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WINDIES IN 2ND TEST

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URVASHI'S
2021 GOAL
IS SELF-LOVE
11 VIVACITY

Vaccination protocol out

Centre draws immunisation plan, max 200 people to get Covid-19 shots per 'session'; it will be similar to election process; 30 crore people to be immunised in 1st phase

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

As India gears up for Covid-19 vaccination drive, the Government has prepared an extensive immunisation plan according to which only 100 people per "session" are likely to be vaccinated against the virus and the process will be similar to the election process. The number of people per session may go up as high as 200 people if logistics allow on the days as fixed by the States and Union Territories, as per the "Covid-19 Vaccines Operational Guidelines" which was released by the Union Health Ministry recently. In the phase one of the vaccination drive, the Government plans to vaccinate nearly 30 crore people, including healthcare & frontline workers, people above 50 years of age and those under 50 with comorbidities.

"Anticipating that Covid-19 vaccine may soon be available, the Government is preparing for its introduction in the country so that it can be expeditiously rolled out when available. One of the milestones in this direction has been the constitution of a National Expert Group on Vaccine Administration for Covid-19 (NEGVAC). The NEGVAC guides on all aspects of Covid-19 vaccine introduction in India," the Ministry wrote in the 112 pages document, calling the conduct of the vaccination process (will be) similar to the election process.

Union Minister Prakash Javadekar while speaking at International Coronavirus Short Film Festival on Monday indicated that vaccine for the novel coronavirus will be soon available in India. "Coronavirus vaccines would be available in India soon. I urge everyone to not let their guard down before antibodies are created and second dose of the vaccine administered: Union Minister @Prakash Javadekar while speaking at International Coronavirus Short Film Festival," PIB tweeted.

Presently, popular vaccine candidates in line for Emergency Use Authorisation include Pfizer-BioNTech's vac-

cine, Astrazeneca and Oxford university developed and Serum Institute of India manufactured 'Covishield' and 'Covaxin' by Bharat Biotech Limited, raising hopes of vaccination at the earliest.

The document containing vaccination guidelines talks about aspects such as training vaccine workers and keeping logistics in place. The vaccines need cold storage units to keep them in usable condition. "One session for 100 beneficiaries. While most of the healthcare and frontline workers would be vaccinated at fixed session sites, vaccination of other high-risk population may require outreach session sites, and mobile sites and teams," the document states.

A vaccination team will comprise five members — the main officer with four aides. The officer can be a doctor, nurse, pharmacist or anyone legally qualified to give the injection. The second will security personnel to check user registration and guard the entry point at the vaccination session. The third officer will verify documents, while the fourth and fifth officers will be responsible for managing crowd and communication as directed by the Home Ministry. The Government is also gearing up with 28,947 cold chain points with 85,643 pieces of equipment across the country to store the vaccines.

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A framed notice is put in front of a shop selling confectionary and designer accessories in Dhamsala on Monday

104 test Covid-19 positive in IIT-Madras, institute closed

Chennai: The Indian Institute of Technology-Madras has been hit by Covid-19 with 104 people, a majority of them students, testing positive, Tamil Nadu Health Secretary said. Radhakrishnan said though the results showed a 20

per cent positivity rate, there was no need for concern.

A spokesperson for the institute said all departments and labs have been shut and only about 700 students, mostly research scholars were accommodated in nine hostels.

Covid-19 IN INDIA

TOTAL

CASES: 99,06,484

DEATHS: 1,43,746

RECOVERED: 94,21,795

ACTIVE: 3,38,376

STATES	TOTAL CASES	DEATHS	RECOVERED
Maharashtra	18,83,365	48,269	17,61,615
Karnataka	9,02,240	11,954	8,74,202
Andhra Pradesh	8,75,836	7,059	8,64,049
Tamil Nadu	8,00,029	11,909	7,78,081
Kerala	6,72,038	2,648	6,11,600
Delhi	6,08,830	10,074	5,83,509
Uttar Pradesh	5,66,728	8,083	5,39,727
West Bengal	5,23,629	9,100	4,93,145
Odisha	3,24,089	1,864	3,19,458
Rajasthan	2,92,539	2,555	2,73,784
Telangana	2,78,108	1,496	2,69,232
Chhattisgarh	2,57,020	3,097	2,34,853
Haryana	2,53,385	2,733	2,41,544
Bihar	2,43,673	1,325	2,37,372
Gujarat	2,28,803	4,182	2,11,703
Madhya Pradesh	2,24,636	3,412	2,08,421

Numbers surge, 2K women heading to Singhu Border

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

As talks with the Centre remained inconclusive, several developments took place vis-à-vis farmers' protest on Monday with leaders of around 32 farmer unions observing a day-long hunger strike from 8 am to 5 pm at Delhi's Singhu border to protest against the Centre's farm laws.

And as peasants claimed that they are set to intensify their protest further to press their demands, over 2,000 women from the families of protesting farmers at Singhu Border will join the ongoing agitation in the coming days. Even on Monday there was no respite for Delhi as several Delhi border points were closed and police asked motorists to take alternative routes on Monday.

Farmers from Rajasthan on Monday blocked the Delhi-Jaipur national highway at Shahjahanpur in Alwar district after police stopped them from marching to the national Capital. In Punjab too the protest is going on with farmers holding protests at district headquarters in the State and

Haryana on call given for a nationwide stir.

The unions claimed that demonstrations were also held at various district headquarters across the country. The unions claimed that more people expected to join the ongoing agitation, which entered the third week. United Farmers'

Front said leaders also observed a two minute-silence over the alleged deaths of over 20 protesters at Delhi borders in last 18 days.

In view of the nationwide protest, the Delhi Police also enhanced security at city border points. Multi-layered cemented barriers, additional

Farmer leaders hold hunger strike, Delhi traffic clogged

police force and barbed wires formed the first layer of security at the protest site at the Singhu border.

The second layer of barricades deployed by the Delhi Police is being guarded by a team of the Rapid Action Force along with paramilitary forces.

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Farmers at Ghaziabad border during their sit-in protest against the Centre's farm reform laws in Ghaziabad on Monday

No retrograde steps against agri sector will be taken ever, asserts Rajnath

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Making it clear that the recent farm laws — which the farmers want to be scrapped — were undertaken keeping the best interests of farmers in mind, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Monday said there is no question of taking any "retrograde" steps against the farm sector. However, he said the Centre is open for discussion on the farm laws.

Addressing the annual convention of the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) against the backdrop of farmers' protest, Singh said the Government is "always willing to listen to our farmer brothers".

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Centre asks Hry, Punjab for toll plaza security as kisan pickets cause ₹200 cr loss

DEEPAK KUMAR JHA ■ NEW DELHI

The Centre has written to Punjab and Haryana Governments to facilitate security at toll plazas following the heavy revenue losses in toll collection due to the ongoing farmers' protest that has blocked the toll plazas leading to losses of about ₹200 crore in last two months.

The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH) had to pitch in to incur the losses to tune of ₹1,900 crore to the concessionaries of NHAI due to the Covid pandemic related lockdown across the country.

A senior MoRTH official said the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) has

suffered a revenue loss of about ₹200 crore so far on account of farmers' protest at toll plazas in Punjab and Haryana since October 1. The protesting farmers are not allowing toll collection.

The Central road-making agency has written twice to the Punjab Government over the blockages at toll plazas.

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AIKCC becomes 4th farmers' union to back farm laws

New Delhi: As farmers' protest against the three new agri laws continues, yet another delegation of farmers, led by All India Kisan Coordination Committee (AIKCC), met agriculture minister Narendra Singh Tomar on Monday to extend their support to the contentious legislations.

This is a fourth group of farmers to have extended their support to the agriculture reform laws in the past two weeks.

Ex-diplomats slam Canada, say encouraged by its 'support', protesting farmers hardened stance

New Delhi: Slamming Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's statement on the ongoing farmers' protest in India as "uncalled for, disconnected with ground realities and served merely to fan the

flames", a group of former Indian diplomats claimed on Monday that Canada's support has led to the protesters hardening their stand and adopting an "all or nothing" approach.

CAPSULE

KOLKATA-DELHI DAILY FLIGHTS RESUME

Kolkata: The Bengal Government on Monday gave its nod for resumption of daily direct flight services between Kolkata and Delhi, an official statement said. Currently, Kolkata-Delhi flights are available thrice a week, Monday, Wednesday and Friday, airport officials said.

VIJAYVARGIYA'S SECURITY UPGRADED AFTER ATTACK

New Delhi/Kolkata: BJP leader Kailash Vijayvargiya's VIP security has been upgraded with the addition of a "bullet resistant" car in his convoy during his West Bengal tour, official sources said on Monday.

NORTH INDIA: NIGHT TEMPS TO DROP BY 3-5°C

New Delhi: Night temperatures are expected to drop by 3-5 degrees Celsius in the next 2-3 days over north India, the IMD department said on Monday.

SUICIDE PACT: FIVE OF FAMILY IN TN FOUND DEAD

Viluppuram (TN): A couple in their thirties and their three children were found dead in their house at a village near here on Monday, police said. Preliminary probe hint at a "suicide pact" and the man and woman could have ended their lives after killing their two daughters aged seven and eight and five-year-old son, they said.

Unprovoked aggression at LAC a wanton disregard for rules: Rajnath

Defence Min makes remarks at ASEAN meet in presence of Chinese counterpart

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

With no let-up in tension on the Line of Actual Control (LAC), Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Monday said "unprovoked aggression" on the Himalayan frontiers is a reminder of the changing world and China not abiding with existing agreements. Without naming the eastern neighbour, he also said it was asserting its power in the Indo-Pacific region, too.

Making this point here, Rajnath praised the armed forces and said they have shown exemplary courage and remarkable fortitude and "fought the PLA with utmost bravery and forced them to go back."

This was in reference to the bloody brawl between the Indian and Chinese troops on June 15 in the Galwan valley in eastern Ladakh. Twenty Indian Army personnel, including the commanding officer were killed in the fracas. China, however, has not disclosed the number of its personnel killed in the clash.

This blunt observation came days after Rajnath last



week called for exercising self-restraint and avoid actions that may worsen the situation. The Minister made these remarks virtually at a conclave of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) where his Chinese counterpart Weng Fei was also present.

The two leaders had held marathon face to face talks two months ago on the sidelines of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) in Moscow. The two Ministers had then discussed ways to defuse tension at the LAC. On Monday while addressing a seminar organised by the Federation of Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FICCI), Rajnath said the "unprovoked aggression" on the Himalayan frontiers is a reminder of how the world is changing, how existing agreements are being challenged, how power is being asserted

not just in the Himalayas but across the Indo-Pacific.

"Whenever there is a situation at the LAC, the most obvious outcome is a comparison between India and China's military strength. There can be a serious debate on who owns more military might but when it comes to soft power there is no scope of ambiguity. India is far ahead of China when it comes to leading the world with ideas, he said. Due to its location, size, population and economy, India has always been at the strategic forefront of global security, he added.

Stating that India has been a victim of cross-border terrorism, Rajnath said India fought the scourge alone even when there was no one to support but later, the world understood that India was right about "Pakistan being the fountainhead of terrorism".

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Students should visit tech marvel Atal Tunnel: UGC

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Perhaps in a first of its kind, the Union Education Ministry has asked the University Grants Commission (UGC) to urge the universities and engineering colleges to share details of the Atal Tunnel in Himachal Pradesh with students and encourage them to visit the "technological marvel".

The university regulator has directed that students must follow Covid-19 guidelines issued by the Centre as well as the State Governments during their visit to the tunnel. Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the Atal Tunnel, the



world's longest motorable tunnel in Rohtang, in October. Educational-cum-recreational tours are part of the course curriculum in the higher and technical education. But a

senior Education Ministry official said that this could be a first where UGC has asked the universities and colleges to take a keen interest in a particular project of national importance.

"Situated at an altitude above 10,000 ft, this 9.02-km tunnel has been constructed in an extremely difficult and hostile climate, deploying the latest and best practices in tunnel technology with state-of-the-art features, including semi-transverse ventilation, SCADA controlled fire-fighting, illumination and monitoring system," UGC Secretary Rajnish Jain said in a letter to VCs.

The all-weather Atal tunnel will reduce the distance between Manali and Leh by 46 km and the travel time by four to five hours. It is the longest highway tunnel in the world.

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YouTube, Gmail restored after 1-hr global outage

IAN ■ NEW DELHI

YouTube, Gmail, Google Docs and other Google services were restored on Monday after an hour-long outage that hit users in several parts of the world, including India.

"We're back up and running! You should be able to access YouTube again and enjoy videos as normal," YouTube said in a tweet, updating the status of the service.

Google said that the services like Gmail, Google Docs, Google Classroom and all other affected services should now be working for the vast majority of affected users. "The problem with Gmail should be resolved for the vast majority of affected users. We will continue to work towards restoring service for the remaining affected users, but no further updates will be provided on the Google Workspace Status Dashboard," Google said.

'Emergency should not have happened', says SC, agrees to examine proclamation of 1975

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Emergency is something which should not have happened," the Supreme Court on Monday said as it agreed to hear a plea of a 94-year-old woman seeking to declare as "wholly unconstitutional" the proclamation made in 1975 during the tenure of the then Indira Gandhi-led Congress Government.

The SC, which issued notice to the Centre, said it would also examine whether it is "feasible or desirable" to make a simpler declaration of the proclamation after a lapse of 45 years. "We are having difficulty. Emergency is something which should not have happened," said a bench headed by Justice Sanjay Kishan Kaul.

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Tatas, Interups, AI staff group among bidders for Air India

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Tata Group, US-based fund Interups Inc. and a group of 219 Air India employees are among "multiple" entities that on Monday put in preliminary bids for buying loss-making national carrier Air India. "Multiple expressions of interest have been received for strategic disinvestment of Air India. The transaction will now move to the second stage," Department of Investment and Public Asset Management Secretary Tuhin Kanta Pandey tweeted. He, however, did not reveal either the identity of the bidders or the number of bids.

Sources said Tata Sons has put in an EoI and so did Interups, whose chairman Laxmi Prasad had in the run-up to the disinvestment made his intentions clear to bid for Air India. Detailed report on P9

New farm laws not only anti-farmer but also anti-people: Kejriwal

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Monday said the new farm laws are not only anti-farmer but also anti-people and this will cause a massive price hike as these laws have given a license to do the same and these laws are brought only to benefit some capitalists.

