a varied usage of the Unmanned Aircraft Systems and help in mapping land use



MANAVENDRA PRASAD

The Government of India recently announced the launch of the 'SVAMITVA' (Survey of Villages and Mapping with Improved Technology in Village Areas) scheme to provide an integrated asset verification solution for rural India. Under this scheme, land will be demarcated with the help of Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) or in common parlance drones. Six States have signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the Survey of India for drone-mapping of rural areas and the implementation of 'SVAMITVA.' The States of Punjab and Rajasthan have signed another MoU for the establishment of the CORS (Continuously Operating Reference Stations) network to assist in future drone-flying activities. This is just another example of the utility of drones and how their usage across a wide spectrum of activities, from education and training, law and order management, to disaster relief and geospatial mapping can be a force multiplier.

There is clearly immense awareness in the Government about the capability of drones, keeping in view their recent use during the anti-locust drives and also in the management of the ongoing COVID pandemic. Drones were used for tracking violators of restrictions, monitoring of the lockdown, decontamination of hotspots and so on. They have also been used by Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs) for inspection of their vital property and for geographic information system (GIS) mapping like oil pipeline monitoring and transit system planning. The list could go on. The Ministry of Civil Aviation has been proactively facilitating drone usage by providing fast track approvals through the exemption route for these critical public projects. Numerous organisations have received this relief and the usage was facilitated by conditional exemptions under the Aircraft Rules, 1937.

Rules and regulations: It is, however, odd that the UAS industry still lacks robust rules and regulations that allow rapid growth of swift innovation and high efficiency, while keeping in mind potential safety and security issues. The first set of drone regulations was notified in 2018, which introduced a unique concept of "no-permission, no-takeoff" (NPNT) through the Digital Sky Platform. However, the latter is yet to see the light of the day. The continuous delay in its launch is affecting legal drone operations in the country.

In June 2020, the Ministry of Civil Aviation released the draft UAS rules 2020 for public feedback. It is apprehended that if the final version is not dramatically different from the draft version, we are likely to have onerous compliance requirements and a difficult regulatory environment.

Getting it going: A computer programme that works like a modern day app and has a quickly deployable software that helps in bringing in greater efficiency could solve many issues. As the Digital Sky Platform may still take time for full operationalisation, having an application-based solution for day-to-day drone permission could help the industry overcome the current flux. An application-based tool could be the solution that catalyses the UAS industry, spur usage and unshackle growth.

The app solution has multiple advantages as it will not require either additional hardware or software for the UAS. The application can be made available on the personal computer and can be used to generate regular approvals, based on the location, time, and date of operation. This will also help Indian manufacturers of UAS to export their ware to other countries. Additionally, this solution can be effortlessly integrated with the currently-available version of the Digital Sky Platform. Perhaps it is time to look at ways to simplify the system that has tremendous benefits in the future and put a stop to ad hocism in the industry.

Global experience: It is worth noting that the American Federal Aviation Administration's Low Altitude Authorisation and Notification Capability (LAANC) uses desktop applications and mobile apps to automate the application and approval process for airspace authorisations. Requests are checked against multiple airspace data sources such as UAS Facility Maps, Special Use Airspace data, Airports and Airspace Classes, as well as Temporary Flight Restrictions (TFRs) and Notices to Airmen (NOTAMs). If approved, pilots can receive their authorisation in near-real time. This has aided commercial operators by introducing predictability around the approval process, which has led to more business opportunities for them. LAANC has also helped the regulators address the challenge of resource constraints, which was otherwise making it hard for them to keep track of operations, by reducing or replacing manual approvals. While there is a need to have solutions customised for India, given its diversity of governance standards, economic development and of geography, the country should not hesitate in benefitting from the experience of other nations.

(The writer is public policy consultant, Chase India)

POINT COUNTERPOINT

GOVERNMENT HAS NOT SPOKEN ABOUT VACCINATING THE ENTIRE COUNTRY. IT IS IMPORTANT TO GET FACTUAL INFORMATION ON SUCH THINGS.

—UNION HEALTH SECRETARY
RAJESH BHUSHAN



THE GOVERNMENT IS CLAIMING IT NEVER SAID EVERYONE WILL GET A VACCINE. EXACTLY WHAT DOES THE PRIME MINISTER STAND BY?

—CONGRESS LEADER
RAHUL GANDHI

Empower the survivors

Unless those rescued are empowered to assert their entitlements and claim accountability from offices at the ground level, the best of laws will remain on paper and have no impact on trafficking



ROOP SEN

In 2018, when the Ministry of Women and Child Development (WCD) attempted to introduce a new Trafficking of Persons (Prevention, Protection and Rehabilitation) Bill, or TOP Bill, in the Lok Sabha, it triggered a strong debate both within the House and outside. While some wanted it to be passed, others were strongly opposed to it. Those for the TOP Bill lauded it because it aimed to have a single legislation to address all forms of human trafficking and rectify the current scenario where each aspect of the crime — from kidnapping, rape, sexual exploitation, forced labour and bonded labour — is separately covered by different sections in the law. This results in fragmented application of laws, flawed investigation and failed prosecution as is evident by the NCRB data on prevalence, prosecution and convictions of traffickers each year. The common law, supporters of the TOP Bill argued, would take away the arbitrary distinctions between sex, labour and other forms of trafficking, which are a product of moral biases against prostitution and non-recognition of the exploitation and torture in labour trafficking. Further, the new Bill, however flawed, was an improvement on the existing legal framework on human trafficking in India, they argued.

Those who were opposed to it countered that the Bill only strengthened the existing flaws in the laws and complicated them further. It pushed for a stronger criminalisation approach, rather than understanding that trafficking was an outcome of socio-economic problems, disparities in growth between regions that pushed for migration but did not provide a support framework. Activists feared that the already prevailing rescue-rehabilitation approach, which gave the police powers of arrests and incarceration of voluntary sex workers in shelter homes, was perpetuated in the new Bill and that it seemed to have learnt nothing from the failures of the past. A third group, also opposed to the Bill, pointed out that creating new laws confounds inefficient law enforcement and overburdens judicial systems even further. So they have no positive bearing on curbing human trafficking, on vulnerable communities, survivors or the implementers of that law and its policies. It cited several social legislations on juvenile justice and domestic, sexual and caste-based violence. Instead of creating new laws, the Government needs to allocate budgets and spend them, strengthen monitoring and implementation of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) Sections that pertain to trafficking, the Immoral Traffic Prevention Act (1986), the Juvenile Justice Act and the Bonded Labour Act.

The WCD Ministry has reiterated its intent to bring in a law on human trafficking and is engaged in revising the TOP Bill. Once the draft Bill is placed in public domain for comments and suggestions, will the stakeholders re-engage with a few fundamental questions that have always led to deadlocks between people of different political and moral ideologies? The central issues in this debate are likely to be around the matter of legalisation of sex work and discernment between sex trafficking and sex work, approaches in rehabilitation of survivors of trafficking, the prevention approach and its impact on migration rights.

Does India need a new law on trafficking? The Immoral Traffic Prevention Act (ITPA), that was formed in 1956 and last amended in 1986, has failed to combat sex trafficking. The ITPA's approach of combating sex trafficking is on criminalisation of organised prostitution and providing for institutionalisation of survivors and their rehabilitation in shelter homes. The law does not directly criminalise sex workers, except for solicitation in public places.

“SURVIVORS OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING CAN BE THE GREATEST RESOURCE IN ANY ANTI-TRAFFICKING MULTI-STAKEHOLDER SYSTEM. THEIR INCLUSION IN NATIONAL, STATE AND DISTRICT-LEVEL ANTI-TRAFFICKING COMMITTEES WILL NEED TO BE ENDORSED BY LAW AND POLICY AND NOT LEFT TO THE GOODWILL OF BUREAUCRATS OR LEADERS. IT'S TIME THAT SURVIVORS OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING WERE RESPECTED AS EQUAL MEMBERS IN THE ANTI-TRAFFICKING ECOSYSTEM AND NOT SPOKEN FOR BY JUST NGOS



However, nowhere in India has any of the States reported a positive outcome of the law, either by way of reduction of sex trafficking of women and children, conviction of customers who demand children for sex or any consistent conviction of traffickers' networks to break source-destination flows of victims for sexual exploitation. On the other hand, survivors, who have been through the provisions of the law, have reported grave trauma because of forced institutionalisation in shelter homes. Shelters providing them with non-formal education did not result in better educational qualifications. The in-house vocational training courses on book-binding, sewing, tailoring or jewellery-making did not lead to sustainable employment generation and when they returned home, they were left to fend off stigma, poverty and their health distress on their own. A 2014 research on the health status of survivors of sex trafficking, who had been rescued from Maharashtra, Delhi, Telangana and Karnataka, found that 86 per cent of those tested for psychological health were found to be suffering from dysthymia, a state of chronic depression and anxiety disorder that, the clinicians found, were a result of untreated PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder). This indicated the inadequacy of the psychosocial counselling services provided in shelters.

India does not have a law on labour trafficking. While Section 370 of the IPC was to have provided us with a comprehensive definition of trafficking, it falls short of mentioning forced labour in its definition of exploitation. Survivors of labour trafficking across India report that there is systemic resistance in recognising them as victims of labour trafficking or of bonded labour. While there is systemic exploitation of inter-state migrant labour being trapped in brick kilns, small factories and sweatshops, construction sites using debt bondage, threats, intimid-

ation and violence, the district administration and police resist in recognising this as trafficking and would rather interpret it as "ill-treatment of labour".

One of the biggest lacunae in the system is the absence of any definition of "rehabilitation of survivors of trafficking" and what specifically a survivor may claim as entitlements for recovery and rehabilitation. The ITPA offers incarceration in shelter homes for up to three years and in-house service delivery without any accountability of the service provider towards recovery, employment or reintegration. The Bonded Labour Act provides for a Central sector scheme for rehabilitation of bonded labour, which focusses on financial benefits, mentioning nothing about recovery, repatriation, reintegration or rights of legal representation of victims of labour trafficking. What this creates is a system that can escape responsibility towards the future of the survivors by claiming that it has provided rehabilitation services but survivors were not able to benefit from them.

The ITPA and the Bonded Labour Act as well as the IPC fail miserably in prosecution of traffickers. The *Global Trafficking in Persons Report, 2020*, observes, "The Government decreased investigations, prosecutions and case convictions of traffickers. The acquittal rate increased to 83 per cent."