Kejriwal and all AAP volunteers across the country held a day-long hunger strike on Monday in support of the farmers protesting against the three farm laws.

Addressing the volunteers

at the party headquarters, Kejriwal said that these laws say only if prices of farm products double within a year then only the government can launch raids against the hoarders and despite being a Chief Minister, he cannot raid the hoarders because these laws have tied his hands.

Kejriwal said "Today, the country is in crisis because the farmers are in crisis. The foundation of any country is farmers and jawans, and the country cannot grow when farmers and jawans are in crisis." He said that when the soldiers sitting on the border hear that

their brother and father are being called terrorists, how will they feel? He appealed to those who are calling farmers as terrorists, to stop this dirty politics.

"I want to thank everyone today who is standing in support of the protesting farmers. I am very happy to see that the whole nation is standing beside these farmers. Doctors, army men, singers, Bollywood celebrities, lawyers and many others are standing beside these farmers. Many people have not been able to reach the Singhu border to show their support for the farmers but



from their heart, they are with the farmers," he said.

"From the very first day the AAP is standing beside the former shoulder to shoulder. Today across India the volun-

teers of the AAP have participated in this day-long hunger strike. From the very first day, we have supported the farmers. When the farmers were coming from Punjab they faced

atrocities from the police. They faced massive lathi-charge, tear gas shells and other kinds of police atrocities. When the farmers were about to reach Delhi the BJP ruled central government asked the AAP government to provide nine stadiums of Delhi. The BJP ruled central government wanted to establish makeshift prisons to jail these protesting farmers. The AAP government immediately rejected this proposal and returned the file to the central government. We stood rock solid beside the farmers," he said.

Kejriwal said, "The BJP

ruled central government and the BJP got rattled to see our support. Last week when the farmers called Bharat bandh then I wanted to visit the farmers and participate in the bandh. But the BJP government blocked the doors of my house and did not allow me to go out. They wanted to make the protest unsuccessful but it did not happen. Today I am standing here in support of the farmers and holding a daylong hunger strike."

The chief minister further said, "These laws will cause massive price hike and running the families will become very

difficult. These laws are not only anti-farmer but also anti-people. These laws are here just to favour some capitalists. So do not think that you are doing any favour to the farmers by supporting them."

"These laws are already passed so now if these laws are not rolled back then we will be in trouble and crisis. Today the farmers are protesting and doing a favour to all of us. The farmers are doing a favour to all the citizens of India. We all need to protest against these laws. The AAP is standing beside farmers and supporting their demands," he added.

Covid daily count plunges below 3000-mark in Maha

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

The Covid-19 infections plunged below 3000-mark in Maharashtra on Monday, as 2,969 people tested positive for Coronavirus and 60 more people died of pandemic in various parts of the state.

A day after Maharashtra logged 3717 infected cases and 70 deaths, the infections came down by 748 and deaths dropped by 10 in the state.

With 2969 fresh infections, the total infections climbed from 18,80,416 to 18,83,365. Similarly, with 60 new deaths, the Covid-19 toll in Maharashtra went up from 48,209 to 48,269.

As 4,610 patients were dis-

charged 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 17,61,615. The recovery rate in the state rose marginally from 93.44 per cent to 93.54 per cent.

With seven new deaths, the Covid-19 toll in Mumbai went up from 10,977 to 10,984, while the infected cases went up by 447 to trigger a jump in the total infections from 2,90,636 to 2,91,113.

Meanwhile, the number of "active cases" total cases in the state dropped from 74,104 to 72,383. The fatality rate in the state dropped from 2.57 per cent to 2.56 per cent.

Pune district, which con-

tinued to be the worst-affected city-district in Maharashtra, saw the total number of cases increase from 3,62,312 to 3,62,793, while the total number of deaths in Pune increased from 7626 to 7631.

Thane district remained in the third spot --after Pune and Mumbai -- after the total number of infections rose from 2,47,645 to 2,48,028 while the total deaths climbed from 5399 to 5404.

Of the 1,17,48,362 samples sent to laboratories, 18,83,365 have tested positive (16.03 per cent) for COVID-19 until Monday.

Currently, 5,04,406 people are in home quarantine while 4335 people are in institutional quarantine.

Farmers at Ghazipur border observe one-day fast in solidarity

STAFF REPORTER ■ GHAZIABAD

The farmers at Ghazipur border (UP Gate) observed one day fast to mark their protest against the Centre's new farm laws. About a dozen farmers, including Rakesh Tikait, national spokesperson of the Bharatiya Kisan Union, led the agitation at the UP Gate and sat on a symbolic fast

from 8 AM to 5 PM.

Apart from this, a large number of farmers from other states also went on hunger strike to express their opposition. Meanwhile, the farmers sitting on the dharna at the UP gate also blocked the NH-24 lane coming from Delhi to UP which led to heavy traffic jam for few hours. However, the farmers allowed the students going to take ambulance and

examination.

The protesters also raised slogans against agricultural laws and the government. Rakesh Tikait and other farmer leaders who were fasting interfered and defused the situation after which the traffic movement was allowed on Delhi to UP carriage on NH-24.

In support of farmers, various political parties and organizations of the district protest-

ed and submitted a memorandum addressed to the President of India to the District Magistrate in Ghaziabad.

Activists of Bharatiya Kisan Union, Samajwadi Party, CPIMA Jan Adhikar Party were involved in this demonstration. Apart from this, the National Lok Dal activists fasted in support of the farmers by sitting at the party office at Meerut Road Tiraha. Most of

the leaders were kept under house arrest by the police so that the law and order of the city was not disturbed.

District Magistrate Dr Ajay Shankar Pandey said that the demonstration of farmers and political parties in the city was peaceful and no untoward incident has been reported in the district. He said that no person will be allowed to take law in his hands.

Unprovoked...

From Page 1

The Minister said "there comes a point in a nation's history, every now and then, when it needs to stand up for itself, tell that India can fight anyone, that it's capable of taking any challenge, just to survive." In Kolkata, Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) General Bipin Rawat assured that the armed forces are fully prepared for any eventuality that they may face.

"We are in a standoff situation in Ladakh and based on that there is some development activity which has been ongoing in Tibet Autonomous Region of China. Every nation will continue to prepare for ensuring its security based on their strategic interest," he said.

Rawat also confirmed that "high levels of preparation" are underway on land, sea and air as "China attempts to change the status quo on the LAC along the northern border."

Talking of technology, Rawat said time has come now to look at the future of war fighting imbining technology into our systems. Asked about unabated ceasefire violations along the Line of Control (LoC), Rawat cautioned that the other side (Pakistan) should be "getting more concerned." "We are fully prepared," he added.

'Emergency should not have happened', says SC, agrees to examine proclamation...

From Page 1

The bench also comprising Justices Dinesh Maheshwari and Hrishikesh Roy said that the court would be disinclined to open all such aspects as there may be some wrongs done to persons, but with the passage of almost 45 years, it would not be appropriate to reopen all such issues.

It asked the petitioner to amend her petition by December 18 with respect to the prayer of declaration of emergency as unconstitutional.

No retrograde steps...

From Page 1

"We are, however, always willing to listen to our farmer brothers, allay their misgivings and provide them with assurances we can provide. Our Government is always open to discussion and dialogue," Singh said.

The Minister said agriculture is one the sector that is able to the cope with the adverse effects of the Covid-19 pandemic and "come out the best". He said, "Our produce and procurement have been plentiful and our warehouses are full."

Vaccination...

From Page 1

Covid Vaccine Intelligence Network (Co-WIN) system — a digitalised platform — will be used to track enlisted beneficiaries for the vaccination and anti-coronavirus vaccines on a real-time basis while twelve

photo-identity documents, including Voter ID, Aadhaar card, driving license, passport and pension document will be required for self-registration on the Co-WIN website.

"At the vaccination site, only pre-registered beneficiaries will be vaccinated in accordance with the prioritisation, and there will be no provision

for on-the-spot registrations. The States have been asked to allocate the vaccine from one manufacturer to a district to avoid mixing of different vaccines in the field while all measures will be taken to avoid exposing the vaccine carrier, vaccine vials or ice packs to direct sunlight," as per the document.

Centre asks Hry, Punjab for toll plaza security as kisan pickets cause ₹200 cr loss

From Page 1

Several groups of farmers' have been protesting against the new Central laws on farm sectors and have been demanding these legislations be repealed. Farmers had also resorted to "rail roko" agitation earlier. The losses due to this protest have ranged to the tune of ₹30,000 crore on various stakeholders including industries.

Earlier the NHAI reportedly suffered revenue losses of Rs 1,822 crore due to suspension of toll collection on national highways during the 40-day lockdown, as per ICRA rating agency. While revenue loss for the NHAI operated toll plazas is estimated at Rs 821 crore, while the compensation to BOT Concessionaires under force majeure (political) event has been estimated at Rs 1,001 crore, as per ICRA. Centre had suspended tolling at NHs following the pandemic.

"The total estimated loss to NHAI due to lockdown is likely to be Rs 1,822 crore. With

goods traffic (both inter and intrastate) allowed to ply from April 20, 2020, onwards, in case if the toll suspension is revoked with effect from April 20, the loss could reduce to Rs 1,181 crore," the statement said.

There are around 570 operational toll plazas on the NHs across the country which includes both public-funded (under NHAI) and projects under build-operate-transfer (BOT) (Toll) and toll-operate-transfer (TOT) mode.

For the BOT Toll and TOT projects, under force majeure (political) event, the revenue loss is compensated in the form of extension in concession period.

In addition, 100 per cent of operations and maintenance (O&M) and interest costs are reimbursed for the BOT Toll projects for the affected period and this amounted to 50-55 per cent of loss of revenue incurred by these projects.

Whereas for projects which are public-funded (currently being toll) by the NHAI

through toll contractors), the suspension would result in a direct revenue loss for the NHAI.

The ICRA also recalled that during de-monetisation in November 2016, the 24-day period toll suspension NHAI offered compensation to the toll road SPVs under force majeure political clauses and incurred loss in the range of Rs 650-700 crore.

The NHAI has now made mandatory electronic toll collection across India on its over 500 toll plazas while doubling toll charges from the vehicles entering FASTag lanes without the tag. In order to give prime importance to existing FASTag users, dissuade defaulters and further encourage adoption of FASTags by national highway commuters, vehicles without FASTags entering the FASTag lane are being charged double the toll fee, and last month over Rs 20 crore were collected from 20 lakh vehicles encroaching FASTag lanes across India.

Students should visit tech marvel...

From Page 1

"It is desired that the knowledge of this technological marvel of the country, encompassing the best practices in engineering, design, planning, construction and project management be disseminated to students of engineering colleges who should be encouraged to visit this tunnel to see, appreciate and assimilate the capabilities in tunnelling efforts which now exist within the country," he added. The tunnel is built with ultra-modern specifications in the Pir Panjal range of the Himalayas at an altitude of 3,000 metres. The south portal of Atal Tunnel is located at a distance of 25 km from Manali at an altitude of 3,060 metres, while its north portal is located near village Teling, Sissu, in Lahaul Valley at an altitude of 3,071 metres.

Numbers surge, 2K women heading to Singhu Border

From Page 1

Then crossing through the toll plaza, as one reaches the main barricades, heavy police presence is witnessed.

Several borders of the national Capital remained closed on Monday due to the ongoing protest. The Delhi Traffic Police took to Twitter to inform people about road closures and advised them to take alternative routes to avoid inconvenience.

Farmers from different States have been camping at Delhi's Singhu, Tikri, Ghazipur and Chilla (Delhi-Noida) border points for over two weeks to demand a repeal of the farm laws enacted in September.

In a series of tweets, the Delhi Traffic Police said, "Singhu, Auchandi, Piau Maniyari, Sabholi & Mangesh borders are closed. Please take alternate routes via Lampur, Safiabad & Singhu school toll tax borders. Traffic has been diverted from Mukarba & GTK road. Pl avoid Outer

Ring Rd, GTK road, NH-44."

"Gazipur border is closed for traffic coming from Ghaziabad to Delhi due to farmers protests. People are advised to take alternate route for coming to Delhi via Anand Vihar, DND, Chilla, Apsara & Bhopra borders," it tweeted.

In Punjab and Haryana, farmers raised slogans outside the offices of district commissioners and took out protest marches on Monday. The Haryana Police closed the Ambala-Patiala highway after protesters gathered at the Shambhu border point with adjoining Punjab. Hundreds of farmers have stayed put at the Haryana-Rajasthan border as they were stopped from moving towards the national Capital.

"Tens of thousands of farmers are moving towards Delhi from Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Uttarakhand and other States and the numbers of protesting farmers at Delhi borders are swelling," a farmer leader

claimed.

Multi-layered cemented barriers, additional police force and barbed wires formed the first layer of security at the protest site at Singhu border. The second layer of barricades deployed by the Delhi Police is being guarded by a team of Rapid Action Force along with personnel from the paramilitary forces.

Meanwhile, an IT professional from Punjab's Ludhiana, who came to India from Sydney in October, is running a Twitter campaign to take on those spreading "fake news and running vilification campaigns" against the ongoing farmers protest.

The Twitter handle -- Tractor2twit -- has garnered 2.5 million impressions from across the globe since November 28.

"I had come to India in October-end to attend to some personal work, but then this (farmers' protest) happened and I stayed on," Bhavjit Singh says. He said his idea was to

disseminate authentic information about the protest as a "lot of people have been tweeting, running a vilification campaign against the movement".

His friend and a volunteer, Jaspreet Singh, says, "Paid and motivated users dominate and encroach up on the Twitter space. Our campaign is an effort to counter them."

Protesting farmers at Delhi border points have expressed apprehension that these laws would pave the way for the dismantling of the minimum support price system, leaving them at the "mercy" of big corporations. The Government has maintained that the new laws will bring farmers better opportunities and usher in new technologies in agriculture.

In Rajasthan, farmers blocked the Delhi-Jaipur highway in Alwar.

With the police stopping their march along the States' border with Haryana, the farmers camping at

Jaisinghpur-Khera border in Shahjahanpur under the leadership of Swaraj Abhiyan chief Yogendra Yadav and others went on a day-long hunger strike, seeking the repeal of farm laws.

With the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh affiliates Swadeshi Jagran Manch and Bharatiya Kisan Sangh too raising the demand for a legal guarantee on the MSP recently, Yadav dared RSS to clarify its stands on the farm laws.

Over 2,000 women from protesting farmers' families to join in and arrangements are being made. Farmer leaders said they are making arrangements to host the women members coming from various parts of Punjab -- tents are being put up, a separate langar is being planned, and extra temporary toilets are being arranged.

The aim is to give them a safe and comfortable environment to stay at the protest site, they said.



NARENDRA MODI
Prime Minister



सत्यमेव जयते
GOVERNMENT OF GUJARAT



VIJAY RUPANI
Chief Minister, Gujarat

Gujarat Furthers India's Resolve of Water Secure and Renewable Energy Powered Future

Foundation Stone Laying of
World's Biggest Hybrid Renewable Energy Park of 30 GW (30,000 MW) capacity and Desalination Plant of 10 Crore Litre per day capacity at Kutch
by

Narendra Modi
Prime Minister

In the presence of

Vijaybhai Rupani
Chief Minister, Gujarat

Nitinbhai Patel
Deputy Chief Minister, Gujarat

Date: 15th December, 2020

Time: 01:00 PM

Venue: Dhordo (Bhuj), Kutch

Live Streaming Link
<https://pmindiawebcast.nic.in>

Gujarat is leading from the front in furthering India's leadership role in sustainable energy & water security. The state is laying the foundation for two mega projects - world's biggest Hybrid Renewable Energy Park with a **30 GW (30,000 MW)** capacity and a **10 Crore Litre per day** capacity Desalination Plant.

Together these projects herald a new era of sustainable progress for the state and the nation.

World's Biggest Renewable Energy Park

- Renewable Energy park with a **30 GW (30,000 MW)** capacity
- First of its kind park with **both Wind & Solar energy**
- Located along the Indo-Pak border at Khavda, Kutch
- Transforming **72,600** Hectares of waste land into first of its kind Hybrid Renewable Energy Park
- It will play a major role in fulfilling our Prime Minister's vision of generating **450 GW (4,50,000 MW)** power by **2030**

Proposed 30 GW HYBRID RE PARK
Northern Part of Rann of Kutch

Desalination Plant

- Visionary initiative of establishing desalination plant with **10 Crore** litre per day capacity at **Mandvi, Kutch**
- **One of five** desalination plants in Gujarat besides **Dahej (100 MLD), Dwarka (70 MLD), Ghogha Bhavnagar (70 MLD)** and **Gir Somnath (30 MLD)**
- Once completed, Gujarat will have desalination capacity of **37 Crore** Litre per day
- Strengthening water security by complementing Narmada Grid, SAUNI network and treated waste water infrastructure
- An important milestone for sustainable and affordable water resource harvesting in the country

"With these initiatives, Gujarat is taking a quantum leap in sustainability across two diverse sectors of Energy and Water."

Nitinbhai Patel, Deputy Chief Minister, Gujarat



Farmer groups meet Tomar, support farm laws



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

At least 10 organisations representing farmers from Uttar Pradesh, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Bihar and Haryana and associated with the All India Kisan Coordination Committee (AIKCC) on Monday met Union agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar to lend their support to the three farm laws and advised to allow the existing mandi system under the control of State Government in Punjab and other States which were opposing it. This is the fifth group of farmers who have extended support to the laws in the last one week.

After the meeting, the agriculture Minister said that the Government is engaging with farmers' leaders to decide on the next date of talks. "The Government is ready for discussion anytime. The farmer leaders have to 'decide and convey' when they are ready for the next meeting," Tomar added.

"We tried to convince farmers and farmer unions' leaders. Our wish is that they come for clause-by-clause discussion. If they are ready to express their views clause by clause, we are ready for discussion," he said. Tomar also met Home Minister Amit Shah and discussed the way forward to end the deadlock.

Led by its General Secretary Gunavath Patil Hangergekar, the AIKCC, which has presence in 28 States, submitted a representation to the Agriculture Minister seeking continuation of the three farm laws, though with some amendments. The farmers unions have urged the Government to encourage those States who are ready to implement the agri reforms. They also demanded to abolish the essential commodities Act.

On Sunday, a delegation of more than 100 farmers from Uttarakhand had extended their support to the laws. Before that, a delegation of 29 farmers from Haryana met Tomar on Saturday to extend their support to the new

BJP raps Cong, AAP for misleading farmers just for sake of political gains

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Citing its serial win in the State and local bodies elections across the country, the BJP on Monday claimed that farmers and the "poor" are standing with the party, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the new farm laws and hit-out at the Congress and AAP for allegedly "misleading" farmers for "achieving" their "own political ends".

As the stand-off with the Central government and agitating farmers calling for the roll-back of three new farm laws is nearing three weeks, the BJP has stepped up its efforts to collect support for the Government even as it also attacks the opposition for its alleged attempts to exploit farmers' protest on the outskirts of Delhi.

"Since the notification of new farm laws, BJP has won all elections be it Bihar Assembly polls or local bodies elections in Hyderabad (Telangana),

legislations and threatened to stage a protest if those are repealed. The delegation, led by Bharatiya Kisan Union's (Mann) Haryana State leader Guni Prakash, submitted a "letter of support" to Tomar on

Rajasthan, Assam, Arunachal Pradesh and latest in Goa 'Zila Panchayat' polls...it says loud that 'gaon, garib aur kisan' BJP aur Modiji ke Saath hain", announced BJP's national spokesperson Sambit Patra here at a press conference.

Counting the results of Goa 'Zila Panchayat' results where he said BJP was inching towards majority mark (already winning 27 out of 48 seats vis-a-vis three of the Congress). Patra said without the support of 'gaon, garib aur kisan', who form the spine of this country, the BJP would not have won all these elections.

Lashing out at Congress and AAP leader and Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal for "creating confusion among farmers" and "misleading" them,

BJP spokesperson said both the opposition parties tried to "lay siege to Prime Minister Modi on four issues of Coronavirus, economic cri-

sis, migrant labourers and new farm laws but badly lost out...".

Claiming that Congress leader Rahul Gandhi who "knows little about agriculture" and may "confuse Rabi and Kharif crops with the names of BJP workers", he said, "Rahul is spreading confusion among farmers".

"Farm agitation has turned into a fight of political parties...Punjab CM Attacking Delhi CM. they have forgotten farmers", said BJP leader. Pointing out that AAP, which also contested in Goa local body polls and scored a duck, Patra quipped "Kejriwal Goa main Zero hain, yahan hero hain..".

He said it was Kejriwal who had said that if his party were to be in power in Punjab, "he would remove middlemen and reform APMC." "You notified farm bill in Delhi and are now sitting on hunger strike..", the BJP leader said condemning the "double-faced stand" of AAP.

Addressing a webinar on 'Weather and Climate Services over Mountains Region', Mohapatra said India has the eastern ghats, western ghats along the east and the west coast and the Myanmar hills in the northeast. Considering the size of Himalayas and its role in India's hydrology, meteorology, disaster management, ecosystem and many other activities, the world has correctly recognised it as the 'third pole of the world', he noted.

As a part of the ecosystem, as a part of the land, ocean,

atmosphere system, the mountains, including the Himalayas and all other hill ranges play a significant role, Mohapatra stressed. Being a data sparse region, the relative observational network is limited as compared to the plain ranges of the country, Mohapatra observed. He said there is a scope to improve further the physical understanding of various processes occurring in these mountains regions, their modelling and hence the forecasting and warning services. "At the same time, we have to develop the climate applications scenarios, especially with respect to water sector, industries, tourism, agriculture, specifically in these mountains regions." We are planning to establish a regional climate centre for the mountains region and it will be providing advices not only to India but also to the entire region in the Himalayas," he said.

India plans to establish regional climate centre for Himalayan mountain region

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

After China, India is also planning to establish a regional climate centre (RCC) for the Himalayan mountain region which will not only provide weather-related advice within the country but also to its neighbours. The RCC is likely to come up in Delhi. The centre will provide weather-related services specially for the farmers and tribes residing there.

According to the India Meteorological Department (IMD) Director General Mrutunjay Mohapatra the work for establishing such a centre has already begun and talks are also on with the World Meteorological Organisation (WMO). China is also building a similar regional climate centre on its side of the Himalayas.

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Himanshu, the country's remote and high altitude research centre, established in 2016, will also undertake weather research activities in the Himalayas. Mohapatra said natural calamities in Himalayas like the earthquakes are well-recognised — the heavy rainfall leading to cloud bursts and also many other phenomena that affect the local agriculture, local industry, local bio-system, local lives. Mohapatra said a lot of initiatives have been taken by the Ministry of Earth Sciences and IMD for augmentation of observational network with deployment of doppler radars and automated weather stations and with the development of region specific numerical models and application activities with improvement in forecast activities and warning services.

Temp may fall by three lto five degrees Celsius during next 4 days: IMD



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) on Monday predicted a fall in temperature by three to five degree Celsius over most parts of northwest India during the next four days after snow falls in Jammu and Kashmir and Himalayan region. Parts of northern India experienced snowfall on Sunday, leading to temperatures below 'zero' degrees Celsius in Jammu and Kashmir. Cold weather conditions prevailed in many parts North West India.

"There will be no significant change in minimum temperatures over most parts of Central and East India during the next two-three days and then fall by two-four degrees Celsius thereafter", the IMD said.

According to IMD, during the next 24 hours, "cold day to severe cold day conditions"

are very likely at a few places over Punjab, and "cold day conditions" are very likely at isolated places over Haryana, Chandigarh, and northwest Rajasthan.

The IMD said the ski-resort of Gulmarg registered minus 7.6 degrees Celsius and was the coldest place in Jammu and Kashmir. Pahalgam tourist resort in south Kashmir recorded a low of minus 3.2 degrees Celsius, while the night temperature in Kokernag settled at minus 2.3 degrees Celsius. Mercury dipped below freezing point in Mount Abu, the sole hill station of Rajasthan, where the night temperature was 0.4 degrees Celsius. In the plains, Sikar was the coldest place with a minimum of 4.5 degrees Celsius. Hisar in Haryana recorded a low of 6.2 degrees Celsius. In Punjab, Amritsar experienced a cold night at 5.6 degrees Celsius.

"Dense fog very likely in isolated pockets over Uttarakhand, Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh, northwest Rajasthan, northwest Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Sub Himalayan West Bengal, Sikkim, Assam, Meghalaya, and Tripura on December 14," the IMD said.

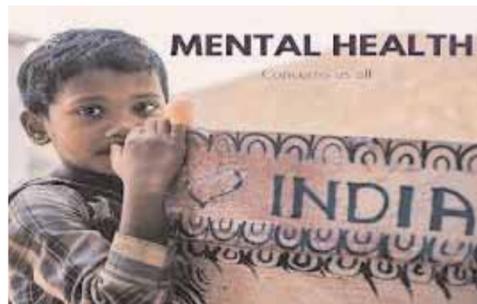
Connect, concentration and counseling necessary for children's well-being during Covid: Vardhan



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

With about one in 10 children and young people suffering from mental health problems such as depression, anxiety and conduct disorder across the world, Union Health Minister Dr Harsh Vardhan on Monday outlined 3Cs—connect, concentration and counseling — as the three mantras for the well-being of the impressionable minds, particularly during the Corona pandemic.

"We should understand that children go through critical stages of mental health during their childhood and adolescent times. Also due to the pressure of studies, competition and a new change of living style due to the involvement of technology in our lives it becomes necessary to talk about mental health issues of our children," said Dr. Harsh Vardhan after inaugurating a e-conclave on mental health for



children organised by Affordable Private School's Association and The Life is Beautiful Foundation.

The tendency of stress, anxiety, anger and depression have increased within our children nowadays, he said adding that connection with family, friends and society is one important aspect which gives a sense of security and platform to discuss personal problems.

The concentration attained through Yoga is another very important tool for building a calm and stress-free mind while counselling of children in case of any issue like stress, anxiety and fear is another important area which must be available for our children, the Minister added.

Lakshya Chhabaria, President of Affordable Private schools' Association, said that the aim to hold such an e-conclave is to understand kids

related issues like emotions, behaviour and perceptions and solutions.

Jyoti Arora, Principal Mount Abu Public School, Rohini cautioned against over-exposure of digital technologies, while Dr. Rajesh Sagar, Professor, Department of Psychiatry, AIIMS, pointed out that there's a myth that children do not have mental health problems. "If a child is sad for more than 2 weeks then he has depression issues which must be taken care of," he pointed out and called for integration of mental health services with mainstream health services.

In fact, Saad Omer, Director of the Yale Institute of Global Health, in another event recently organized by his institute had cautioned that the Covid pandemic's silent killer is having its impact on people's mental health, particularly children.

Maha Govt happy to cooperate in restoring INS Viraat: Chaturvedi's letter to Def Ministry



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Rajya Sabha member Priyanka Chaturvedi has written to the Defence Ministry saying the Maharashtra Government is "happy to cooperate in restoring and preserving the historical ship" INS Viraat, which served as India's aircraft carrier. "It was with great sadness and concern [that] I read that the scrapping of the historic INS Viraat has been initiated at Alang in Gujarat," Chaturvedi, the Shiv Sena MP wrote in her letter to Defence Minister Rajtanth Singh.

The letter, which asks the Defence Ministry for a no-objection certificate to preserve Viraat, comes at a time when the decommissioned warship is being pulled ashore by a ship-breaker in Alang before it is destroyed for scrap.

"We as a nation must use our decommissioned naval ships to help citizens to better understand the significance



The letter, which asks the Defence Ministry for a no-objection certificate to preserve Viraat, comes at a time when the decommissioned warship is being pulled ashore by a ship-breaker in Alang before it is destroyed for scrap

of India's maritime history. It saddens me further to note that

though there is an offer to convert the warship into a maritime museum, it awaits a no-objection certificate from the Ministry of Defence for transfer of the warship," Chaturvedi said.