A whopping 90 per cent of human trafficking in India is inter-state, and from villages and small towns to cities. The Ministry of Home Affairs had recognised the need to create an integrated and comprehensive investigation system in 2008 when it passed a directive to form Anti-Human Trafficking Units (AHTU) at the district-level, which could pursue investigations seamlessly between States. This would take the burden off from the general police stations. However, a recent report, *AHTU Watch*, found less than 10 per cent of the currently-existing 332

AHTUs to be notified and functional, with officers exclusively in charge of them. Non-notification of AHTUs means that they do not have the powers of investigation, rendering their roles largely notional. As a result, the bulk of the trafficking cases are investigated by officers from general police stations, who confine their probes to the areas in their jurisdiction. For example, the police team that rescues a survivor of trafficking from Pune would confine its investigation and prosecution to the local brothel but would not trace back to the traffickers in the source State where the victim was abducted. As a result, such prosecution based on poor probes can be easily challenged by the defence. AHTUs have yet to be recognised under any legislation and State Governments are under no obligation to implement their advisories.

Those who are worst affected by the inadequacies of the law are survivors of trafficking themselves. There is truth in the contention that unless trafficking survivors are empowered to assert their entitlements and claim accountability from offices at the ground level, the best of policies and laws will remain on paper and have no impact on the ground. NGOs have their own subjectivities, their ideological battles and limitations in challenging duty bearers.

Survivors of human trafficking can be the greatest resource in any anti-trafficking multi-stakeholder system. Their inclusion in national, State and district-level anti-trafficking committees will need to be endorsed by law and policy and not left to the goodwill of individual bureaucrats or leaders. It's time that survivors of human trafficking were respected as equal members in the anti-trafficking ecosystem and not spoken for by activist NGOs.

(The writer is a researcher and advisor to the Indian Leadership Forum Against Trafficking)

Scientists, the real heroes of the Corona era

With the success of the vaccine in sight, it is important to understand that none of it would have been possible without years of expertise and funding support

cine and the country is gearing up to start mass vaccination of its population. Meanwhile, the successful trials of the Oxford-AstraZeneca and Moderna vaccines have raised tremendous hopes too. While Moderna and Pfizer have announced high efficacy in clinical trials for their respective vaccines, that is up to 95 per cent, the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine can be stored in normal refrigerators. This makes it much easier and cheaper to store, transport and distribute in comparison to the other two candidates which would need to be stored at minus 20-80 °C.

Being cost-effective and easy to store, the Oxford vaccine is being touted as the most promising candidate for a country like India, which has cold chain issues. Russia's Sputnik V, another such vaccine that stays stable between 2 and 8 °C, is also being considered viable for India and other developing countries. These vaccines not only mark a

defining moment for medical advances in the modern era, they are a manifestation of the commitment shown by scientists and researchers across the world in producing the shots in record time. They remind us how investing in medical research is critical to beating unforeseen health emergencies and vital to the survival of the human race.

Race against time: The stories behind the development of these vaccines and the speed at which they were done is truly inspiring. Let's take the case of the Oxford vaccine. British and Irish scientists Professor Adrian Hill, Professor Sarah Gilbert and Professor Terese Lambe started working on this vaccine in early January as soon as scientists in China published the first genetic sequence of the virus. Given the novel nature of the Coronavirus, it was an uphill task but Oxford University and later the Government gave the vaccinologists access to unprecedented funding and resources to find the much-coveted

COVID vaccine. The scientists based their work on an existing technology they pioneered and patented years ago in the Oxford labs. In fact, they designed this vaccine that very weekend itself in January, staying up all night. At that point it wasn't even clear how fast the virus would spread or how many people it would end up infecting, but these researchers saw it as an opportunity to demonstrate rapid vaccine development against a new viral threat. From here on, within weeks Oxford had useable vaccines for lab tests and clinical grade shots for human trials. The rest, as they say is history.

By the beginning of April, the COVID-19 virus had spread to most parts of the world with the UN chief Antonio Guterres terming it the "worst crisis" since World War II. With deaths mounting and economies crashing one after the other, the development of this vaccine was much more than a healthcare need, it was an economic

urgency as well. The Oxford vaccine is a chimpanzee adenovirus-vectored shot. It uses a genetically-modified version of a virus strain that is usually found in chimpanzees. This modified virus carried with it an element of the COVID-19 viral strain that triggers an immune response in the human body.

Not without controversies: Given the urgency and the competition between pharma companies, vaccine development has understandably been hasty. The Oxford vaccine trial discovered up to 90 per cent efficacy when the volunteers were given a half dose before a full dose booster shot. Interestingly, when given two full doses, the vaccine showed only 62 per cent efficacy. While this serendipitous discovery gave an expected boost to the vaccine, questions remain over the cause of this surprising trial result. It also brought to the fore discrepancy in the narratives of the two partnering agencies on the project. While the AstraZeneca team insist-

ed that half dosage was given as an inadvertent error, Oxford scientists underlined that it was a calibrated move.

Even as the varying accounts raised concerns, the controversy also served to remind us how hasty trials can result in handling errors. It also underscores the need for Oxford-AstraZeneca's India partner, Serum Institute of India, to ensure a highly transparent trial for Covishield to dispel any doubt and distrust over its efficacy.

Funding medical research must be top priority: The adenovirus vector platform that has been used in the Oxford vaccine was first developed in the early 1990s and has since then been repeatedly tested and modified in continued research and development. The current vaccine design that could successfully use the existing platform is essentially based on almost three decades of research and testing. With the success of the vaccine in sight, it is important to understand that none of it would have been

possible without years of expertise developed by the scientists and the adequate funding and resource support given to medical research.

These researchers are our modern heroes, who have made tremendous sacrifices and given it their all, in order to make a difference to humankind and create history. In all of this, science will be the winner. Let this encourage and inspire our youngsters to be future scientists who can make the impossible possible.

Countries like India, where the shortage of medical research funding has been a perennial problem, can also learn vital lessons from this. Notably, the Department of Health Research in India was given barely three per cent of the total healthcare allocation in the Budget 2020-21. India needs to increase funding and spend more on biomedical research to be able to develop effective drugs and vaccine solutions for multiple diseases in the future.

(The writer is Executive Director of a pharmaceutical firm)



NIKKHIL MASURKAR

One of the most difficult years in recent memory, 2020 has been nothing less than a global healthcare nightmare. However, as the year draws to an end, there is good news on the horizon. Even as an indigenously-developed vaccine by Bharat Biotech has entered Phase-3 of clinical trials, several other international vaccines have either shown promising results or are on their way to reach last-stage trials. In the UK, the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) has already given its nod to the Pfizer/BioNTech vac-

TRUMP ON ELECTION FRAUD

'Votes started miraculously disappearing on poll night'

Washington: US President Donald Trump has alleged that his votes started "miraculously disappearing" on the election night, reiterating his unsubstantiated claims about widespread voter fraud in the presidential polls.



Trump on Thursday told reporters at the White House that his team has found a large number of such votes. "We went through an election. At 10 o'clock, everybody said, 'That was an easy victory for Trump.' All of a sudden, the votes started disappearing — miraculously disappearing. We found much of it, but we found far more votes than we need in almost all of these states. And I think I can say in all of these states, far more votes than we need to win every one of them," he said in response to a question.

Democratic leader Joe Biden won the November 3 presidential election over Trump, who is continuing his legal efforts to upend his victory. Trump, a Republican, has allowed the official start of Biden's transition to power but has not yet conceded defeat, alleging massive voter fraud and electoral malpractice.

However, state election officials and the media have denied such large-scale fraud. Election officials in key battleground states have declared Biden the winner, giving him an unofficial 306-232 edge in the

Electoral College that determines the outcome of US presidential contests.

The Trump campaign has filed multiple lawsuits in several states, most of whom have been dismissed so far.

"I want to just thank my team because my team is doing an unbelievable job. And more importantly, I want to thank the 74 million-plus people that voted, which is the largest amount of people that a sitting President has ever had — 74 million-plus...The level of loyalty, I've never seen anything like it. All over the country, they know it was a fixed election. It was a rigged election. They know it, and I appreciate their support," Trump said.

When asked if he has confidence in Attorney General Bill Barr, Trump said: "Ask me that in a number of weeks from now. They should be looking at all of this fraud." **PTI**

Gregory Meeks first African-American to chair House Foreign Affairs Committee



Washington: Congressman Gregory Meeks, who backs a strong US-India relationship, was on Thursday elected as the next chairman of the powerful House Foreign Affairs Committee, becoming the first African-American to head the Congressional panel that plays an influential role in shaping the country's foreign policy.

Meeks, 67, would replace fellow Democratic Congressman Elliott Engel from New York as the Chair of the House Foreign Affairs Committee in the 117th Congress next year.

Meeks, who had paid floral tributes at the statue of Mahatma Gandhi at the Gandhi Plaza on October 2, is also a powerful member of the Black Caucus. **PTI**

Qatar rules out normalisation of Israel ties for now

Rome: Qatar's foreign minister said Friday that his country remains committed to the creation of a Palestinian state with its capital in east Jerusalem, and that progress on that front would need to be "at the core" of any agreement to normalize relations with Israel.

"Right now, I don't see that the normalization of Qatar and Israel is going to add value to the Palestinian people," Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani said at Italy's annual Mediterranean Dialogue.

There was speculation that Qatar — which already coop-

erates with Israel in providing aid to the Gaza Strip — might be the next Arab country to normalize relations after the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Sudan established diplomatic ties with Israel earlier this year.

But the foreign minister said Qatar remains committed to the 2002 Arab Peace Initiative, in which Arab countries would recognize Israel in exchange for its withdrawal from territories occupied in the 1967 war and the creation of a Palestinian state in the West Bank, Gaza and east Jerusalem. The foreign minister noted

that his country has a "working relationship" with Israel to provide aid to Gaza, where the Islamic militant group Hamas seized power from rival Palestinian forces in 2007.

"But for the full normalization, I believe that the (Palestinian issue) needs to be at the core of any agreement of normalization between Qatar and Israel," he said.

The wealthy Gulf country's aid to Gaza has provided a lifeline to the territory, which has been under a crippling Israeli and Egyptian blockade since Hamas seized power. It has also been a key element in a shaky,

informal truce that has prevented any major outbreaks of fighting in recent years.

Israel and Hamas have fought three wars — the most recent in 2014 — as well as countless smaller skirmishes.