The letter comes following series of media reports which highlighted the plight of Viraat, the decommissioned Indian Navy warship which was India's flagship for several decades and came to define India's maritime power. Before being commissioned into the Indian Navy in 1986, Viraat served as HMS Hermes in the Royal Navy where she fought with distinction in the Falkland Islands war in 1982 in the south Atlantic.

IMPORTANT NOTICE

This is notified for the information of rail passengers that in addition to already announced some trains whose Arrival/Departure time has been revised, the timings of the following Special Trains will also be revised as under:-

REVISED TIMINGS OF SPECIAL TRAINS					
Spl Train No.	Station From	Dep. Time	Station to	Arr. Time	Revised Timings Effective From
02691	KSR BENGALURU	20:00	HAZRAT NIZAMUDDIN	05:30	10.01.2021
02692	HAZRAT NIZAMUDDIN	19:50	KSR BENGALURU	05:20	13.01.2021
02629	YESVANTPURJN	13:55	HAZRAT NIZAMUDDIN	11:25	15.12.2020
02630	HAZRAT NIZAMUDDIN	08:30	YESVANTPURJN	06:10	16.12.2020
02715	NANDED	09:30	AMRITSARJN.	20:35	01.01.2021
02716	AMRITSARJN.	04:25	NANDED	14:10	03.01.2021
06527	KSR BENGALURU	19:20	NEW DELHI	10:20	17.12.2020
06528	NEW DELHI	20:20	KSR BENGALURU	12:50	17.12.2020
02503	DIBRUGARH	19:55	NEW DELHI	13:38	17.12.2020
02504	NEW DELHI	11:25	DIBRUGARH	05:30	15.12.2020
01077	PUNE JN.	17:20	JAMMU TAWI	09:55	TILL FURTHER ADVICE
01078	JAMMU TAWI	23:40	PUNE JN.	15:55	TILL FURTHER ADVICE

NORTHERN RAILWAYS TRAVEL ADVISORY TO RAIL PASSENGERS IN VIEW OF REVISED TIMINGS

In order to provide better train services and due to operational reasons, the timings / stoppages of some trains have been revised from 01.12.2020 and onwards. Therefore, rail passengers are advised to:-

- Please check and verify the revised train timings pertaining to your rail journeys well before commencement of journeys, either with Integrated Enquiry No. 139 or Indian Railways website <https://enquiry.indianrail.gov.in> or NTES App or by approaching authorized person in the nearby reservation counters/railway stations.
- Passengers are advised to please mention their own mobile number only while filling the Reservation Requisition Form. It will help Railways to provide the important information such as 'Change in train timings' or 'Train Cancellation' etc to the bonafide passengers through S.M.S.

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

Security Helpline No. 182
Integrated Helpline No. 139

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Notice for Request for Proposal

No: RMSA/Robotics lab-20-21/1315/2020/19 Dated: 14/12/2020
This is an invitation of proposal from the reputed registered organization affixing court fee stamp of minimum value Rs 8.25/- for the implementation 50 (fifty) Robotics Lab in Govt/Prov. Secondary and Hr. Secondary Schools through e-procurement system of Govt. of Assam i.e. <https://assamtenders.gov.in>. Bidder should have valid Digital Signature Certificate and have to register in the portal <https://assamtenders.gov.in>. Detailed RFP document may be seen at "https://assamtenders.gov.in" for eligibility, scope of work, RFP terms and conditions etc. The RFP is to be submitted online through the e-procurement portal of Govt. of Assam i.e. <https://assamtenders.gov.in> only on or before 5/1/2021 at 2.00 p.m.

Important Dates and Milestone of the RFP:

SI	Particulars	Date & Time	Particulars	Date & Time
1.	Publishing Date & Time	14/12/2020, 2.00 PM	-	-
2.	Document Download Start	14/12/2020, 2.00 PM	Document Download End	5/1/2021 1.00 PM
3.	Pre-Bid Meeting	22/12/2020 2.00 PM	-	-
4.	Bid Submission Start	14/12/2020, 3.10 PM	Bid submission end	5/1/2021 2.00 PM
5.	Technical Bid Opening	5/1/2021 3.00 PM	-	-
6.	Financial Bid Opening	To be intimated to the technically qualified entity at a later date.		
7.	Earnest Money Deposit(EMD): INR 3,20,000/-			
8.	RFP FEE : INR 5000/-			

- The RFP document can be downloaded from the website <https://assamtenders.gov.in>
- The details of the scope of work and requirement areas provided in the bid document. The Proposal has to be submitted as described in the bid i.e. in <https://assamtenders.gov.in>.
- The RFP document shall have two covers: (i) Technical Bid & Commercial terms (ii) Financial Bid.
- Online mode of submission of Technical and Financial Bids are mandatory. Manual submission of Financial Bids will not be accepted
- However original copy of the Tender Fee / EMD and Technical Bid along with Rs. 8.25 court fee stamp to be submitted at State Mission Office, Samagra Shiksha, Assam (RMSA, Assam), Kahilipara, Guwahati-19 before the last date and time of bid submission. Samagra Shiksha, Assam (RMSA, Assam) reserves the right to amend or cancel the bid document without assigning any notice or reason thereof at any stage of the bid. Moreover, in case of non-availability of sufficient bidder (or less than three bidder), authority has the right to take decision without prior notice.

Sd/- Executive Director,
Janasanyog No. CF/3229/20 Samagra Shiksha, Assam, Kahilipara, Guwahati-19

High blood pressure accelerates decline in memory, verbal fluency: Study

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

High blood pressure appears to accelerate a decline in cognitive performance which includes memory, verbal fluency, attention and concentration in middle-aged and older adults, according to a study published in Hypertension, an American Heart Association journal.

Although the participants of the study were adults from Brazil, the findings are applicable to India too where hypertension is the most important risk factor for chronic disease burden. Studies from various parts of India have reported high prevalence of hypertension. To make the matter worse, hypertension is increasing and there is low awareness and control in India.

Blood pressure of 120 mmHg - 129 mmHg systolic (the top number in a reading) or higher is considered elevated. Systolic pressure above 130 mmHg, or diastolic pressure (the bottom number) of 80 mmHg or higher is considered hypertension.

"We initially anticipated that the negative effects of hypertension on cognitive function would be more criti-

cal when hypertension started at a younger age, however, our results show similar accelerated cognitive performance decline whether hypertension started in middle age or at older ages," said study author Sandhi M Barreto, Professor of medicine at the Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais in Belo Horizonte, Brazil.

"We also found that effectively treating high blood pressure at any age in adulthood could reduce or prevent this acceleration. Collectively, the findings suggest hypertension needs to be prevented, diagnosed and effectively treated in adults of any age to preserve cognitive function."

Barreto and colleagues analyzed findings from an existing study that included blood pressure and cognitive health information for more than 7,000 adults in Brazil, whose average age was about 59 years old at the study's start. The study participants were followed for an average of nearly 4 years; testing included analysis of memory, verbal fluency and executive function, which includes attention, concentration and other factors associated with thinking and reasoning.

Another TMC leader rebels, party calls urgent meeting

Asansol Mayor Jitendra Tewari accuses State of blocking Central Fund

SAUGAR SENGUTA ■ KOLKATA

After powerful Trinamool Asatrap Suwendu Adhikari and his erstwhile Cabinet colleague Rajiv Banerjee it is now the turn of senior party leader and Asansol Mayor Jitendra Tewari to unfurl the banner of rebellion in the Trinamool Congress.

In a rather astounding letter Tewari has charged the State Government with blocking central funds. The letter written to State Urban Development Minister Firdah Hakim says how Asansol corporation had been perennially starved of funds whereas all the Government allotments had gone to Kolkata Municipal Corporation and the neighbouring Rajarhat-Salt Lake municipal board.

A war of words soon ensued with Hakim blaming Tewari of being in touch with the BJP. A meeting had been lined up for Tuesday to iron out the differences, inside sources said adding Hakim will meet Tewari in Kolkata in the presence of election strategist Prashant Kishore who has been appointed by the party to prepare its electoral strategy for 2021. Tewari who said that Asansol did not receive central funds of Rupees 2,000 crore due to state government which blocked its passage, also denied Hakim's allegations of being in touch with BJP.

The letter reads written by outgoing Asansol Mayor and present Administrator "... due to political reasons", Asansol was deprived of Rs 2,000 crore under the Government of India's Smart

City Mission project despite being selected by the Ministry of Urban Development.

Earlier powerful TMC leader and former Minister and MP Suwendu Adhikari quit his ministerial post and returned the State police security cover before snapping all the communication channels with the party.

He was followed by Forest Minister Rajiv Banerjee who alleged only corrupt sidekicks were given responsible assignments in the party. He would not only not retract from his comments but also said "age aage dekho hota hai kya ... (wait and watch what unfolds next)." There are other leaders and MLAs like Mihir Goswami who already joined the BJP this month, Sil Bhadra Dutta and a set of other MLAs who have openly revolted against the party. Jitendra Tewari is only next in the line.

Meanwhile the BJP has dismissed Trinamool Congress' fear that Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee might be murdered as "unfounded, manufactured and politically designed to win sympathy" from voters.

Reacting to the remark of a possible assassination bid on the Chief Minister by the BJP, Bengal BJP president Dilip Ghosh said "this is an old tactic which Mamata Banerjee tries on the people of Bengal to garner sympathy votes. She has done so earlier also. But this time this will not cut much ice with the electorate ... the play will bomb in the electoral market..."

Earlier senior Trinamool Congress leader and Panchayat Minister Subroto Mukherjee told in a meeting that the BJP

was planning to assassinate the Chief Minister as she was the stumbling block between the safe-front party and power in Bengal.

"They (BJP) are hatching a conspiracy to eliminate Mamata Banerjee if it fails to come to power in Bengal in the coming elections," Mukherjee said adding however that the people and the TMC cadres would shed their blood to protect Banerjee who was the mother of crores of poor people in Bengal.

"They (read BJP) are making secret plans to secretly assassinate Mamata Banerjee ... This they can do even by hiring people for the purpose. But the people of Bengal will foil their plans," Mukherjee who also tagged with his speech an excuse for the December 10 attack on BJP president JP Nadda's convoy said. Accusing the BJP of trying to gain sympathy he said "Our members, following an investigation, have confirmed that the BJP hired people to hurl stones at his vehicle so as to bring bad name to Bengal, humiliate Mamata Banerjee" and find out an excuse to impose Article 356 in the State."

Erosion of public support is making the TMC to talk nonsense BJP strongman and MP Arjun Singh said. Singh said that "Mamata Banerjee herself is a threat to all the opposition parties and the people of Bengal... she is a terror... how can she be terrorized... even if we are to believe that she is facing a threat on her life then it is not from the BJP but her own men ... who does not know about the infighting and defections in the Trinamool."

BJP sweeps Goa ZP polls, Cong, AAP routed

Panaji: The ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) on Monday swept polls to two zilla panchayat bodies in the state, in an election which Chief Minister Pramod Sawant claimed was a "test" for his government.

While the final results are not out yet, the BJP has already won 17 out of the 25 seats of the North Goa Zilla Panchayat, while the party has won 14 seats out of the 23 seats of the South Goa Zilla Panchayat body. The Congress, so far, has won one seat in North Goa, while in South Goa the party managed to win only three seats. The Maharashtrawadi Gomantak Party won three seats across both the ZP bodies, while the Aam Aadmi Party and Nationalist Congress Party won one seat each. **IANS**

Sena MLA files breach of privilege notice against media houses for stories based on Kangana's tweet

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

In fresh trouble for controversial Bollywood actress Kangana Ranaut, senior Shiv Sena MLA Pratap Sarnaik on Monday filed a breach of privilege notice against some media outlets for running stories allegedly based on a tweet put out by the actress that a Pakistani credit card was found during the recent raids conducted by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) on his houses.

Sarnaik, a three-time MLA and close aide of chief minister Uddhav Thackeray, in his breach of privilege notice filed against Kangana before the Principal Secretary of the Maharashtra Legislature said: "On November 24, the ED raided my houses in Mumbai and Thane and seized several

documents. The ED called me and my son for inquiry and we are cooperating with the ED".

"On December 12 and 13, some selected news papers, electronic media and web portals -- based on a tweet by Kangana -- reported that a Pakistani credit card was found in my house during the raids. They published without any proof. The only basis they had was a false tweet put out by the actress. The news reports have defamed me and projected me in a poor light," Sarnaik stated in his notice.

He has urged the Principal Secretary concerned to forward his notice/complaint to the Privilege Committee of Maharashtra Legislative Assembly so that an inquiry into the matter of breach of privilege and necessary action can be taken against Kangana.

if the breach of privilege notice against the media outlets admitted by the State Legislature, Kangana -- apart from the media houses -- may also asked to appear before the Privileges Committee to know on what basis she put out the "false" tweet which, Sarnaik has alleged, has maligned his image as an elected representative.

It may be recalled that Sarnaik had earlier in September moved a breach of privilege motion in the State Assembly against Arnab Goswami, Republic TV editor in chief, for using "derogatory" language against Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray and NCP chief Sharad Pawar. Sarnaik had also accused Goswami of insulting ministers and MPs during his TV debates.

Kerala local body polls: Brisk polling in 3rd phase

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

The third and final phase of polling to local bodies concluded in Kerala on Monday with more than 75 per cent of the electorate casting their votes till 5 pm. Both the fronts (LDF and the UDF) claim they would sweep the polls while the BJP said Kerala's wait for the Third Alternative would become a reality with this edition of the local body polls.

Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, who cast his vote at his village in Pinarayi, Kannur district, told reporters that the CPI(M)-led LDF would sweep the polls. "The electorate is thoroughly impressed with the excellent work done by the government during the last four and half years. Kerala has never seen such a dedicated and selfless service rendered by any government in the past and hence they would vote en masse for us," said Vijayan.

Kodiyeri Balakrishnan, who had to step down as party's state secretary recently following the arrest of his son Bineesh by the Enforcement Directorate in connection with drug trafficking and hawala transactions, said there was a Marxist wave in Kerala. "There is no doubt about the victory of the LDF. We are on the way to sweeping the polls. The Congress-led UDF would disintegrate immediately after the local body election," he said.

But K Sudhakaran, MP, who is the veteran Congress leader from the Malabar region scoffed at the comments made by Vijayan and Balakrishnan. "I couldn't control my laughter after listening to the duo. Do you think Swapna Suresh, Sarith, Sandeep Nair and M Sivsankar, the jailed associates of the chief minister, in connection with gold smuggling and hawala transactions would bring votes to the CPI(M)? No sensible persons would vote for the CPI(M) or the LDF."

Maha ATS busts immigrants' racket, 8 Bangladeshi held

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Maharashtra's Anti Terrorism Squad (ATS) has busted a major illegal immigrants' racket by arresting eight Bangladeshi nationals and seizing a cache of illegal Indian documents, including several fake Indian identity cards, passports and material used for making illegal travel documents.

Acting on a tip-off that one Bangladeshi national staying in Mumbai as an illegal immigrant was indulging in preparation and supply of Indian identity cards other Bangladeshi nationals, the ATS sleuths laid a trap and caught an illegal Bangladeshi national from Sewree, Akram Ollaiddin Khan (28) hailing from Novkhali district in the neighbouring country.

Akram's custodial interrogation revealed that he had travelled to India without any valid documents. Later, persons identified as Noornabi, a resident of Wadala, Mumbai and Rafiq Shaikh, Kausa, Mumbai, Thane helped Akram in preparing forged Aadhar card, Pan card and Indian passport in his name.

Based on the inputs given by Akram, the ATS arrested one Mohd. Rafiq Rehmatulla sayyad (42), a resident of Kausa near Mumbai in Thane district and his interrogation revealed that he had been indulging in as agent in preparation of counterfeit passports since 2013.

The investigations also revealed that Rafiq was involved in preparation of many passport of illegal Bangladeshi immigrants.

"On scrutiny of records, we have found that he has been involved in providing at least 85 fake Indian identity cards and passport to illegal Bangladeshi immigrants," a senior ATS officer said.

"Shaikh used forged documents like Pan cards, Aadhar cards, election cards, ration cards, electric bills, rent agreements, school leaving certificate, birth certificates, bank passbooks required for processing passports," he said.

The ATS officials went onto arrest Shaikh's accomplices Idris Mohammad Shaikh (57), a resident of Kausa, Mumbai, Avin Gangaram Kedare (35) Yrs, resident of Antop Hill, Mumbai and One Nitin Rajaram Nikam (43), a resident of Talaja, Navi Mumbai.

While Idris had played an active role in preparing forged school leaving certificates and birth certificates, Kedare helped Idris in preparing fake rubber stamps to make these forged documents. Nikam provided fake bank passbooks and election cards.

In addition, the ATS officials Mohd. Soahil Abdul Subhan Shaikh (33), Abdul Khair Samsulhaq (42) and Abul Hasham alias Abul Kasham Shaikh (26) for entering into India and residing without valid documents of their stay and seized forged Indian identity cards and passports from them.

Raj CM OK's special relief scheme for exemption in penalty, interest on stamp duty

Jaipur: Chief Minister Mr. Ashok Gehlot has approved the proposal for special relief scheme for relaxation in penalty and interest on the amount of stamp duty in pending stamp cases at various levels during the current financial year. The scheme will be effective from 31 March 2021 from the date of issue of notification.

This decision of Mr. Gehlot will make possible the disposal of pending stamp cases, and the cases pending in the court will also be reduced. Also, the public will get relief from exemption in interest and penalty on stamp duty.

It is noteworthy that the state government had earlier also issued a special relief scheme for exemption in interest and penalty payable on stamp duty, the duration of which was till August 31, 2020.

Church calender featuring rape accused Bishop Mulacka's photo burnt in Kerala

KOCHI: Bishop Franko Mulakkal, the Jallandhar based chief of the Jesus Congregation, and facing trial in a Kerala court for alleged sexual exploitation of a nun, is back in the news. This time, a section of the laity came out in the open on Monday morning and burnt copies of the 2021 calendar that featured picture of the controversial bishop issued by the Thrissur Archdiocese.

It is customary on the part of the Thrissur Archdiocese to publish the annual calendar every year that features photographs of bishops hailing from the Archdiocese. Since Bishop Mulackal hails from the archdiocese, "Catholic Church", its mouthpiece had included his picture in the page featuring March 2021. All the 12 pages in the calendar has pictures of bishops who were born in the respective months.

But Father Raphael Akkamattathil, managing director of the publication, told media persons that there was nothing

abnormal in publishing the photograph of the Bishop. "He is still functioning as the head of the Jesus Congregation in his position as bishop. Well, there is a case against him in a Kerala court. But the court has not pronounced its verdict. So there is no need to remove his picture from the calendar," said Fr Akkamattathil.

Jaison Mazhuvancherry, a Catholic youth based in Pulluvazhi said till the Bishop is declared as an accused by the court, it was not proper to stage demonstrations of this kind. The copies of the calendars were burnt under the auspices of the Catholic Church Reforms Committee, Church Act Action Council and United Christian Movement.

Bishop Mulakkal declined to make any comments on the issue. "I am facing charges in a court. Let the court declare its verdict. Till then it is not fair on my part to make any comments on this issue. All I could say is that let God Almighty save everybody," he told The Pioneer. **PNS**

AIMIM gears up political activity in Bengal

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

After Bihar the All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen's (AIMIM) has turned its attention on Bengal.

With the Assembly elections scheduled to take place in mid 2021 AIMIM chief Asaduddin Owaisi has aired his view to visit Bengal sometime soon.

He is known to have conducted a meeting of senior party functionaries at Hyderabad. The meeting held on Saturday with party representatives from Bengal has been said to be "satisfactory". The Bengal AIMIM leaders have told Owaisi that the situation in the State was perfect for his entry and that the party could get more support than expected from the minority voters, many of who are disillusioned with Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's style of functioning.

The meeting was held for taking their (Bengal leaders') detailed views with regards to upcoming polls and the political situation in the state, party sources said. According to sources Owaisi was briefed by the Bengal party leaders about AIMIM's areas of strength.

The meeting was "fruitful" Owaisi was quoted as saying. "He was briefed about the political situation in the State which he listened with quite interest and asked us whether we are prepared to jump into the electoral fray to which we said we can," a Bengal AIMIM leader said.

Bengal has about 27 per cent minority voters though in actual

terms it reaches 30 percent because the minority voter turnout is more than that of the majority community.

According to sources while the Muslims voters may impact about 125 out of 294 Assembly seats the AIMIM has a sizeable presence in about 35 seats.

The Trinamool Congress has recently come down heavily on the AIMIM and Owaisi for its alleged act of "cutting the anti-BJP votes." Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee whose party commands most of the Muslim votes told a recent meeting that "some parties from Hyderabad funded by the BJP are trying to come to Bengal... they will break the secular fabric of the State and help the BJP by cutting minority votes as they did in Bihar."

Disadvantaged students receive tablets for e-learning

Aligarh: Disruption caused by Covid-19 is no longer a hurdle for the girl students from lower-economic strata at the Women's College of Aligarh Muslim University (AMU). They are being provided with free tablets for access to online classes amid the pandemic.

At least 550 tablets have been purchased with a generous contribution by the Aligarh Alumni Association, Greater Chicago, USA. The Association has donated Rs 60 lakhs for the purchase of gadgets to provide the Women's College students from financially weaker backgrounds with technology mediated and digitally empowered learning during the Covid pandemic. **PNS**

Remember day man landed on moon: Scientist

Aligarh: For Aligarh Muslim University (AMU) alumnus, Dr Hashima Hasan, Program/Discipline Scientist at the NASA, USA; the fascination with space science began when she watched the Sputnik launch, stargazing a clear night sky offering an engrossing display of celestial bodies at her home town in Lucknow in 1957.

"I was a little girl back then, but the spectacular satellite launch made me eager to follow every success and failure in the newspaper. I clearly remember the day man landed on the moon," said Dr Hashima in her interview to the NASA STEM Stars. **PNS**

Srinagar: PSO of PDP leader killed by ultras

PNS ■ JAMMU

A personal security officer, deployed on security duty of a Peoples Democratic Party leader Haji Parvaiz Ahmad, was killed by unidentified terrorists at Asthan Mohalla area of Natipora in Srinagar on Monday.

According to ground reports, around 10.50 a.m terrorists opened indiscriminate firing at the front gate of the PDP leader and tried to gain access inside the house. One of the PSO's stationed there received bullet injuries and was rushed to the nearby hospital where he succumbed to his fatal injuries.

According to a Jammu and Kashmir police spokesman, at about 10:50 a.m, Srinagar



police received information about a terror crime incident at Natipora area of Srinagar district where terrorists had fired upon PSO of PDP leader.

The Police spokesman said, "Preliminary investigations revealed that terrorists had fired upon PSO of PDP leader Haji Parvaiz Ahmad at Asthan Mohalla Natipora. The injured

PSO was evacuated to nearby hospital for treatment where he succumbed to his injuries and attained martyrdom."

He has been identified as Sgt Manzoor Ahmad of 11th BN Security," he added.

Later, the mortal remains of the martyred cop were handed over to his family in Srinagar after a formal wreath laying ceremony at DPL, Srinagar. DGP Dilbagh Singh, IGP, Kashmir range Vijay Kumar along with other senior officers paid rich floral tributes to the martyred cop. **PNS**



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Now, hunger strike

As the farmers mount pressure and remain intransigent, the Govt seeks more discussion. Will price guarantee work for it?



This is unlike any other civil protest in recent times and has outlasted them in terms of commitment to a cause, unity despite provocation or temptation and a determination to be heard. The farmers' intransigence would seem egoistic in the face of liberalisation of the agricultural sector and reforms which are intended to set up an enabling architecture for increasing its GDP percentage. But the farmers fear that the gains of the new farm laws would not percolate down to them and have rightly expressed fears of their negotiating power losing out to the largescale corporatisation it involves. And the Government, by pushing the laws in

haste, has lost out on the virtues of consensus that could have ensured acceptance of its policies and addressed the angst of farmers. And though it is considering a clause-by-clause discussion on the Acts now, the fact is the farmers' protests have now escalated across the country: From demonstrations, sit-ins and road blockades to hunger strikes now. For its part, the Government is no longer relying only on Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar but, with Union Home Minister Amit Shah stepping in, even high-profile Ministers with heartland appeal like Rajnath Singh are playing the negotiator. Singh said the recent reforms had been undertaken with the best interests of "farmer brothers" in mind and that agriculture was one sector that had managed to avoid the lows of a pandemic-hit economy and had ensured the nation's food security. But the reconciliatory moves so far have not yielded any results, with the farmers still firm on the repeal of the farm laws. They simply want a level playing field. Experts may argue that the protest is largely being spearheaded by agitationists from Punjab and Haryana, who have benefitted since the Green Revolution because of the Government's guaranteed pickup of volumes and fixed rates, namely the Minimum Support Price (MSP), and are stuck on cash-rich prospects of wheat and rice. Of course, this assurance has meant an over-dependence on water-intensive crops like paddy and wheat, which is depleting aquifers and crop diversity. However, farmers argue that they would be incentivised to grow other crops provided the MSP was guaranteed for all and not selectively and new laws alone would not even out the imbalance. In the end, the Government has to give a price guarantee of sorts as the Minimum Support Price (MSP) has itself become unremunerative given rising input costs. Farmers are naturally wary of competitive prices in the open market that would lower their earnings. In such a scenario, the Government has to probably do some direct cash transfers to them, grading their capacities, as a transitional measure to a new system. The reason why farmers are not buying into its claim that MSP and Government *mandis* will co-exist is because price equalisation in an open market would mean that the parallel market would be weakened over time.

Of course, the small and marginal farmers, the lot of whom the Acts intend to improve, would still be dependent on some sort of mediatory intervention to deal with food majors. With most of them not literate enough about exercising their rights, dispute resolution could also end up being loaded against them. The Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement on Price Assurance and Farm Services Act, 2020, seeks to bring uniformity in contractual farming rules and State APMC Acts. So the farmer can now enter into a contract with a corporate entity at a mutually agreed price. The problem here is that the mechanism for price fixation is not codified and farmers fear that corporations could use their might to manipulate or browbeat them into accepting their terms. Finally, the Essential Commodities (Amendment) Act, 2020, aims to remove cereals, pulses, oilseeds, edible oils, onion and potatoes from a regulated list, which is being seen as a major threat to the food security of the poor. Besides, most farmers do not have or cannot afford the post-harvest warehousing and processing storage this involves. They would willy nilly have to depend on food corporations. A licence won't be required to trade in farm produce and anyone with a PAN card can now buy directly from the farmers. Growers want they be registered too, considering they have a trusted bond with their existing commission agents, as their licence is proof enough of their credibility and delivery abilities. Governments like Punjab are obviously upset that access to another market would dry up their own revenue from their APMC *mandis* and are seeing this as an affront to federal controls. Farmers are not entirely without reason, battling as they are bad loans and non-payment of sugarcane dues in Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan. They do not want to be swamped. And while the Opposition is hoping to make good on a political capital that farmers are, the fact is they themselves are not throwing up any pragmatic alternatives. The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), which had initially stayed away from the farmers' stir, is now deciding to fast with them. Yet the Opposition disunity is the reason that it failed to block the Ordinance on farm reforms or muster enough numerical strength to shout out the ruling party in the Rajya Sabha, force a debate and discussion in the House or at least make sure that the legislation was scrutinised by parliamentary committees. Of course, farmers have not let parties take the upper hand and are in it for the long haul. For the Government, it's impossible to go back unless it brings in another supportive law to convince farmers that they won't be cheated in the end.

It's Pink!

India will play Adelaide day-night Test with Kookaburra



This isn't India's first dance with a day-night Test but the first such match in strange away conditions. India has a lot of selection dilemmas ahead of the first Test in Australia that is being played at the Adelaide Oval. Ordinarily, this would have been written about in passing, just another Test series between India and Australia, the two pre-eminent cricket powers in the world, no matter what the English think. Yet, as we all know, this has been no ordinary year and the very fact that India is ending 2020 playing a Test match might have seemed improbable back in July or August. But the Indian Premier League and the first half of the Indian tour of Australia have passed without much of a Coronavirus scare and India surprised punters by even being competitive in the white-ball matches. But the Test in Adelaide is a first for India as it is our first away day-night match and even though India played a day-night match against Bangladesh at Eden Gardens, this one is being played with the strange (to Indian players) Kookaburra pink ball and will be a unique test of skill.