The normalization agreements with Israel, brokered by the United States, were widely seen as a breakthrough in Mideast diplomacy.

But the Palestinians condemned the agreements as a betrayal because they marked a major erosion in Arab support for their cause, a key source of leverage in any future peace talks. **AP**

China 'greatest threat' to democracy since WW-II: Trump's intel chief

Washington: China is the "greatest threat" to democracy and freedom since World War II and Beijing was preparing for confrontation with the US and intended to dominate the world "economically, militarily and technologically", according to America's top intelligence official.

Writing in the Wall Street Journal, Director of National Intelligence John Ratcliffe said

China was growing its power by stealing US secrets and then replacing US firms in the market. The Trump administration has taken a hard line on China, imposing tariffs on Chinese goods and accusing Beijing of intellectual property theft.

"The intelligence is clear: Beijing intends to dominate the U.S. And the rest of the planet economically, militarily and technologically. Many of

China's major public initiatives and prominent companies offer only a layer of camouflage to the activities of the Chinese Communist Party," according to Ratcliffe.

The Trump administration's most senior intelligence official's stark warning was just the latest from senior administration officials about China's intentions, with some warning of possible military action in

Asia and others pointing to unprecedented efforts to influence the incoming Biden administration.

The op-ed comes as the Trump administration has recently taken several punitive measures against Beijing, sharply limiting visas for members of the ruling Communist Party of China and unveiling new sanctions on Chinese companies. **PTI**

Fauci will be chief medical adviser: Biden

AP ■ WASHINGTON

President-elect Joe Biden says he is keeping Dr Anthony Fauci on as a chief medical adviser and a member of his Covid-19 advisory team.

Biden made the comments Thursday during an interview with CNN's Jake Tapper. He said he spoke with Fauci earlier in the day about the need to instill confidence in any coronavirus vaccine and the fact that "you don't have to close down the economy" to combat the virus.

Biden says he'd be "happy" to get a vaccine in public to prove its safety.

Jobs report will show how much pandemic is squeezing hiring

Washington: Friday's monthly US jobs report will help answer a key question overhanging the economy: Just how much damage is being caused by the resurgent coronavirus, the resulting curbs on businesses and the reluctance of consumers to shop, travel and dine out?

Economists surveyed by the data provider FactSet have forecast that employers added 450,000 jobs in November.

In normal times, that would be a healthy increase.

But a gain that size would amount to the weakest monthly hiring since April. **AP**

Denmark to stop pumping oil, gas in North Sea

Copenhagen (Denmark): Denmark has decided to end to all oil and gas offshore activities in the North Sea by 2050 and has cancelled its latest licensing round, saying the country is "now putting an end to the fossil era."

The Danish Parliament voted late Thursday to end the offshore gas and oil extraction that started in 1972 and has made it the largest producer in the European Union. Non EU-members Norway and Britain are larger producers. Denmark is estimated to pump some 83,000 barrels of crude oil and another 21,000 barrels of oil equivalent this year, according to the government. **AP**

TERROR FINANCING CASES

Pak court sentences three more JuD leaders to 15 years in jail

Lahore: A Pakistani anti-terrorism court has sentenced three more leaders of Mumbai terror attack mastermind Hafiz Saeed's Jamat-ud-Dawa (JuD) to 15 years imprisonment each in two more terror financing cases.

Anti-Terrorism Court (ATC) Lahore Judge Ijaz Ahmad Buttar handed down the sentence to Abdul Salam bin Muhammad, Zafar Iqbal and Muhammad Ashraf on Thursday.

JuD chief Saeed's brother-

in-law Prof Hafiz Abdul Rehman Makki was sentenced to six months imprisonment in each case.

The suspects were presented in the court amid high security and the media was not allowed to cover the proceedings.

The sentencing comes a day after Saeed's spokesperson Yahya Mujahid was handed down another 15 years in jail by the ATC in a terror financing case. **PTI**

French surgeon gets 15-year jail in massive pedophilia case

Lyon: A French retired surgeon accused of sexually abusing over 300 young children over decades - primarily his patients in their hospital rooms - has been sentenced Thursday to 15 years in prison in the first trial of what may be the largest-ever pedophilia case in the country.

The trial this week in the western city of Saintes concerned four people allegedly targeted by Joel Le Scouarnec, 70, including two of his nieces, a young female neighbor, and a

child who was hospitalized at age 4 in the establishment where he practiced. Le Scouarnec has been found guilty of "rapes" and "sexual abuses," Francesca Satta, the lawyer for the neighbor's family, told the AP. His name will also be added to the database of sex offenders, she said. During the trial, Le Scouarnec admitted he had raped his nieces. Other legal complaints against the doctor have piled up since the original investigation wrapped up. **AP**

Israel urges citizens to avoid Gulf, cites Iran threat

Jerusalem: The Israeli government on Thursday urged its citizens to avoid travel to the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain, citing threats of Iranian attacks.

Iran has been threatening to attack Israeli targets since its chief nuclear scientist, Mohsen Fakhrizadeh, was assassinated last Friday near Tehran. It accuses Israel, which has been suspected in previous killings of Iranian nuclear scientists, of being behind the shooting.

Israel has not commented on the killing. But Fakhrizadeh has long been on Israel's radar screen, with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu saying

at a 2018 news conference about Iran's nuclear program: "Remember that name." Israel accuses Iran of trying to develop nuclear weapons — a charge Iran denies.

In recent months, Israel has signed agreements establishing diplomatic relations with Gulf Arab states of the UAE and Bahrain — its first normalization deals with Arab countries in a quarter century.

The agreements, brokered by the Trump administration, have generated widespread excitement in Israel, and thousands of Israeli tourists are scheduled to travel to the UAE for the Jewish holiday of Hanukkah this month. **AP**

Thousands killed in Ethiopia's conflict, Tigray side asserts

AP ■ NAIROBI

Several thousand combatants have been killed in Ethiopia's Sembattled Tigray region, an official with the fugitive regional government has asserted, although claims remain difficult to verify a month after the fighting erupted between Ethiopian and regional forces.

Getachew Reda, a senior adviser to the Tigray leader, in an interview with Tigray TV aired Thursday urged young people and others in the region to "rise and deploy to battle in tens of thousands" days after Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed over the weekend declared victory.

With the leaders of the Tigray People's Liberation Front on the run in rugged territory, fears of a drawn-out conflict continue. But with communications and transport links still largely severed to the region of 6 million people, it's difficult to know the situation on the ground, including the extent of popular support for the TPLF and the number of people killed.



An Indonesian soldier examines the damage at a neighborhood affected by a flood in Medan, North Sumatra, Indonesia on Friday **AP**

Rain in western Indonesia leaves 2 dead, 2,700 homes flooded

Medan: Torrential rain in Indonesia's third largest city caused four rivers to overflow, flooding thousands of homes and killing at least two people, officials said Friday.

The local disaster mitigation agency said rescuers were searching for six missing peo-

ple, including a toddler, after the heavy rains in Medan, the capital of North Sumatra province.

At least two people were found dead after being swept away by the floods, which began Thursday evening, the agency said in a statement. **AP**

Greek FM: Turkey's moves to ease tensions 'unconvincing'

AP ■ NICOSIA (CYPRUS)

Turkey's recent moves to de-escalate a clash with Greece and Cyprus over east Mediterranean energy reserves are "unconvincing" and European Union leaders need to take action that will prompt Ankara to heed international law, Greece's foreign minister said on Friday.

Nikos Dendias said Turkey opted not to seize an opportunity that European Union leaders offered it in October to ease tensions in the region so that the 27-member bloc could start reshaping its fraught relations with Ankara.

Turkey last week ordered the research vessel Oruc Reis

back to port after completing what it said was seismic research in east Mediterranean waters.

The warship-escorted vessel's activities in waters where Greece asserts jurisdiction prompted a military build-up between the two neighbors and nominal NATO allies.

Greece countered by also sending its warships, and both countries conducted military exercises to assert their claims. NATO stepped in to prevent a potential armed conflict.

But Dendias said the ship's return to port wasn't enough. "Turkey's belated moves in recent days to supposedly de-escalate tensions are not convincing."

APPEAL FOR IDENTIFICATION

General public is hereby informed that an unidentified dead body of male **Name:** Unknown, **S/o:** Unknown, **R/o:** Unknown, **Age:** about 35 years, **Height:** 5' 7", **Complexion:** Wheatish, **Face:** Round, **Built:** Normal, **ID:** An old cut mark on forehead, **Wearing:** White colour Shirt with blue print and brown colour track suit and jeans pant, who was found in unconscious condition near Canteen at Gate no. 1, LNJP Hospital, he was shifted to LNJP Hospital, Delhi for treatment where he was declared dead during treatment by doctor. In this regard a case **DD No. 57 Dated 25.11.2020 has been registered at P.S. I.P. Estate, Delhi.** Any person having any information or clue about the deceased may kindly inform to the undersigned on the following address or telephone nos.