It could also be a preview of future India-Australia series, with the day-night fixtures being far more attractive to Indian television audiences who will be spared a five o'clock alarm, given that the first session starts at a surprisingly attractive 2.30 PM India time. The fact is that more day-night Tests in Australia will allow for more viewers in India, thanks to the vagaries of time zones and ergo, more television (and online) advertising revenue for the rights holders. This could work well with day-night Tests in India with England as well. Few other global sports have innovated as much as cricket with three recognised and popular formats, and even changes to those formats. Purists might argue that the constant tinkering devalues the sport, but it also brings in a whole new fan base not just in established markets but across the world. *The Financial Times* recently reported that a new IPL-style franchise cricket league is being created in the United States and, with the significant diaspora population in the US, not just Indians but also those from the Caribbean and England, cricket is possibly the most innovative of all major global sports. If this day-night Test fixture between the top two cricketing nations works, the sky might be the limit.

Budget for compassion

The Government's Budget-making exercise in COVID times must handhold the domestic industry as well as look for resource mobilisation avenues



BINDU DALMIA ATUL JOSHI

Closer to the Union Budget-making exercise, Finance Ministers are compelled to recall Kautilya's "capacity to pay" principle from the *Arthashastra* that a tax collector should collect taxes "just as a bee collects honey from a flower, without disturbing its petals". For fiscal 2021/22, this will be a daunting task as any FM would rather sting like the bee from any source that yielded supernatural gains while remaining benign towards the most afflicted sectors. The focus of this article is to put oneself into the Government's shoes and suggest possible avenues for raising revenues while also offering relief, where necessary.

The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) estimates that for each month of containment, there is a need to factor in two per cent loss of annual GDP. The IMF advises that during periods of hardship, Governments must go slow in restoring public finances as raising taxes must be commensurate with resumption of economic activity.

As India entered the crisis with weak balance sheets in banks, shadow banks and corporates, their current state of recovery or indebtedness cannot be determined till the next fiscal year due to moratoriums and the 'standstill clause' in operation to avoid the NPA tag on COVID-hit companies that have gone in for restructuring loans. Should some sectors have gotten further singled in the last nine months, two risks get compounded: The systemic risks of increased NPAs; and the increased number of retail loans coming under pressure due to debt servicing limitations of borrowers whose income growth is uncertain.

Central avenues for taxation: Ideally, how should countries tax after the pandemic?

As nations compete for investment and jobs, taxation is one of the competitive levers to attract FDI as well as to encourage domestic consumption and Capex expansion.

But most likely, new taxes on the "super profits" of digital internet companies will be the key avenue for raising revenue. We, therefore, must think of applying a higher corporate tax rate on large corporations in 'oligopolised sectors' with excess rates of return, just for a limited one-year period.

Second, though wealth tax was abolished in 2015-16, the



scope for raising just one-time revenues through this avenue cannot be underestimated in the post-COVID times.

However, this does not call for reverting permanently to the days of wealth tax and estate duty as that would amount to unfair and double taxation.

Indians who have made it to the world's richest lists must be taxed progressively higher than a normal HNI. Super-HNIs, according to the *IIFL Wealth Hurun India Rich List 2019*, have an average net worth of ₹5,000 crore among the 953 richest Indians. Their combined net worth is a quarter of India's GDP. Levying even a one-time, say a four per cent, WT on them can yield much-needed additional resources. Such provisions should be one-off in nature, applicable for just one fiscal year.

Other prospective avenues for raising revenue are:

Introduce Leave Travel & Stay Allowance (LTSA):

While high-frequency data points to a firm recovery in consumption, manufacturing, retail, housing and consumer durables, the losses in the contact-intensive services sectors of aviation, tourism and hospitality have suffered irrecoverable losses.

Every rupee spent on tourism has a threefold impact on the economy. Tourism creates maximum employment across the economic classes of labour. One way to boost tourism is to announce a relief package directly impacting the expenditure budget of the Government. The other is to announce benefits to the masses. The existing Leave Travel Allowance scheme is riddled with several strictures.

The Government may introduce LTSA as deductible income for FY22 and FY23 provided it is spent only in India, allow hotel and stay expenses and multiple vacations be allowed. The Government may recover the

tax foregone through increased spending and GST recovery.

Education Fee Deduction:

The education fee deduction was set up many decades ago at ₹200 per child. Today it will not cover the cost of even a textbook. This needs reinstatement to realistic levels. A deduction of ₹25,000 for formal education from pre-primary to graduation level or its equivalent and ₹50,000 for Post-Graduation/professional courses per child annually for a maximum of two children should be allowed. This will help achieve Sustainable Development Goals as set by the UN and adopted by India.

Special WFH Allowance:

People have had to redesign their homes for creating work space and have incurred expenses to that effect.

A special allowance of ₹1,00,000 must be allowed for FY 2020-21 and FY 2021-22. The actual expense incurred to redesign, repair, purchase PCs, laptops, internet devices and so on should be allowed.

Special levy on fliers:

The Government may impose a special COVID levy of ₹500 on the economy class and ₹1,00,000 on business class on international travel. A special levy of ₹100 may be imposed on domestic air travellers. By imposing a small amount, the travel is not rendered uneconomical. The Government may make a revenue of ₹3,500 crore from seven crore international travellers and ₹3,000 crore from 30 crore domestic travellers.

Creation of strategic holding companies for banks, PSUs and infrastructure:

The Government should transfer its holdings in all banks, PSUs and special institutions such as NABARD, NHAI, PFC and REC to a sector-specific holdco. This holdco should receive funding from the Government which can be lever-

aged and then given to operating companies as debt or equity. This will ease the Government's burden of supporting companies through fiscal allocation.

The Government may contribute Viability Gap Funding (VGF) as equity in holdcos which, in turn, invests the same as equity in infrastructure projects. The repayment of debt of holdcos could be from dividend income and/or sale of investment. Holdco structure would allow timing of disinvestment instead of fire-sale. Besides, consolidation of land holdings of subsidiaries could help achieve affordable housing targets as well.

Also, nations will be in a wait-and-watch mode before recalibrating their domestic policies depending on whether the Joe Biden administration retains status quo on Donald Trump era's taxation which lowered corporate rates to 25 per cent.

Future avenues for State taxation:

The ratio of States' debt to GDP is poised to rise to a decadal high of 36 per cent this fiscal, according to a CRISIL report. Given the massive tax shortfall due to higher spending on health and relief measures, States must look to enhance their own tax base through the avenues still within their purview, like agriculture and land by:

Affluent farmers' net income above ₹1 crore must come under the tax net by taking a three-year average of earnings (permitting them this benefit due to climate variations). In 1969, the KN Raj Committee had first initiated the suggestion to tax farm income. But it has never been acted upon as political considerations have outweighed economic considerations. There is no economic rationale for excluding such large earners

out of the tax base. Since this will require a constitutional amendment with the support of States, let the entire proceeds of such collections devolve upon States as *quid pro quo*. This will also reduce the devolution commitment of the Union. The sense of inequitable treatment will be addressed that emanates from this sector getting the largesse of farm loan incentives without tax obligations. Taxing income of *arhatiyas* needs to be introduced given high income levels. As per the Panjab University, Patiala, report of 2016, in Punjab alone around ₹1,400 crore was outstanding as loan from *arhatiyas* at 12 per cent to 18 per cent interest.

Lowering of stamp duty, as Maharashtra and Gujarat have done, will increase construction activity and bring in more revenue through economic activity. Lowering stamp duty in conjunction with low interest rates is a big incentive for home buyers. The case for lowering stamp duty varies between 2 per cent to 7 per cent. This reduction will boost real estate transactions, encourage price transparency and encourage fuller declaration of capital gains.

Lastly, it is time to dispense with an aggressive, adversarial and target-oriented tax department for encouraging compliance and reducing litigation. The taxpayer must be treated as partner in nation building. For building a stronger India, it is imperative for the policy-makers to balance welfare with growth; laying out a red carpet that facilitates FDI but also handholds all sections of the domestic industry.

(Dalmia is a columnist and Chairperson NCFIL at Niti Aayog and Joshi is Founder & CEO Oyster Capital and ex-CEO India Ratings)

SOUNDBITE

The Government is ready to renegotiate with farmer leaders and when the real leaders come forward, they will find avenues for solutions.

Agriculture Minister
—Narendra Singh Tomar



We must acknowledge the then governments of India and the UK for bringing Father of the Nation Sheikh Mujibur Rahman back home alive in 1972.

B'desh Foreign Minister
—AK Abdul Momen



Asians are at the top of most companies in this country. We are killing it in America. We are gaining both visibility and power. The recent election was our coming out party.

US actor of Indian origin
—Ravi Patel



Our fitness tests in the strength, weight, speed and muscle components show we are on target. We are close to the level we showcase in international matches.

Indian hockey head coach
—Graham Reid



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Be cautious on farm laws

Sir — The Opposition and many trade bodies are opportunistically supporting the farmer agitation, reminiscent of when a moribund BJP revived itself by jumping onto the Anna Hazare-led India Against Corruption bandwagon.

Now the boot is on the other foot. The ruling party is trying to discredit farmer leaders and attempting to drive a wedge among their groupings. There is genuine fear that APMCs may collapse as a result of these laws and farmers will then be at the mercy of corporates. When procurement through MSP is delayed or denied, farmers under duress will fall into the clutches of corporations run by oligarchs.

The unsolved question, therefore, is how to ensure that the reforms do not lead to monopoly or cartelisation? Equally important is the issue of federalism, as agriculture is a State subject. The States play a critical role in the sector but they have scarcely been involved in the passing of farm laws. If the Government admits that no one has a magic formula for societal and economic problems, it will open up avenues for dialogue and lead to faster and amicable solutions.

Shovanlal Chakraborty
Kolkata

New Parliament building has little value

The NDA Government's "new Parliament" is all set for take-off. The Central Vista project's launch has attracted both bouquets and brickbats. PM Narendra Modi's ambition is to ensure that the upscale building is ready for India's 75th Independence Day celebration in 2020. The Centre has said it wants to free up the Lutyens space and bring more Government ministries under a common roof, apart from housing the Vice-President and the Prime Minister.

Also, since the freeze on the number of Parliament seats is going to end in 2026 and it would pave the way for delimitation, States are likely to send more representation to the Lower House, and consequently to the Upper House, through possible amendments. It will necessitate more space.

But what about the mammoth cost to be incurred? ₹20,000 crore is no small change.

What's wrong with the existing building? It is a 93-year-old imposing structure which is not just a building. It symbolises the spirit of Indian democracy that has stood the test of time. Yes, the structure looks old, but it looks grand. The massive colonial product has been made their own by Indian leaders over the years. The very fact that the Government plans to convert the old Parliament into a muse-



um has pained observers.

Felling of innumerable trees to make way for the sprawling 64,500 sq m building is another hotly disputed issue that has threatened to go out of hand. It is clear that laws and guidelines pertaining to land clearance and environment were bypassed while visualising and executing the 'new Parliament' plan. The Opposition parties have cried foul; of course they were not consulted because the Centre would rather rush ahead with a grand project which would have anyway met with their disapproval.

Ganapathi Bhat
Akola

Farmers beat COVID?

Sir — Lakhs of farmers are protesting against the three farm laws for the past 20 days but not a single Coronavirus case has been reported from the huge gatherings. It leads one to wonder whether the figures and data released by the Government are bogus and aimed only at creating

fear to extract money from the people in the form of treatment and facilities by doctors, hospitals, testing laboratories and chemists.

This has resulted in some people not reporting COVID symptoms and taking home treatment to avoid being cheated by health professionals who are looting patients. However, the farmers are well organised in the

aspect of healthcare and have a medical team with them.

Bhagwan Thadani
Mumbai

Cheetah times return

Sir — After 70 long years, cheetah is going to be reintroduced on Indian soil. The apex wildlife body of India has started evaluating sites for the big cat's reintroduction.

The site evaluators must think hard about the required prey base, water availability, climate and topography before shortlisting/ finalising the sites. Also, for the longevity of this project, a suitable budget must be allocated for anti-poaching squads, CCTVs, drones and other paraphernalia. From environmental bio-diversity to sustainable tourism, all points of view seem to merge into what looks like a win-win situation.

Sunil Chilwal
Haldwani

Cattle insurance scheme

Sir — The Madhya Pradesh Government has launched 'Pashu Dhan Bima Yojana' under which an insurance cover would be offered to indigenous cattle owned by farmers. This will help them mitigate the losses they suffer due to the death of their cattle.

The scheme has been implemented across the State. It is a welcome step and one hopes that the scheme will benefit the maximum number of farmers and encourage them to adopt animal husbandry as a livelihood option.

Amit Singh Kushwaha
Satna

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Reimagine healthcare

In the future, telehealth benefits for employees will be an integral component of a firm's plans for the well-being of its staff



VIKRAM THAPLOO

The COVID-19 pandemic has pushed healthcare to the forefront of every organisation's agenda. Businesses across the world have adapted to telecommuting, reconfigured work environments and logistics and updated operating protocols to cope with the effects of the global health emergency. While there has always been a correlation between the health of the population and the economy, never has it been more apparent than in the COVID era. Governments across the globe have realised that investing in the health of the population can not only improve the quality of life of citizens and mitigate the risk of a public health crisis, it can lead to greater economic returns and productivity, too.

The pandemic is set to cause a 4.5 per cent permanent loss to India's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), say experts. Poor health and loss of productive potential among the working population will only make things more difficult. If we want to achieve a healthier nation and minimise economic losses, we need to shift the focus to preventive care. A large percentage of economic benefits can be achieved with safer work environments, increasing access to medicines, preventive care and by encouraging workers to adopt healthier lifestyles. The rest will come from timely treatment of diseases with proven medical interventions.