Sd/- SHO P.S. I.P. Estate, Delhi
DP/529/CD/2020 Tel.: 011-23370928, 23370999

The Executive Engineer, DWS Division, Ambassa, Dhalai, Tripura invites e-tender against press Nle-T No 105/EE/PWD(DWS)/AMB/2020-21 dated 30-11-2020 for (i) JJM/BADP/NITI-AYOG/NEC scheme in Dhalai District during the year 2020-21/SH: Drilling & Development of 10(ten) Nos. Deep Tube Wells at different places of Dhalai District with Contractor's direct rotary high power rig machine and other machineries and equipments including providing of ERW pipes, pea-gravels etc. for the year 2020-21(Gr.-I)

DNleT-14/CE/PWD(DWS)/2020-21 with Estimated cost: 3,57,90,746.00, Earnest Money: 3,57,907.00, Time of completion - 180 (One Hundred Eighty) days. Last date of bidding for bids 21-12-2020 upto 15.00 hrs (ii) JJM/BADP/NITI-AYOG/NEC scheme in Dhalai District during the year 2020-21/SH: Drilling & Development of 10(ten) Nos. Deep Tube Wells at different places of Dhalai District with Contractor's direct rotary high power rig machine and other machineries and equipments including providing of ERW pipes, pea-gravels etc. for the year 2020-21(Gr.-II)

DNleT-15/CE/PWD(DWS)/2020-21 with Estimated cost: 3,57,90,746.00, Earnest Money: 3,57,907.00; Time of completion - 180 (One Hundred Eighty) days. Last date of bidding for bids 21-12-2020 upto 15.00 hrs & (iii) JJM/BADP/NITI-AYOG/NEC scheme in Dhalai District during the year 2020-21/SH: Drilling & Development of 10(ten) Nos. Deep Tube Wells at different places of Dhalai District with Contractor's direct rotary high power rig machine and other machineries and equipments including providing of ERW pipes, pea-gravels etc. for the year 2020-21(Gr.-III)

DNleT-16/CE/PWD(DWS)/2020-21 with Estimated cost: 3,57,90,746.00, Earnest Money: 3,57,907.00, Time of completion - 180 (One Hundred Eighty) days. Last date of bidding for bids 21-12-2020 upto 15.00 hrs. For more details, please visit website-www.tripratenders.gov.in for query 9436355955/03826267230

Sd/- Executive Engineer DWS Division, Ambassa, Jawaharnagar, Dhalai, Tripura dt. 30-11-2020

NORTHERN RAILWAY TENDER NOTICE

The Dy. Chief Engineer/Const.-I, Northern Railway, State Entry Road, New Delhi for and on behalf of President of India invites open e-tender under Single Packet System for the under noted work:-

1. Name of work and location	Balance work of Additional holding line between Anand Vihar & Chandernagar station in c/w Development of new coaching terminal at Anand Vihar Railway Station (Phase-II) (Fourth call).
2. Completion period of the work	06 (Six) months from the date of issue of acceptance letter.
3. Approx. Cost of work	Rs. 58.25 Lakh (Rupees Fifty eight lakh & twenty five thousand only)
4. Earnest money amount (to be deposited Online)	Rs. 1,16,500.00 (Rupees One lakh sixteen thousand five hundred only)
5. Date, Time for submission of e-tender and opening of tender	Tenders may be uploaded upto 11.30 hrs. on 28.12.2020 on IREPS web site i.e. www.ireps.gov.in The bidders can only participate in the e-tender, the tender will be opened at 11.30 hrs. on 28.12.2020
6. Detailed Tender Notice & Tender Document	The detailed e-tender notice is available on Northern Railway web site i.e. www.indianrailways.gov.in Above tenders document will be available on IREPS web site i.e. www.ireps.gov.in from 07.12.2020 to 28.12.2020. All other terms and conditions in respect of above tenders are given in tender document. The detailed tender notice also can be seen on the Notice Board of the above office.

No. 220-Acs/11/166/Holding Line Date: 04.12.2020 2715/20
SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

PROCLAMATION REQUIRING THE APPEARANCE OF ACCUSED PERSON (See Section 82 Cr.PC)

Whereas complaint has been made before me that **Smt. Santi Devi W/o Sh. Shyam Lal R/o B-1233, J.J. Colony, Sawda, Delhi** has committed (or is suspected to have committed) the offence in case **FIR No. 709/20 u/s 420/120-B IPC P.S. Nihal Vihar, Delhi** and it has been returned to a warrant of arrest thereupon issued that the said accused **Smt. Santi Devi** cannot be found and whereas it has been shown to my satisfaction that the said accused **Smt. Santi Devi** has absconded (or is concealing herself to avoid the service of the said warrant).

Proclamation is hereby made that the said accused **Smt. Santi Devi of FIR No. 709/20 u/s 420/120-B IPC P.S. Nihal Vihar, Delhi** is required to appear before this Court to answer the said complaint on or before **05.01.2021**.

By Order, **Sh. Pankaj Arora Metropolitan Magistrate, Room No. 292 2nd Floor, Tis Hazari Court, Delhi**

SEARCH OF MISSING

General public is hereby informed that one boy, (depicted in the photo), **Name:** Arjun, **S/o:** Nari **R/o:** Vill- Devrani, PS Wile Chauki, Dist-Bati Nepal, **Age:** 14 years (Approximately), has been missing from Child Welfare Committee, Palika Dham, Gole Market since 11.03.2019 at about 2:00 P.M. regard **FIR No. 26/19, u/s 363 IPC, Dated 11.03.2019, has been lodged at P.S. Arjun Mandir Marg, New Delhi.** His physical description is as under:



Height: 4'2" Feet, **Complexion:** Fair, **Face:** Wide (Nepali), **Physique/Built:** Normal, Hair: Black Normal, **Clothing:** Black colour Jacket, White Colour Jeans and Black Shoes in feet.

Any person is having any information/clue about this missing boy, may inform SHO, Mandir Marg, New Delhi at E-mail: cic@cbi.gov.nic.in or website : <http://cbi.nic.in> Tele No. : 011-24368638 or 24368641

S.H.O P.S. Mandir Marg, New Delhi
DP/160/NDD/2020. Ph.: 011-23364100, 23366730, 8750870522

APPEAL FOR IDENTIFICATION

General public is hereby informed that a person **Name:** Dharamvir, **S/o** Shri Ram, **R/o** Patri, in front of Delhi Public Library, Chandani Chowk, Delhi, **Age:** about 30 years, **Height:** 5'2", **Face:** Long, **Complexion :** Shallow, **Built :** Thin, **Wearing:** Blue colour juroy, Blue colour Checkdar shirt and Blue colour jeans was admitted at Aruna Asaf Ali Hospital, Delhi on 05.11.2020. He was shifted in COVID ward of LNJP Hospital, Delhi where during treatment doctor declared him dead on 30.11.2020. In this regard a case vide DD No. 116A dated 05.11.2020 has been lodged at Police Station Kotwali, Delhi. The dead body has been preserved in GTB Hospital Mortuary, Delhi.

Any person having any information or clue about this dead person may kindly inform to the following:-
SHO : P.S. Kotwali, Delhi North Distt., Delhi
DP/776/N/2020 Tel. No. 011-23953442, 23977100

S.H.O P.S. Kotwali, Delhi
DP/776/N/2020 Tel. No. 011-23953442, 23977100

पंचायतीराज निदेशालय, उत्तराखण्ड, देहरादून
संख्या : 1669/पं-2/लेखा/विज्ञाप/2020-21 दिनांक 04 दिसम्बर, 2020
ई-निविदा आमंत्रण
निदेशालय पंचायती राज, सहस्त्रधारा रोड, देहरादून भवन में Housekeeping/ Cleaning/ Sweeping Service हेतु सेवा प्रदाता के चयनार्थ पत्र संख्या : 1553/पं-2/लेखा/विज्ञाप/2020-21 दिनांक 18 नवम्बर, 2020 द्वारा आमंत्रित ई-निविदा अपरिहार्य परिस्थितियों में निरस्त करते हुए ई-पुनर्निविदा आमंत्रित की जाती है। ई-निविदा दिनांक 05 दिसम्बर, 2020 से वेबसाइट <https://www.uktenders.gov.in> पर उपलब्ध होगा।
भविष्य में इस निविदा से सम्बन्धित कोई भी विवरण/शुद्धिपत्र मात्र उक्त वेबसाइट पर ही प्रसारित किया जायेगा।
निदेशक, पंचायतीराज

RBI holds interest rates; projects GDP growth returning to positive territory

Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Friday left interest rates unchanged for the third straight time amid persistently high inflation and said the economy was recuperating fast and would return to positive growth in the current quarter itself.

The MPC "decided to continue with the accommodative stance of monetary policy as long as necessary — at least through the current financial year and into the next year," Governor Shaktikanta Das said.

The central bank's stance is "to revive growth on a durable basis, and mitigate the impact of COVID-19 while ensuring that inflation remains within the target going forward," he added.

India entered a technical recession last week — it was the first time in decades that Asia's third-largest economy saw two consecutive quarters of contraction.

RBI ensures benign rate of interest, ample liquidity to support growth amid high inflation: Experts

24x7 RTGS from Dec 14; ₹5,000 new limit for contactless card transactions

In a bid to give a push to digital payments, the Reserve Bank on Friday announced a slew of measures including enhancing the limit for contactless card transactions to ₹ 5,000 and making RTGS transaction facility available round the clock from December 14.

Policy Committee. Now the central bank has issued circulars notifying the announcements.

increase the limit for contactless card transactions to Rs 5,000 from Rs 2,000 at Point of Sale (PoS) terminals from January 1, 2021 in view of the COVID-19 pandemic and feedback from stakeholders.

Govt procures 330 lakh tonnes kharif paddy so far at MSP for ₹62,278 cr

Paddy procurement in the ongoing kharif marketing season at MSP has so far increased by 20 per cent to nearly 330 lakh tonnes, valued at Rs 62,278.61 crore.

Chandigarh, Jammu & Kashmir, Kerala, Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh, Odisha, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Bihar.

Need to maintain confidence in digital banking led to action against HDFC Bank: Das

The need to maintain people's confidence in digital banking resulted in the action against HDFC Bank for service outages, RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das said on Friday.

PNB MD-CEO Mallikarjuna Rao praises RBI Monetary Policy

In line with the market expectations, RBI has kept the Repo Rate unchanged. The accommodative stance has been maintained into the next financial year in order to ensure durable economic growth.

Shantanu Narayen, Ajay Banga named among Fortune Businessperson of the Year 2020

Adobe CEO Shantanu Narayen and Mastercard CEO Ajay Banga have been named by Fortune among the Businessperson of the Year 2020, a list topped by Tesla CEO Elon Musk.

"Adobe has benefited from growth in its digital media segment, its largest division, in particular, with demand rising for its subscription-based suite of tools for designing and publishing content and software for document creation and electronic signatures," Fortune said.

Fuel supply by Coal India to power sector drops 7% in Apr-Oct

The despatch of coal by CIL to the power sector declined 6.6 per cent to 236.97 million tonne (MT) in April-October period of the ongoing fiscal.

Initial response looks 'positive' for PMC Bank resolution, says RBI Guv

Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Governor Shaktikanta Das on Friday said the response from potential investors for reconstruction of crisis-ridden Punjab and Maharashtra Co-operative Bank looks "positive" so far.

The last date for submission of EoI by potential investors is December 15, he said, adding "let us see what is the response and after that we can take a view on this".

Flipkart launches '2GUD Local' to digitise offline retailers

Bengaluru: Flipkart's independent value-driven platform, 2GUD on Friday launched 2GUD Local to connect popular offline retailers scattered across the country with online shoppers.

Diesel crosses ₹73-mark, petrol price nears ₹83 in Delhi

Diesel price on Friday crossed ₹73 a litre mark in Delhi and petrol rate neared Rs 83 after 12th increase in the last fortnight.

₹82.66. Diesel rate went up from ₹72.84 to ₹73.07 per litre. This is the 12th increase in rates since November 20 when oil companies resumed daily price revision after a nearly two-month hiatus.

NORTHERN RAILWAY TENDER NOTICE (Through e-tendering) Dated: 03.12.2020

PUBLIC NOTICE Notice is hereby given to the General public that Mr. Shivam Singh is joint owner of Property bearing No. 81, 360.65 sq. mtrs. out of Khassa No. 212.

PUBLIC NOTICE Notice is hereby given to the General public that Mr. Vinod Kumar, Mrs. Seema and Mrs. Manju Verma are the joint owners of Residential Property bearing No. 5, area measuring 535 sq. Yds., in Block C.

CANCELLATION OF TRAINS It is notified for the information of passengers that the services of following Special trains will be discontinued due to operational reasons from the dates shown against each:-

WESTERN RAILWAY E-TENDER FOR SUPPLY & ALLIED WORK OF VIDEO SURVEILLANCE SYSTEM

BSES Yamuna Power Limited, New Delhi ... A joint venture with Govt. of NCT of Delhi TENDER NOTICE Date: 05.12.2020

ZEL JEWELLERS LIMITED Regd. Office: E-5, South Extension, Part - II, New Delhi-110 049

PARADIP PORT TRUST INTERVIEW Applications are invited from Indian Nationals for filling up five General Duty Medical Officers on Contractual basis in Paradip Port Trust.

RAJASTHAN STATE ROAD TRANSPORT CORPORATION, JAIPUR E-BID NOTICE निगम की नकारा वाहानों एवं स्कूप का ई-ऑक्शन वेब-साइट

BEFORE DEBTS RECOVERY TRIBUNAL - II, DELHI 4TH FLOOR, JEEVAN TARA BUILDING, PARLIAMENT STREET, NEW DELHI: 110 001

SHORT CIRCUITS

PREITY ZINTA

I'm loving getting back to gardening and being one with nature. It's my way of staying positive, appreciating the simpler things in life and connecting with the earth because when life gives you lemons, it's time to make lemonade and lemon pickle. I'm sure my mum will be very proud of me when she watches me growing.



KIRTI KULHARI

Making the first move in life might seem like climbing a mountain, especially when we're younger and get to know ourself and the world. I know the thought of being the first one to express yourself can be daunting. As a teenager, I lacked self-confidence and self-esteem, and always wondered if I could make the first move.



NAMIT DAS

This song is an answer to the horrific incidents of crimes against women these days. Huge props to Slow Cheeta for writing and composing the song so beautifully. *Aankhon Ka Tara* is all heart and I dedicate it to all the women, who are trying their best to be heard. This song is a reminder of the power of music.



RANI MUKERJI

I learnt a lot about humanity by doing sensitive films like *Black* and *Hichki*. They contributed in making me a better human. I'm fortunate that I did them and became a part of beautiful cinematic visions of Sanjay Leela Bhansali and Siddharth P. Malhotra. I hope these films managed to spark the right conversations in society.

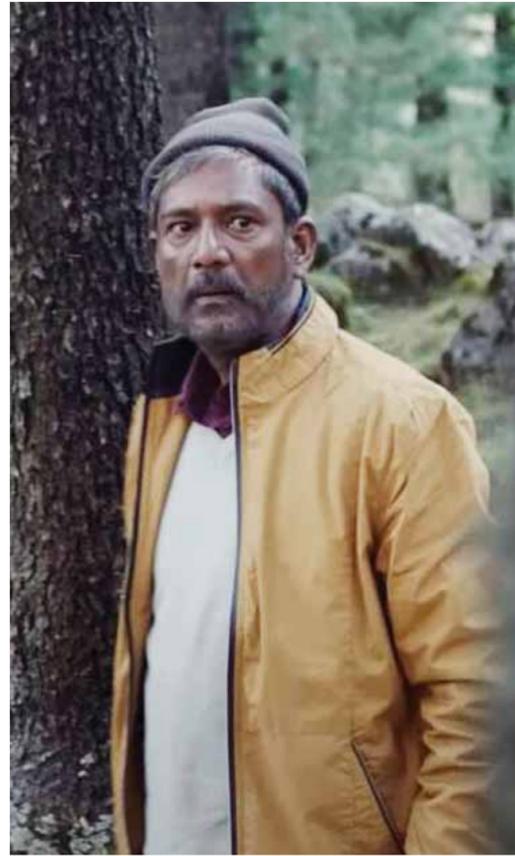
CHRISSEY TEIGEN

To me, the most embarrassing thing in the entire world, as in when I would want to melt into a puddle and down a drain into the ocean and then boiled into steam and blown into the atmosphere, is when I call someone by the wrong name.



ENCOUNTER 45 MINUTES

A MAN OF CHOICES



Actor ADIL HUSSAIN is unapologetic in his approach. His roles should resonate with his inner core. They should be intriguing. He tells CHAHAK MITTAL that his character in the psycho-horror drama, *Nirvana Inn*, is one such as it blurs the line between realism and mystery

So what made you say yes to the role?" I ask actor Adil Hussain. When he questions, "Which role?" from the other end of the phone, I confirm, "*Nirvana Inn*." I soon realise how the actor has been riding high on the success and proud win of his web series, *Delhi Crime*, at the Emmys that he almost forgets his other projects. He laughs and clarifies, "Actually, these days, I keep forgetting what's the call for as it could also be for *Delhi Crime*."

Well, the series has been a very "special" project for Hussain and he credits it all to its writer-director, Richie Mehta. He adds, "Richie is a dedicated art lover. I don't know anybody else who could have done such a great artistic job. He has done justice to the issue by portraying it the right way. It's amazing how the series doesn't show any abuse, violence or brutality and yet manages to shed light so beautifully on such a sensitive issue. It's difficult to do what he did. It took him four years to complete his research. I haven't seen any series in the country so far which has this level of beauty and reality at the same time, and also an artistic rigour to create something like this."

After a moment of pause, he returns to answer my previous question about his forthcoming psycho-horror drama, *Nirvana Inn*, which for him is another

"astounding project." He says, "It is an intelligent film and my character is crafted quite well. I have come across very few Indian films, which have treated the genre with so much suspense and aesthetics of arts. Usually, a violent and brutal side is lent to such films but I found this quite intriguing and real. It is not just horror, it's more of a character study in a slow narrative that blurs the line between realism and mystery."

Hussain believes that when it comes to horror, the genre has not been very well-experimented or explored in mainstream Indian cinema. Is there a specific reason why it lags behind? He says, "I'd say that it's very difficult to write good scripts. In the Indian filmmaking culture, we haven't been giving much space, time, energy, resources and money into writing. Very rarely, I come across a brilliantly-written script which is at par with the level of Hollywood or the films from the Eastern part of the country. I am not even comparing those scripts to the likes of Satyajit Ray. However, I was surprised how a horror genre script like *Nirvana Inn* would find me, which is really that good that it's acceptable to my kind of aesthetics."

The film, shot in Manali, Majuli (Assam) and Chennai, revolves around the life and personal encounters of Jogiraj

'WHEN YOU SHOOT FOR A FILM, YOU REALLY DON'T KNOW WHAT'S GOING TO HAPPEN. A SCRIPT IS CONSTANTLY EVOLVING. WRITTEN WORDS MIGHT CREATE SOME VISUALS IN YOUR MIND BUT THEY WILL BE DIFFERENT THAN WHAT IS ACTUALLY CREATED. WHEN YOU EVENTUALLY SEE THE FILM, YOU REALISE HOW THE CINEMATOGRAPHY, THE BACKGROUND, THE SET AND EVEN THE CHARACTERS TURN OUT TO BE'



(played by Hussain), a boatman who becomes the caretaker of a mysterious Himalayan resort after a suicide attempt. While the synopsis might be perplexing, the film's trailer is as intriguing and Hussain's description of the mystery behind it makes one even more curious to watch it. He tells us that "guilt" is the underlying theme of the film. "That feeling is not easy to play around with but the intensity of guilt in a person has been dealt with in a wonderful way in this film. The plot mixes nightmares with the reality and so, the audience really doesn't know what

is real and what is not. I have never played such an intense role," he adds.

Well, talking about roles, Indian cinema has certainly seen characters evolving. There's a surge of grey roles now as actors don't like to keep them in a box. Now, roles are more layered, etched and life-like. For Hussain, a role should speak of something he resonates with. "I look at a role fundamentally, what does it offer as a character — is it black-and-white, layered or more grey? Does it create empathy in me even while I'm portraying a dark-shaded character? Do I feel empathy for a dark person? How well is it written craftwise? Is the director good enough? Jogi, I'd say, is very unpredictable and grey," he says.

The actor earlier revealed that he himself was "terrified" at the end of it. But why? He points towards the difference between a script and the cinematography. "When you shoot for a film, you really don't know what's going to happen. A script is constantly evolving. Written words might create some visuals in your mind but they will be different than what is actually created. When you eventually see the film, you realise how the cinematography, the background, the set and even the characters turn out to be — totally different than you'd imagined. You feel, 'Oh, this is what was going on!' And hence,

I was blown after watching it." When I try to get deeper into the details, he laughs and keeps me from bringing the suspense out.

The film will have its digital world premiere on a new, pay-per-view OTT platform, Cinemapreneur, for 99 hours from December 11. Hussain talks about how it is different from the other OTTs and has the potential of giving a cinema-like experience post-COVID. "The lockdown shut cinema halls and the subscriptions for OTT platforms like Netflix, Amazon, Hotstar, etc, surged. However, there, one needs to subscribe and pay a monthly charge. Here, it's quite similar to going to a cinema hall and buying a ticket for the film you want to watch."

Nirvana Inn, which also stars Sandhya Mridul and Rajshree Deshpande in leading roles, became the only Indian film selected for the Asian Market Project (AMP) in Busan and was awarded the Asian Cinema Fund. It also had its world premiere at the 24th Busan International Film Festival 2019. Getting global recognition is huge for any actor. And Hussain believes that one should take it "with humility and work harder to keep doing better," he says as he signs off, preparing for his next morning flight to the UK to shoot for his another brilliant project, *Footprints On Water*.