Change is imperative: The switch to prevention is easier said than done. Not only does it necessitate the need to shift incentives in the existing healthcare systems to health promotion, but it foregrounds the need to make better health a policy prerogative, too. The contagion has also highlighted the importance of tackling non-communicable diseases (NCDs), which have been one of the leading causes of India's disease burden. NCDs are responsible for 61 per cent of the deaths in the country, and we need to focus on scaling up screening programmes and awareness drives to address chronic conditions like diabetes, hypertension, obesity, heart and lung diseases, stroke and cancer. A paradigm shift to focus on preventive care can be realised at a low cost and the implementation costs will be more than offset by the gains to productivity in healthcare delivery.

Time to rethink the healthcare architecture: The outbreak has demonstrated that it is possible to reevaluate healthcare service delivery. Reimagining workforce and patient flow in COVID-19 wards and a move to teleconsultations are just two notable transitions. People are already demonstrating that it is not that difficult to induce a behavioural shift by showing their readiness to wear masks, prioritise hand hygiene and reduce person-to-person interactions in order to help curtail the spread of the virus.

The contagion has also fast-tracked innovation and collaboration by scientists across the globe. If this is sustained, it can help us address major health conditions like cardiovascular diseases, cancers and mental health disorders. As of September this year, scientists have shared more than 50,000 genome sequences and close to 200 vaccines are in different stages of development. Many of these are the result of multi-sectoral, transnational collusions. Companies are playing a key role in the ongoing transformation and pharmaceutical giants, healthcare providers and the medical technology industry are an integral part of the pandemic response. They should further come up with ways to build on innovations and help do their part in the ongoing remodeling of healthcare systems. They must ensure the alignment of incentives and efficient collaboration to improve the overall health and prosperity of the population.

The corporate world needs to adapt: Companies outside the healthcare domain are also adapting to the crisis by revamping their organisational workflow and operation models. There is a strong economic case to be made for the need to invest in the health of their employees. In today's fast-paced and hectic corporate world, occupational risks are increasingly linked to mental health triggers, sleep hygiene and the level of physical activity. Mental health, too, is fast becoming a concern as the economic uncertainty associated with the pandemic is beginning to take its toll. Chronic conditions like migraines, back pain and mental health problems like anxiety and depression can reduce the productivity of workers and have a negative effect on the quality of life. Companies should seriously consider providing greater access to mental health services and more flexible working hours.

Encouraging workers to take advantage of telehealth and virtual programmes is the first step. Times like these bring a lot of uncertainty and anxiety, and people feel the need to talk to a counsellor. Mobility restrictions not only make that more difficult but also end up exacerbating symptoms of anxiety. That is precisely where telehealth comes into play. It will help people cope better in times of crises and induce a behavioural change in their attitudes towards seeking remote help, which is necessary as we increasingly adapt to a digitally-mediated life. By offering telehealth benefits, organisations will have an engaged and productive workforce while employees benefit from a convenient and readily accessible form of healthcare. In the future, telehealth benefits for employees will be an integral component of a firm's plans for the well-being of its staff.

(The writer is CEO Apollo TeleHealth)

WHILE THE AVAILABILITY OF THE SHOTS FOR KERALA IS AN ISSUE THAT WE WILL LOOK INTO, THE COVID VACCINES WILL BE GIVEN FOR FREE.

—KERALA CHIEF MINISTER
PINARAYI VIJAYAN

POINTCOUNTERPOINT



HE THINKS THE VACCINE WILL SAVE HIM FROM IMPENDING HUMILIATION AND IGNOMINY (AT THE HUSTINGS). BUT HE'S MISTAKEN.

—BJP STATE PRESIDENT
K SURENDRAN

Don't squeeze PSUs

The Govt should collect money from all those who owe it instead of squeezing CPSEs for bridging fiscal gaps. This is neither healthy for the economy nor good for the enterprises



UTTAM GUPTA

The Department of Investment and Public Asset Management (Dipam) has come out with a circular requiring Central Public Sector Enterprises (CPSEs) to pay interim dividend every quarter or half-yearly, depending on whether it is a relatively higher dividend (100 per cent or ₹10 on a share of ₹10) or less. Even those which can't pay the prescribed "minimum" must give an interim dividend. Further, at least 90 per cent of the projected annual dividend should be paid as interim. Even as the bureaucrats justify this in terms of easing cash flow and improving the investment sentiment, the reality is that the Government is squeezing CPSEs to lessen its fiscal woes. However, there are better and potent ways to do this; for instance, by plugging leakages in direct and indirect tax collections. The Centre should collect money from where it is due, instead of squeezing CPSEs for bridging its fiscal gaps.

The CPSEs have also been asked to pay the final dividend of the last financial year (FY) (April-March) soon after the Annual General Meeting (AGM) is over (normally, it is held in September of the FY) in cases where the interim dividend has not been paid out fully during the last FY and there is a balance to be paid out as final dividend.

A shareholder is eligible to receive dividend on the share capital held by him/her in a company if it makes profit in a year. The profit made is the revenue generated from its operations (sale of products or services or any other income source) minus expenses (on raw materials/other inputs, wages and salaries, interest payments and so on). While this is pre-tax profit, the surplus left after payment of tax or Profit After-Tax (PAT) is normally used for building resources such as capital reserves (to offset capital losses), securities premium reserve (used for buyback of shares), general reserves (used for working capital) and so on.

After appropriation to the reserves, the leftover amount is surplus cash, which can be used for paying the dividend. Therefore, the amount available for distributing the dividend is a derived figure through a complex process that has to keep in mind the overarching interest of running the enterprise in a robust and sustainable manner. This has to come from the company management. Unfortunately, in the case of CPSEs, leveraging its majority ownership and control, the Government follows a top down approach, issuing directions from time to time.

As a general principle, the guidelines issued by the Dipam require the CPSEs to pay a minimum annual dividend of 30 per cent of PAT or five per cent of the net worth, whichever is higher. This is seriously flawed. Given its financial position, the enterprise may not be able to afford the dividend as per this diktat of the Government. Yet, being forced to give can result in derailment of its business plans and impact its viability.

This was bad enough. Now, the Dipam has come out with excruciating directions on the "interim dividend." This is a dividend payment made before a company's Annual General Meeting (AGM) and the release of final financial statements (audited accounts and the balance sheet). Its declaration is normally accompanied by release of the company's interim financial statements. What is the need for interim dividend?

For any given FY (say, 2019-20 ending March 31), it takes time to prepare, process and finalise the financial statements, get these audited and approved in the AGM, which normally happens

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TO WRIGGLE OUT OF A TIGHT FISCAL SITUATION, THE GOVERNMENT IS GOADING THESE PUBLIC ENTERPRISES TO DIP INTO THEIR ACCUMULATED RESERVES ON THE ONE HAND AND TAKE RECOURSE TO BORROWINGS ON THE OTHER. TRUE, THIS WAY, THEY WILL BE ABLE TO FUND CAPITAL SPENDING. BUT THIS WILL MAKE THE ENTERPRISES OVER-LEVERAGED. SURELY, THIS IS NOT A SUSTAINABLE WAY OF FINANCING INVESTMENT



six months after the end of the FY. This means that the regular dividend can't be declared till that time (or September). Having to wait that long can make the shareholders jittery. The idea of declaring interim dividend — normally done towards the end of February/March of the concerned FY — is to put some cash in their hands. This practice is fairly logical as at the time of declaring the interim dividend, the FY is almost over and the management has got a broad idea of the profit/loss the company is expected to make. But to stretch it to a point where by the CPSE is asked to give "interim dividend" at the end of each of the four quarters or half-yearly (as contemplated in the Dipam circular) during the FY, is appalling.

The performance of a company can never be consistent throughout the year. If it has made "X" amount of profit during the first quarter (April-June) of the FY, it does not necessarily follow that in the remaining quarters, it will sustain this trend. The profit could be less or there could even be loss during subsequent quarters. In such a scenario, if interim dividend is paid in the first quarter, it will spell financial trouble for the enterprise even as payment once made can't be reversed after financials are finalised for the whole year.

Furthermore, directions such as forcing companies which can't pay dividend as per the prescribed "minimum," to pay interim dividend and that too at the end of the first half of the FY (during October/November) or payment of at least 90 per cent of the projected annual dividend, in one or more installments as interim dividend, are completely devoid of any logic.

By nature, an interim dividend can only be a small portion of the regular dividend. Yet, if 90 per cent is given as interim, it tantamounts to demeaning the very concept itself.

Bureaucrats have sought to justify quarterly/half-yearly payments citing that bunching of interim dividend

payouts in February-March may compete with their cash availability for year-end payments to suppliers, as well as towards advance tax. They also aver that this will improve investment sentiment by assuring investors of regular and certain dividend receipt during the year. The argument is untenable.

When to make payments to the suppliers and discharge other liabilities is purely a commercial matter and the company management is best equipped to ensure that these are met satisfactorily, without causing any cash flow problem. As regards investment sentiment, the investor sees the fundamentals of an enterprise and its ability to ensure a reasonable return on investment on a sustained basis — not by how frequently the dividend payment is made. The real reason behind issuing the obnoxious guidelines lies elsewhere.

The Union Government gets a good portion of its non-tax revenue as dividend receipts from CPSEs — surplus transfer from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and telecom spectrum receipts being the other major components. In recent years, these receipts have declined (courtesy, reduction in its shareholding in many profitable enterprises via disinvestment). For the current year, the situation has worsened. Against the Budget estimate of close to ₹66,000 crore, it has so far received only ₹10,000 crore.

This, together with a substantial decline in tax revenue (during April-September, this was only ₹4,60,000 crore. This is a reduction of about 33 per cent over the corresponding period last year) and the surge in expenditure due to COVID-19 has made the Government desperate. No wonder, it is making highly unrealistic demands.

Shockingly, the directive has come at a time when the profits of CPSEs have plunged due to the pandemic. If their financials don't justify payment of dividend (at the rate desired by the Centre), how does one expect them to

pay? This looks even more anomalous when seen in juxtaposition with the Government goading these very CPSEs to undertake spending on a massive scale (to make up for the substantial decline in investment by the private sector and, during the current year, by the Government too). How can the latter spend on projects and, at the same time, fill the coffers of the Centre?

To wriggle out of a tight fiscal situation, the Government is goading these public enterprises to dip into their accumulated reserves on the one hand and take recourse to borrowings on the other. True, this way they will be able to fund capital spending. But this will make the enterprises over-leveraged. Surely, this is not a sustainable way of financing investment.

The Government can't have the cake and eat it too. It can't keep on denuding the CPSEs and yet expect them to remain healthy and contribute to capital formation. To meet the rising expenditure and keep fiscal deficit within the prescribed ceiling, no doubt it needs to raise resources. But there are better ways. For instance, during 2019-20 (then the impact of the Coronavirus was not there), there was a shortfall of about ₹2,00,000 crore in tax collections vis-à-vis even revised estimates. Under the Goods and Services Tax, there are fraudulent claims of input tax credit of close to ₹1,00,000 crore since its launch from July 1, 2017. From the 'Vivad se Vishwas' initiative launched in the Budget for 2020-21 on direct tax demand of about ₹10,00,000 crore under dispute, the expected recovery is about ₹70,000 crore — a meagre seven per cent. The list is unending.

The message is loud and clear. The Government should collect money from all those who owe it instead of squeezing CPSEs for bridging its fiscal gaps. This is in no way healthy for the economy in the long run, nor is it sustainable for the CPSEs.

(The writer is a New Delhi-based policy analyst)

A swift end to farmers' stir desirable

The Centre as well as farmers should resolve the issue rather than prolonging it. This would be beneficial for the entire country



KALYANI SHANKAR

The continuing protests by the farming community for the last 20 days might be one of the biggest challenges of the Narendra Modi-led Government. Though the Centre is seized of the issue, the confrontation still continues. Perhaps it is time to look back and see how India went from being one of the largest food grain importers after Independence, to achieving self-sufficiency.

Former Prime Ministers Lal Bahadur Shastri and his successor Indira Gandhi were responsible for the Green Revolution in India. The food crisis began in the last year

of the Jawaharlal Nehru era, as the first two Five-Year Plans did not pay adequate attention to agriculture. In 1949 the Indian food situation was difficult and the foreign exchange position was worse. In November 1949 Nehru made his first visit to the US and during his talks with US President Harry Truman he mentioned the scarcity of food in India. Truman's response was positive, but bureaucratic hurdles, resistance in the US Congress, red-tapism and other difficulties, including the US' bid to barter wheat for strategic materials, ensured that there was no pact in the end.

As a result of the continued food shortages in some of the States, India witnessed riots. It was then that the country resorted to PL480 food grains as part of the US' policy of 'Food for Peace'. However, soon, India faced a crisis in the supply of food grains from the US, as President Lyndon Johnson's food politics was a puzzle even to his administration. However, it had a happy ending because, by the time Johnson left office, India experienced a Green Revolution.

Prime Minister Shastri had in his very

first month in office in June 1964 indicated a policy shift from heavy to light industry and towards consumer goods and agriculture. Shastri asked his Agriculture Minister Chidambaram Subramaniam to chalk out a new strategy to increase production. By giving the slogan "Jai Jawan, Jai Kisan" Shastri inspired both, farmers as well as farm scientists, to sow the seeds of the Green Revolution.

Meanwhile, within a few months of his second term in office, Lyndon Johnson decided to take a tougher approach to food grain supply to India and Pakistan. Johnson told his puzzled officials, "I will take care of the problem." He always waited till the last minute before personally authorising the shipments. Then American Ambassador to India, Chester Bowles, called the supply the "ship to mouth" programme as it never went through the warehouses.

After Indira Gandhi took over as the Prime Minister in January 1966 she continued the focus on agriculture. One of the first things Indira Gandhi sought from Johnson during her first visit to Washington as Prime

Minister in March 1966 was food aid. Though Johnson was bowled over by her charm he made it clear that the two primary conditions for the US' aid — self-help and more focus on agriculture — were necessary.

Things began to change for the better as India ushered in an era of expansion in the farm sector, which started with the introduction of high-yielding varieties of wheat in the late 1960s. With all the push for agriculture, coupled with the efforts of leading scientists like Dr MS Swaminathan, slowly India began to see improved yields and got closer to solving the chronic food shortages in the country.

Indira Gandhi made the Green Revolution a priority of her Government and along with new hybrid seeds, initiated State subsidies and ensured the provision of electricity, water, fertilisers and credit to farmers. Agricultural income was not taxable.