READING LIST

A strange story

Author DEEPA ANAPPARA's *Djinn Patrol on the Purple Line* is a quick read but haunts the readers for a long time, says KAVITHA MURALI



on the periphery of the highway, near the high rise, as far as the central railway station even. The reader roots for the kids, even though it

sounds childish. Perhaps, they invoke memories of the 3 *Investigators* and *Famous Five*, if we could only have some hot scones

and picnic baskets to go with it. But, a sharp rap on the proverbial knuckle brings one back to the real world, an unfair one that values slum children many notches lower than the other children because, aren't they children of the slums, one of many disposables?

Deepa has built a book that can be read quick enough but will haunt the readers for a long time to come.

FILM TALKIES 15 MINUTES

Arjun gears up for next

Nominated at the International Emmy Awards this year, actor Arjun Mathur has earned himself a global stardom. His evolution as an actor has only been inspiring and hints on his talent. His webshow, *Made in Heaven* was a breakthrough and the actor received immense critical acclaim for his role of a gay man. He was last seen in *The Gone Game*, a suspense thriller series, which impressively was set, conceived, shot and released during the lockdown.

Currently, when Mathur is getting showered with love from fans all across the globe, he has some exciting news about the star. The actor is now gearing up for his next film titled *Silence* which is touted to be a murder mystery. What's exciting is that Arjun will begin shooting for it this month itself, December 12 onwards.

Written and directed by Aban Bharucha Deohans, the suspense thriller is produced by Kiran Deohans under the Candid Creations banner. Premiering on ZEE5, the film features Mathur alongside talented Manoj Bajpayee. We hear that Arjun is extremely thrilled to work with Manoj, which is why he was keen to be a part of this project.

The film also features Prachi Desai, Sahil Vaid, Vaquar Sheikh and Shishir Sharma in interesting roles.



JUKEBOX 45 MINUTES

CELEB TALK 15 MINUTES

THE POWER OF LOVE

Singer NIKHITA GANDHI says that her new song, *Khud Ko Hi Paake*, is a poetic representation of self-discovery and embodies the message that the only truth in life is about who you are and letting yourself be. By TEAM VIVA



tivity crisis. The idea is to convey that we all have our fair share of beauty and pain in different magnitudes and none of us can escape it. The song is an expression of self-acceptance and embodies the message that the only truth in life is about who you are and letting yourself be that person. It is a manifestation of loving oneself and accepting love in all its forms.

You feature in the music video as well. What kind of preparations went behind the making of it?

When I heard the vision MTV Beats had for the video, I fell in love with it instantly. It's the story of a couple in love where our protagonist, played by Ivanka Das, is dealing with issues related to his sexuality. It progresses around how the protagonist's wife supports him through the transition and instills the confidence to love "yourself" first irrespective of how you identify "yourself"; all this while dealing with a pregnancy and the traditional shift of her family life because of her husband's transition. It's a touching story of a couple who redefine love and acceptance.

Since Ivanka is a LGBTQ+ activist and a voice from the community, I was so happy to see her involvement and the positive reception of her feedback. The entire process has been extraordinary and it's one project I'll always be extremely proud to be associated with.

How do you think music as a medium helps in addressing some of the important social issues in the country?

I feel that art has always been a reflection, and in a lot of cases, a mirror to the society and the lives of people around you. For me, music is a medium of self-expression rather than just being a genre. Music has the magic to create a sense of community, it has the power to bring people closer and will always be the universal language of love, unity and peace.

It has been two years to the verdict on Section 377, how do you think our society has progressed? Is there still a long way to go?

Even though that was one of the most historic days I have had the pleasure to witness, I feel there is still a long road we have to cover. Our society has progressed and we are more vocal about equality for everyone but there is a dark shadow lingering behind the rainbow. I have so many friends and acquaintances who are still afraid of the social stigma attached to it and are living their lives in fear of being outed. It's the most suffocating thing to happen to anyone. It will take time but taking that first step is important in a journey. Since we have already hit a milestone, the destination won't be that far.

What are your forthcoming projects?

My debut song as a composer came out last week so the last couple of days have been really interesting. I composed a song for Netflix's *Mismatched* and even had the pleasure of singing a song in the album. My first international collaboration with the US-based artist, Rajiv Dhall, came out just a week before we released *Khud Ko Hi Paake*. I am also working on a couple of singles and collaborations with some amazing artists and can't wait to make more music.



Parenthood changed me: Vyas

Actor Sumeet Vyas feels that in our patriarchal society, we do not talk about the emotional and vulnerable side of a man. He says fatherhood has changed him emotionally. Vyas, who says he is emotionally a different person after the birth of his son Ved, also quipped how International Men's Day is quite a forgotten affair as opposed to International Women's Day.



"I think when it comes to men, living in a patriarchal society, we do not show and extensively talk about our emotional side. Being modern men of progressive society who support gender equality, we tend to overthink and complicate certain things. But I think our next generation will not go through this," the actor said.

He opened up about his son, who was born on June 3, to establish his context, "He is just six months old but I feel an emotional shift happened within me because of parenthood. There is no doubt that no one in the world can compare the physical and emotional effort that a mother offers to a child, she is the birth-giver and that is incomparable. We always talk about how motherhood changes a woman, which it surely does. But I am saying, fatherhood also changes a man!"

"Everything that I do, my child comes first now. I was thinking of investing in an expensive cycle before my child was born, now I am so obsessed with my son that I am checking out toys and thinking which toy cycle is more cool!" shared the actor. He notes that we constantly talk of gender equality but days dedicated to women and men are not celebrated in the same manner.

"It is funny, we do not even remember when the International Men's Day is — which was on November 19! It is almost ignorable! However, I just want to mention how at times I overthink or become over-conscious, being a man in a patriarchal society. See, when my partner comes home after a long day and asks for a coffee, I happily prepare it for her because that is natural, but when I ask for the same, the thought crosses my mind, 'am I doing it out of the habit that woman should serve the coffee, like the way my grandfathers' generation used to think?'" Vyas said. "I do not want to come under that category but, you see, the same action can be progressive for one person and regressive for the other one. Maybe I am overthinking but it is a real thing. This bell rings in our head at times, and that is when you think, coffee machine *zindabad!*" he signed off with a laugh.

—IANS

Tell us about your collaboration for MTV Beats Love Duet, a gender atypical album. How has the experience been?

Honestly, the experience has been phenomenal. I am so grateful that the new song, *Khud Ko Hi Paake*, is in sync with the vision of the album. *Love Duet* has been a path-breaking initiative in normalising conversations around love that goes beyond gender stereotypes. It has given a platform to some of the greatest artists from the LGBTQ+ community to showcase their talent and make their voices heard. I am glad that I got the chance to make a tiny contribution in this journey. It's a coincidence that

this song has the same underlining message that the album wants to convey and that's what I truly love about this collaboration! I am thrilled to play a supporting character in the music video, telling a touching story of two people who are in love but have been living a closeted life for a long time. I am sure it will be loved by the masses and also help influence perceptions in some way or other.

What was the idea behind the song, *Khud Ko Hi Paake* and how do you think it stands out from other mainstream songs?

It is a song I composed keeping in mind the internal struggles of someone facing an iden-

'ART HAS ALWAYS BEEN A REFLECTION, AND IN A LOT OF CASES, A MIRROR TO THE SOCIETY. FOR ME, MUSIC IS A MEDIUM OF SELF-EXPRESSION RATHER THAN JUST BEING A GENRE'

ART AND CULTURE 30 MINUTES

A tantalising exhibition on *Tantra*, a greatly misunderstood word that has been tossed into the realms of sexual ardour by the West, but the British Museum creates an epic sojourn in art history by bringing together sculptures, prints and paintings as well as a stunning recreation of the famous Chausathi Jogini Mandir in Hirapur just outside Bhubaneswar.

HINDUISM AND BUDDHISM

According to the curator Immos Ramos, from its inception to the present day, *Tantra* has challenged religious, cultural and political norms around the world. A philosophy that emerged in India around the sixth century, *Tantra* has been linked to successive waves of revolutionary thought from its early transformation of Hinduism and Buddhism to the Indian fight for independence and the rise of 1960s counterculture.

Centering on the power of divine feminine energy, *Tantra* inspired the dramatic rise of goddess worship in medieval India and continues to influence contemporary feminist thought and artistic practice. Presenting masterpieces of sculpture, painting, prints and ritual objects from India, Tibet and around the world, this exhibition offers new insights into a philosophy that has captured our imagination for more than a millennium.

MANUSCRIPTS AND MEMENTOES

History and the love for collectibles combine when you run your eyes through the objects on display — four of the earliest *Tantra* manuscripts, made in Nepal around the 12th century and loaned by Cambridge University Library are stunning. The curator highlights the importance of divine feminine power and challenges the perception of womanhood as passive and docile. But there is

For the love of history

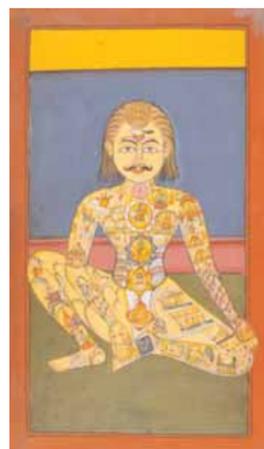
Presenting masterpieces of sculpture, painting, prints and ritual objects from India, Tibet and around the world, an exhibition on *Tantra* offers new insights into an age-old philosophical theory, says UMA NAIR

more to showing fearsome goddesses trampling over fragile men. Intoxicating perhaps is the 9th-century sandstone temple relief from Madhya Pradesh depicting the ferocious goddess Chamunda dancing on a corpse. Historians have noted that in the 19th century, *Tantra* became a tool for Indian revolutionaries fighting the British colonial rule with goddesses such as Kali, becoming the symbol of independence.

Among over 100 objects, including the masterpieces of sculptures, paintings, prints and ritual objects, depicting the history and evolution of *tantric* philosophy since AD 500 — the works of Indian artists are important.

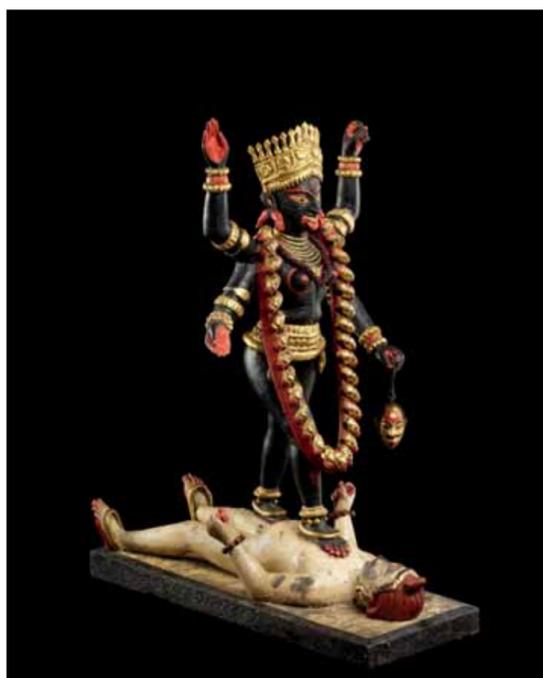
GHULAM RASOOL, MAHIRWAN AND BIREN DE

Among Indian practitioners of *Tantra* moving into contemporary fields of Neo *Tantra* were Ghulam Rasool Santosh. He worked within the *Purusha Prakriti* principle. His painting has an equivocal tenor because it combines yogic powers of transcendental meditation with the form. The philosophy is what ignites our awareness and awakens us. *Purusha* is the soul, the self, pure consciousness, and the only source of consciousness. The word literally means "man." *Prakriti* is that which is created. It is nature in all her aspects. *Prakriti* literally means "creatix," the female creative energy. Santosh uses this in his human



form to bring alive the energy principle, which holds that *purusha* is infinite, eternal, omniscient, unchanging, and unchangeable. But *Prakriti* is what holds materiality and dynamism, constantly changing and evolving.

Biren De's luminous penumbra hails the concentration of the *chakra*, it is his exploration into higher realms that evokes many a moment of deeper intensities. Mahirwan Mamtani, another master in the field of *Tantra*, known for his magnificent human faces, is not about the lower *chakra*, it is the union of a higher self. Mamtani's work in the collection of the



'Curator Immos Ramos highlights the importance of divine feminine power and challenges the perception of womanhood as passive and docile'



British Museum is a hybrid creation with an inner rootedness.

History states the development of *Tantra* in medieval India coincided with the rise of many new kingdoms across the subcontinent after the breakdown of two major dynasties, the Guptas in the North and the Vakatakas in the Southeast. Along with political precariousness, there was a great flourishing of the arts. Rulers were drawn to *Tantra's* promise of power and public temples often incorporated *Tantric* deities as guardians.

BHARTI KHER'S HEADLESS SCULPTURE

Tops among contemporary practitioners is Bharti Kher's headless sitting on her haunches figure with a tea and saucer in one hand and a skull in the other. While the benevolent slept, 2008 stirs you out of your skin. The power and the paths both intermingle to ask you uncomfortable questions. This is not a pretty woman, this is a woman of strength. Her hands holding two objects, that suggest a slow genes, is a cultural interpretation that weaves Hindu mythology, *tantric* painting and found objects together in a sweeping ode to selfhood. This sculpture with those straw-like long projections slice through your senses with fine-tuned resonance. Kher is telling us that there is a collective need for answers following further questions. Kher also points to angular junctures of mismatched belief systems as she pairs multiple compositions with more materially complex, confrontational sculptures. This sculpture fits into the modern mould of women artists, who create after deep rumination.

Ramos says *Tantra* has a continuing relevance. "Gender, female power, gender fluidity, religious pluralism, mindfulness, well-being... These are all topics that are very much part of contemporary discourse."

SUTAPA BISWAS

She excels and extols with her mesmeric work. Housewives with Steak-knives 1985. This image has a stark but poetic resonance, concerned with the relationship between art and politics, and questions of subjectivity in relation to identity, gender and race. She draws on temporal relationships between myth and reality, as spatial opposites, she questions the concept of time itself, and what this constitutes in relation to histories and to the everyday idiom of a woman in society.

Jadeja, Chahal checkmate Oz



Yuzvendra Chahal celebrates with Indian skipper Virat Kohli after he dismisses Aaron Finch during run-chase. BCCI/Twitter

Jaddu got a knock on the side of the head. He was feeling dizzy, he still is. Sometimes concussion subs work, sometimes they don't. We were lucky to have a like-for-like.

VIRAT KOHLI

ON RAVINDRA JADEJA'S CONCUSSION SITUATION

Their doctor had ruled Jadeja out due to concussion. You can't be challenging a medical expert's opinion.

AARON FINCH

WHEN ASKED ABOUT THE CONCUSSION SUBSTITUTE

A decision was taken that there was a concussion and we are fine with that. But was there a like for like replacement? Jadeja was more of an all-rounder, and he had done his batting. Chahal is a bowler.

MOISES HENRIQUES

ON INDIA'S CHOICE OF OPTING CHahal AS JADEJA'S CONCUSSION SUBSTITUTE

PTI ■ CANBERRA

Yuzvendra Chahal turned out to be the perfect concussion substitute after an injured Ravindra Jadeja did his part with the bat as the duo played their roles to perfection in India's impressive 11-run victory over Australia in the first T20 International here at Manuka Oval on Friday.

While Jadeja smashed an unbeaten 44 off 23 balls to propel India to 161 for 7, his head injury turned out to be a blessing in disguise with India unleashing Chahal (3/25 in 4 overs) on an Australian side caught completely off-guard. The hosts could manage only 150 for 7 in 20 overs.

Credit was also due to the lion-hearted effort from debutant Thangarasu Natarajan (3/30) and off-spinner Washington Sundar (0/16 in 4 overs), who bowled well in Powerplay.

ICC match referee David Boon allowed the visitors a "like for like" replacement, as mandated by the rules, for Jadeja in Chahal even though home team coach Justin Langer looked visibly angry.

And to make matters worse, Chahal dismissed two form men — Aaron Finch (35) and Steve Smith (12) — in his first two overs to turn the game on its head. At the end of it all, he also scooped the man of the match honours for his superb effort.

The Australians were not prepared for Chahal, who bowled way better in his most preferred format, varying the pace of his deliveries and using the flight to good effect.

Natarajan, whose nerves had eased after a decent ODI debut, was right on the money and got one to straighten catching Glenn Maxwell plumb in front.

If that wasn't enough, Natarajan snuffed out a frustrated Darcy Short (34 off 38 balls) to make it 113 for 4 and India didn't have to look back from then on.

Earlier, vice-captain KL Rahul continued his impressive run in the shortest format with yet another fifty but it took Jadeja's brilliant back-end

flourish to take India to a fighting total.

The Indian vice-captain hit 51 off 40 balls but leg-spinner Adam Zampa (1/20 in 4 overs) and all-rounder Moises Henriques (3/22 in 4 overs) were brilliant between overs 11th and 15th, which shifted the momentum in favour of the home team till Jadeja came into play with a 44 not out off 23 balls.

During 11th and 15th over, India scored 22 runs and lost three wickets in Sanju Samson (23 off 15 balls), Manish Pandey (2 off 8 balls) and Rahul.

However, Jadeja (five fours and a six), who suffered from hamstring trouble, launched into Josh Hazlewood and Mitchell Starc in the final two overs that yielded 34 runs taking India to a par-score at the Manuka Oval.

Shardul replaces Jadeja in T20 team

CANBERRA: Ravindra Jadeja was on Friday ruled out of the remaining two T20 Internationals against Australia after he suffered concussion during the first match of the series, the BCCI said.

Right-arm pacer Shardul Thakur was named as Jadeja's replacement.

"He (Jadeja) will not take any further part in the ongoing T20I series. The All-India Senior Selection Committee has added Shardul Thakur to India's T20I squad," BCCI said in a statement.

The BCCI said Jadeja remains under observation and will be taken for further scans if required based on the assessment on Saturday morning.

"Ravindra Jadeja sustained a concussion after being hit on the left side of his forehead in the final over of the first innings of the first T20I against Australia in Canberra on 4th December 2020," the BCCI said. "The diagnosis was confirmed based on a clinical assessment in the dressing room during the innings break by the BCCI Medical Team," it added. PTI

Was Chahal a 'like-for-like' sub, questions Henriques

PTI ■ CANBERRA

Australia all-rounder Moises Henriques on Friday questioned whether Yuzvendra Chahal can be called a "like for like" concussion substitute for Ravindra Jadeja after the leg-spinner spun his web to take India to a 11-run victory.

"There was no doubt that Jadeja was hit on the helmet and there could have been a concussion. A decision was taken that there was a concussion and a replacement was made. We are not doubting that," Henriques said at the post-match conference.

"But was it a like-for-like replacement? That is the question. Jadeja was more of an all-rounder and he had done his batting. Chahal is a (pure) bowler," said the 33-year old who scored 30 and took three wickets for 22.

He, however, made it clear that he was neither questioning ICC's concussion replacement rule nor India's right to seek a replacement.

"ICC's rule is fine, sure there should be (concussion) replacement. We are not talk-



Indian physio attends Ravindra Jadeja after he suffers injury. AP

ing about the decision to make the replacement.

"Only thing we are saying is there should be a like-for-like replacement. That is the way to do going ahead, I think."

Henriques however chose to steer clear of debate surrounding how one reaches the conclusion about replacement.

"I don't know how the decision (to make replacement) was arrived, I am not involved in those things. There are doctors to do that and it's not our job to take those decisions," he said when asked whether there should be

more clarity in the replacement rule.

'READY ALL THE TIME'

Indian batsman Sanju Samson was all praise for Yuzvendra Chahal, who till the break didn't know that he was going to play such a big role in India's win.

"That is the standard that has been set by this team. The quality of players is so high that anytime you ask, they are ready. Chahal grabbed his chance and it was a great lesson for everyone that they need to be ready all the time."

We had no plans to play Yuzi: Kohli

PTI ■ CANBERRA

India captain Virat Kohli was quite pleased that the concussion substitute rule worked out well for his side even though there were no plans to play Yuzvendra Chahal, who proved to be a match-winner after replacing Ravindra Jadeja in the first T20I.

"There were no plans of having Yuzi (Chahal) in the game. Jaddu (Jadeja) got a knock on the side of the head and was a bit dizzy and still is," Kohli said in the post-match presentation.

"Concussion replacements are a strange thing, today it worked for us maybe another time he wouldn't have found a like-for-like," he



Hardik Pandya posts selfie with Indian teammates Yuzvendra Chahal, Ravindra Jadeja and T Natarajan after India's win in 1st T20 on Friday. @hardikpandya7

Kohli was full of praise for all his players but singled out Jadeja and Chahal for their

efforts. "He (Chahal) came in and bowled really well. The pitch offered him enough. Yuzi

showed character to squeeze the opponents," he said.

"In Australia, you need to play hard and show intensity till the end. He (Jadeja) batted beautifully in the last game. Natarajan looks like he can improve a lot. (Deepak) Chahal bowled well as well. Chahal got us back in the game. Hardik's catch was a game-changer as well."

Man-of-the-moment Chahal said having not made the original playing eleven, there was no pressure on him when he came on as a concussion substitute.

"There was no pressure for me when we were batting and then suddenly I got to know I was going to play. I have played so many games so I was mentally fit," he said.

Pucovski can't wait to take on Indian bowlers

PTI ■ SYDNEY

The hype around his potential Test debut against India has Will Pucovski more excited than intimidated and the rising Australian batsman cannot wait to take on the visiting bowlers after having watched them on TV "dominating around the world."

Led by pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah, India's much-vaunted bowling attack features Mohammed Shami, Umesh Yadav, Mohammed Siraj and Navdeep Saini. Ravindra Jadeja, Ravichandran Ashwin and Kuldeep Yadav are the three spin options.

"...It is pretty exciting. Obviously, just challenging yourself at the next level is pretty exciting in itself," Pucovski said in an online media interaction.

"You watch these boys on TV dominating around the world and sort of never think that could be me facing them one day. But it could potentially become a reality," the right-handed batsman added.

The 22-year-old might just



make the playing XI for the Tests starting December 17 as swash-buckling opener David Warner is recovering from a groin injury, which he sustained during the recently-concluded ODI series.

"I am probably as mentally prepared as I can be, it will just be if I do get the opportunity, just go out there, and as I said before just apply my processes, and the rest will take care of itself," Pucovski said.

Asked whether there is less pressure heading into Australia's tour game against India A given the injury situation in the senior team, Pucovski said he still has to perform to earn his place.

"...You always got an expectation or a will to perform, so that doesn't really change to me too much regardless of what is going on outside," he said.

He also believes that the upcoming four-Test series would be even more intense than the last series, which India won.

"I remember it being a very tense series, there seems to be a lot of momentum shifts, and obviously when two very good teams come up against each other, that seems to be the case," he said.

"So, I wouldn't expect anything different this summer, if anything, it will be even more intense."

Pucovski, who has amassed 1,720 runs from 22 first-class matches for Victoria, also said playing with the pink ball could be a bit different and he was excited to play the Day-Night Test in Adelaide if he got an opportunity.

Williamson's career-best 251 corners WI early

AFP ■ HAMILTON

New Zealand captain Kane Williamson hit the highest Test score of his career on Friday with a majestic 251 as the hosts posted an imposing 519 for seven declared on day two of the first Test against the West Indies at Seddon Park in Hamilton.

West Indies bowler Kemar Roach said Williamson's innings was one of the best he'd seen as the 30-year-old surpassed his previous record of 242 against Sri Lanka nearly six years ago.

In reply, the injury-hit West Indies were 49 without loss with John Campbell on 22 and Kraigg Brathwaite on 20 after cautiously negotiating the 26 overs to stumps.

After two months playing in the same Indian Premier League team (Sunrisers Hyderabad) as West Indies skipper Jason Holder, Williamson slipped seamlessly back into the strict demands of the red-ball game at Seddon

Park, his home ground. Thrust into the Test after just five overs, over the next 10 hours and 24 minutes he faced 412 deliveries, caressing the ball to all points as he picked the balls that needed to be played and rarely touched anything else.

Williamson's third double century, which included 34 fours and two sixes, extended his New Zealand record to 22 Test centuries, three more than teammate Ross Taylor.

"It wasn't really at the forefront of my mind," the master batsman said, when asked about achieving his highest Test score.

"You just want to keep going and try to get yourself and the team in a position of

strength, and getting to 240 the job wasn't done."

Roach praised Williamson's "fantastic" innings but said the West Indies remained confident.

"Kane's obviously the main person for them, and kudos to him, it was a fantastic innings, one of the best I've seen," Roach said.

"But, take away Kane's innings and we were in at the other batsmen and didn't let the other batsmen settle as long."

"To survive this evening definitely shows a lot of confidence in the team and we will take more confidence into day three."

The first signs that Williamson was thinking of declaring came when he sharply lifted the scoring rate after passing 200.

His next 51 came off 42 deliveries. In one Roach over he smacked two fours and a six before being given out on 222, caught behind, only to be recalled when replays showed the delivery was a no-ball.

It was Alzarri Joseph who finally removed Williamson when he mistimed a short delivery and was caught at mid-wicket by Roston Chase.

He walked off to a standing ovation and with the West Indies players rushing over to congratulate him.

Three overs later, once Kyle Jamieson reached his half-century, Williamson declared. The tall Jamieson, with his unbeaten 51, is proving a solid performer in his third Test outing and was the only other batsman to add significantly to the New Zealand total on day two.

SA-England game postponed

AFP ■ CAPE TOWN

The first one-day international between South Africa and England, scheduled to be played at Newlands in Cape Town on Friday, was postponed after a South African player tested positive for Covid-19.

Cricketer South Africa made the announcement just over an hour before the day-night match was due to start.

According to a statement from Cricket South Africa and the England and Wales Cricket Board, the unidentified South African player's positive status emerged from tests conducted after his team's final scheduled practice on Thursday.

The first match will now be a day-game in Paarl on Sunday, when the second match was scheduled.

The second match will be a day-night game at Newlands on Monday, with the series concluding as scheduled with another day-night match at Newlands on Wednesday.

AFP ■ LONDON

Premier League leaders Tottenham struggled to gain the draw they needed in Linz, finishing 3-3 on Thursday thanks to two penalties, to secure a place in the knockout rounds of the Europa League.

The result in Austria ensured that Antwerp will also advance from Group J.

Elsewhere, Braga, AC Milan, Lille, Villarreal, Dinamo Zagreb, Red Star Belgrade, Slavia Prague, Bayer Leverkusen, Rangers, Benfica, Granada and Eintracht Frankfurt ensured their places in the last 32 with one round of group games still to play.

They join Leicester, Arsenal, Hoffenheim and Roma who had already qualified.

For the first time in 270 days, fans were back inside a Premier League ground as Arsenal welcomed 2,000 supporters into the Emirates for Thursday's routine 4-1 Europa League win over Rapid Vienna.

The sparse crowd in a 60,000 capacity stadium were well distanced between two stands and in high spirits despite the Gunners' poor form of late in the English top-flight.

Arsenal welcome fans with win



Arsenal players celebrate in front of fans after win in Europa League match. AP

The result, extending Arsenal's perfect record in the tournament this season, ensured the Gunners will finish top of their group with second spot still up for grabs.

In Linz, the hosts dominated the first half but only scored once, through Peter Michorl. Spurs, who had not managed a shot on target, won a penalty for handball in added time. Gareth Bale converted for his 200th career goal.

Son Heung-min put Spurs ahead on the counter attack in the 56th minute.

With Linz still threatening, coach Jose Mourinho made a series of defensive substitutions.

Tottenham had three centre backs, three full backs and two defensive midfielders on the field by the 84th minute when Johannes Eggestein still found a huge hole and lashed in a shot that Joe Hart reached but could

not keep out.

Three minutes later, Spurs regained the lead. One of the two attacking players, Steven Bergwijn was tripped to earn a penalty and the other, Dele Alli, swept it home.

Spurs could not keep the lead. Young Frenchman Mamoudou Karamoko smashed in an equaliser from outside the box in added time.

The draw was enough to put Tottenham through and next week they will host Antwerp, who beat Ludogorets 3-1, with first place at stake.

In Group H, AC Milan fell two goals behind at home to eliminated Celtic but rallied to win 4-2 and advance.

Tom Rogic and Odsonne Edouard scored for the visitors in the first 14 minutes, but Hakan Calhanoglu and Samuel Castillejo responded with two quick goals midway through the half.

Jens Petter Hauger and Brahim Diaz, with a clever chip, struck in the second half.

Milan are second in the group, one point behind Lille who also came from behind to win at home. Burak Yilmaz came off the bench in the 77th minute with Lille losing to 10-man. The Turkey striker poked home the equaliser three minutes later and smashed in the winner four minutes after that.

Celtic's neighbours city Rangers, advanced with 3-2 home victory over Standard Liege. The Belgians, who need to win, took the lead twice in the first half, but James Tavernier hit a penalty just before half time. Scott Arfield won the game in the 65th minute, running onto a pull back to end a crisp move with a precise low drive.

The tightest group is F where Alkmaar fought back to draw 1-1 with Napoli and La Liga leaders Real Sociedad came from behind twice to draw at home with Rijeka, who picked up their first point. The Italians lead by two points from Sociedad and Alkmaar and host the Basques next week.

Mujeeb in hospital after +ve virus test

AP ■ GOLD COAST

Afghanistan cricketer and Brisbane Heat import Mujeeb Ur Rahman has been taken to a Queensland hospital after testing positive for Covid-19.

The 19-year-old spinner, the world's No 2 ranked T20I bowler, was in hotel quarantine on the Gold Coast south of Brisbane after arriving in Australia last week.

Mujeeb reported symptoms of the illness and has since been placed in the care of Queensland Health to complete his recovery.

The news comes a week out from the Heat's season opener against the Melbourne Stars in Canberra and means Mujeeb will almost certainly miss Brisbane's two matches in Australia's capital.

Queensland Cricket chief executive Terry Swenson said Mujeeb's welfare was the primary concern.

Babar, Misbah want NZ tour to continue

PTI ■ KARACHI

Pakistan captain Babar Azam and head coach Misbah-ul-Haq on Friday managed to convince the Pakistan Cricket Board to continue with the tour in New Zealand even as the PCB pondered over different options, including calling the squad back home, according to sources.

A well-placed source in the Board told PTI that PCB CEO Wasim Khan discussed various options with Babar and Misbah after the New Zealand Health Ministry denied the right to train while in managed isolation after eight members of the touring squad tested positive for Covid-19.

"Yes, PCB Chairman Ehsan Mani and Wasim were disappointed that the New Zealand Board and health ministry didn't uphold an understanding that the 44 members of the touring squad who had again tested negative for Covid-19 would be allowed to start training in isolation," the source said.

"Babar and Misbah assured Wasim that the players are managing and they would still have around nine to 10 days before they play the first T20 International against New Zealand," he said.