The result was that India became self-sufficient in food. This was something that Indira Gandhi wanted to achieve with all her heart, particularly given her frustration with Johnson's erratic and conditional food

aid. Once, as soon as she hung up after talking to Johnson, Indira Gandhi is reported to have said angrily, "I don't ever want us to have to beg for food again."

She hit back at Johnson and signed a declaration calling for an end to "imperialist aggression" against the Vietnamese people. Lyndon Johnson's response was swift and food grain shipments to India slowed down. But later, once Johnson was satisfied that the Green Revolution in India was on track, he became liberal and tried to get the support of other countries to share the burden with the US.

The World Bank, too, started a consortium for food supply. Today, India has achieved self-sufficiency as food production has gone up from less than 50 million tonnes (MT) in 1947 to 292 MT in 2019-20.

Meanwhile, Government investment in agriculture rose sharply, too. Apart from that, institutional credit, remunerative prices and the availability of new technology at low prices were facilitated. By the 1980s not only had India become self-sufficient in food grain production, it was exporting farm produce

to pay off its debts and loaning it to food-deficit countries, too.

Over the decades, successive governments have thrown sops at farmers, including large subsidies on power and fuel, but there has been little sustained or strategic effort to modernise the sector. The Modi Government, too, came up with several schemes for growers and is now talking of an 'Evergreen Revolution' in the farming sector.

However, the new farm laws seem to have created apprehensions among the farmers, who have been protesting on Delhi's borders since November 26. Though the Government has held six rounds of talks with farmers' organisations, there seems to be a trust deficit and the Opposition parties, too, have joined hands with the growers to attack the Government. The Centre as well as farmers should resolve the issue rather than prolonging it. This would be beneficial for the entire country. No one wants to see the nation's "amudata" suffering in the fields and on the streets, too.

(The writer is a senior journalist)

Electors meeting to formally choose Biden as next Prez

Washington: Presidential electors are meeting across the United States on Monday to formally choose Joe Biden as the nation's next president.

Monday is the day set by law for the meeting of the Electoral College. In reality, electors meet in all 50 states and the District of Columbia to cast their ballots.

The results will be sent to Washington and tallied in a January 6 joint session of Congress over which Vice President Mike Pence will preside.

The electors' votes have drawn more attention than usual this year because President Donald Trump has refused to concede the election and continued to make baseless allegations of fraud.

Biden is planning to address the nation Monday night, after the electors have voted. Trump, meanwhile, is clinging to his false claims that he won the election, but also undermining Biden's presidency even before it begins.

"No, I worry about the country having an illegitimate president, that's what I worry about. A president that lost and lost badly," Trump said in a Fox News interview that was taped Saturday.

Following weeks of Republican legal challenges that were easily dismissed by judges, Trump and Republican allies tried to persuade the



Supreme Court last week to set aside 62 electoral votes for Biden in four states, which might have thrown the outcome into doubt.

The justices rejected the effort on Friday.

Biden won 306 electoral votes to 232 votes for Trump. It takes 270 votes to be elected.

In 32 states and the District of Columbia, laws require electors to vote for the popular-vote winner. The Supreme Court unanimously upheld this arrangement in July.

Electors almost always vote for the state winner anyway because they generally are devoted to their political party.

There's no reason to expect any defections this year. Among prominent electors are Democrat Stacey Abrams of Georgia and Republican Gov. Kristi Noem of South Dakota.

The voting is decidedly low tech, by paper ballot. Electors cast one vote each for president and vice president.

The Electoral College was the product of compromise during the drafting of the Constitution between those who favored electing the president by popular vote and those who opposed giving the people the power to choose their leader.

Each state gets a number of electors equal to their total number of seats in Congress: two senators plus however many members the state has in the House of Representatives.

Washington, D.C., has three votes, under a constitutional amendment that was ratified in 1961. With the exception of Maine and Nebraska, states award all their Electoral College votes to the winner of the popular vote in their state.

The bargain struck by the nation's founders has produced five elections in which the president did not win the popular vote. Trump was the most recent example in 2016. AP



People wait in line on the first day of advance voting for Georgia's Senate runoff election at the Bell Auditorium in Augusta, Georgia on Monday. AP

Biden's likely AG pick accused of sexual harassment by ex-aide

New York: A former aide to New York Gov Andrew Cuomo who is now running for Manhattan borough president accused him of sexual harassment in a series of tweets on Sunday, saying he made inappropriate comments about her appearance.

Lindsey Boylan tweeted that the Democratic governor "sexually harassed me for years. Many saw it, and watched." "I could never anticipate what to expect: would I be grilled on my work (which was very good) or harassed about my looks. Or would it be both in the same conversation? This was the way for years," she

continued. Boylan, 36, worked for the Cuomo administration from March 2015 to October 2018, serving first as executive vice president of Empire State Development, and then as a special adviser to Cuomo for economic development.

She did not provide details of the alleged harassment and didn't immediately respond to messages from The Associated Press. Boylan later tweeted, "To be clear: I have no interest in talking to journalists."

The Associated Press earlier reported that Joe Biden might consider Cuomo for the job of Attorney General. AP

Early in-person voting begins in Georgia Senate runoffs

Atlanta: What could be the main event in Georgia's twin US Senate runoffs — early in-person voting — begins on Monday.

More than half of the record 5 million votes in the November 3 general election were cast during the two-week early voting period. Early in-person voting could be even more important in the January 5 runoffs because of the short time frame

for voters to request and send back ballots by mail, as the two races decide which party will control the US Senate.

"It's very important," Democrat Raphael Warnock, who is challenging Republican US Senator Kelly Loeffler in one of the races, said Friday after a speech to labor union canvassers.

"It's how we won in the general and it's how we're going to

win in the runoff." No one expects turnout to be as high in the Warnock-Loeffler contest or the race between US Senator David Perdue and Democrat Jon Ossoff. But Bernard Fraga, an Emory University professor who studies voting, said overall turnout could rise as high as four million.

More than 125,000 people cast ballots in October on the first day of early in-person vot-

ing before the general election. Gabriel Sterling, election system implementation manager for the Georgia Secretary of State, said he expects a surge of people on Monday. Some Atlanta-area early voting sites in October and November saw people frequently lined up for hours.

"As always, on the first day of early voting, it's kind of like when the iPhone comes out," Sterling said last week. "People

want to go get the new iPhone at the Apple store. They're going to stand in line for a while."

One question is how many mail-in ballots will be cast in the election. By Friday, 1.2 million mail-in ballots had been requested and 200,000 returned. In the general election, Democrat Joe Biden won 65 per cent of the 1.3 million absentee ballots that were returned, a record fueled by the coronavirus pandemic. AP

Iran President says Israel was behind killing of scientist

Tehran: Iran's President Hassan Rouhani on Monday claimed that Israel was behind the killing of a scientist who founded the Islamic Republic's military nuclear program in the 2000s in an effort to start a war in the last days of President Trump's administration.

Rouhani's comments in a news conference marked the first time he has directly accused the Jewish state of carrying out the killing of Mohsen Fakhrizadeh late last month.

Israel, long suspected of killing Iranian nuclear scientists over the last decade, has repeatedly declined to comment on the attack. "Waging instability and war in the final days of the Trump administration was the main aim of the Zionist regime in the assassination," Rouhani said.

Rouhani vowed to avenge the killing but said his country will not allow Israel to decide the "time or venue" of any retaliatory action. He said Iran will not allow instability in the region. Fakhrizadeh headed Iran's so-called AMAD pro-



gramme, which Israel and the West have alleged was a military operation looking at the feasibility of building a nuclear weapon.

The International Atomic Energy Agency says that "structured program" ended in 2003. US intelligence agencies concurred with that assessment in a 2007 report.

After the killing of Fakhrizadeh, a top Iranian security official, Ali Shamkhani, accused Israel of using "electronic devices" to remotely kill the scientist.

Israel insists Iran still maintains the ambition of developing nuclear weapons, pointing to Tehran's ballistic missile program and research into other technologies. Iran long has maintained that its nuclear programme is for peaceful purposes. AP

US court rejects bail plea of 26/11 accused Tahawwur Rana

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

A US court has denied the bail plea of Pakistani-origin Canadian businessman Tahawwur Rana, a key accused in the 2008 Mumbai terror attack and declared a fugitive by India, asserting that he has not negated the "risk of flight".

Rana, 59, a childhood friend of David Coleman Headley, was rearrested on June 10 in Los Angeles on an extradition request by India for his involvement in the Mumbai terror attack in which 166 people, including six Americans,

were killed.

Pakistani-American LeT terrorist Headley was involved in plotting the 2008 Mumbai terror attack. He was made an approver in the case, and is currently serving a 35-year prison term in the US for his role in the attack.

Magistrate Judge Jacqueline Chooljian, the US District Court of Los Angeles, in his order on December 10 said that Rana "presented a robust bail package" and offered conditions that significantly mitigate the risk of flight.

But the "Court cannot find that he has negated the risk of flight" and as such granted the request of the US government to the continued detention of Rana.

Meanwhile, the US government in the court has supported India's request that the documents submitted by it in support of extradition of Rana be not made public.

The extradition documents presented by India apparently include information about Rana's involvement in the Mumbai terrorist attack that would be shared with him.

Oli Govt tacitly supporting pro-monarchists: Nepal Opp

Kathmandu: Nepal's main Opposition party Nepali Congress on Monday accused the KP Sharma Oli Government of tacitly supporting pro-monarchy rallies that have recently surfaced in different parts of the country, demanding reinstatement of constitutional monarchy and re-establishing the country as a Hindu state.

Nepali Congress President Sher Bahadur Deuba, addressing a massive anti-government demonstration in Hetauda in central Nepal, alleged that "Prime Minister Oli seems to have been standing behind those who are staging demonstrations."

"Otherwise, how come they are taking to the streets freely at the moment?" Deuba questioned.

Former prime minister Deuba, however, ruled out the possibility of revival of monarchy at present.

"There should not be any illusion at all about reinstatement of monarchy in the country," he said.

Deuba was pointing to the recently held demonstrations by loyalists of ex-King Gyanendra in different parts of the country, including capital city Kathmandu that demanded the government to declare Nepal a Hindu state and restoration of monarchy. PTI

Study: Bacteria can travel from one continent to another in atmospheric dust

London: Some bacteria can travel from one continent to another 'hidden' in atmospheric dust, according to a new study which says these microbes may not only affect human and animal health, but also impact climate and ecosystems.

The research, published in the journal Atmospheric Research, deciphered the mystery of the transport of microorganisms across continents via 'giant' atmospheric particles called iberulites that could be inhaled by humans.

According to scientists, including those from the University of Granada (UGR) in Spain, these aerosols act like a "launch vehicle" for bacteria, and may pose risk of disease transmission across continents.

They explained that iberulites are giant atmospheric bioaerosols made of multiple minerals, measuring on average one hundred microns approximately.

While these bioaerosols were discovered in 2008, the scientists said the mechanism by which bacteria are involved in the formation of atmospheric iberulites remained unknown.

In the current study, the researchers analysed atmospheric dust deposits in the city of Granada in Spain. PTI

Sudan no longer on list of terror sponsors: US Embassy

AP ■ CAIRO

The US Embassy in Khartoum said on Monday that President Donald Trump's administration has removed Sudan from the US List of state sponsors of terrorism, a move that could help the African country get international loans to revive its battered economy and end its pariah status.

The US Embassy in Khartoum said in a Facebook post that the removal of Sudan was effective as of Monday, and that a notification to that effect, signed by U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, would be

published in the Federal Register.

It said the 45-day congressional notification period has lapsed.

The designation of Sudan as a state sponsor of terrorism dates back to the 1990s, when Sudan briefly hosted al-Qaida leader Osama bin Laden and other wanted militants. Sudan was also believed to have served as a pipeline for Iran to supply weapons to Palestinian militants in the Gaza Strip.

Delisting Sudan is also a key incentive for the government in Khartoum to normalise relations with Israel.

Singapore OK's Pfizer vaccine, first shipment expected by end-Dec: PM

Singapore: Singapore has approved the Covid-19 vaccine developed by American pharmaceutical giant Pfizer and German firm BioNTech and the first shipment will arrive by the end of this month, Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong announced on Monday.

Lee, in a televised address on Singapore's Covid-19 situation, said the Health Sciences Authority (HSA) approved the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine after studying the scientific evidence and clinical trial data.

He said other vaccines are also expected to arrive in the coming months, and the country "will have enough vaccines for everyone" by the third quarter of next year if all goes according to plan, the Channel News Asia reported. PTI



Officials show seized crystal methamphetamine during a press conference in Penang on Malaysia. AP

MALAYSIA MAKES ITS LARGEST-EVER CRYSTAL METH SEIZURE

Kuala Lumpur (Malaysia): Malaysian authorities have seized more than two tons of crystal methamphetamine worth more than \$26 million aboard a small boat off the country's western coast, the largest ever such haul in the

country's history.

The Malaysian Maritime Enforcement Agency said over the weekend that it made the seizure on December 9 off the coast of Penang.

The agency said in a statement that a maritime patrol

found the drugs on a recreational boat that was behaving strangely. Methamphetamine is illicitly smuggled across much of Southeast Asia, China and Australia, part of a multi-billion dollar illegal trade in the drug. AP

GOVERNMENT OF JAMMU AND KASHMIR
OFFICE OF MATERIALS MANAGEMENT OFFICER (PURCHASE I)
SHER-I-KASHMIR INSTITUTE OF MEDICAL SCIENCES
SOURA, SRINAGAR - 190011
Tel/FAX NO.: 0194-2403929, email: ammopurchase1@skims.ac.in

E-NIT NO: SIMS 325 (P 1st) Drugs Tender 07 OF 2020
DATED: 12/12/2020

Sub: Notice inviting e-tenders for Purchase of Drugs/Medicines on two year Rate Contract basis.

E-tenders are invited for and on behalf of Lt. Governor UT of Jammu & Kashmir, through Director, Sher-I-Kashmir Institute of Medical Sciences Soura Srinagar, from Manufacturers (self Manufacturers) having valid Drug License/ GST registration and all other pre-qualification documents as per tender requirement) for supply of Drugs/ Medicines to SKIMS Soura and SKIMS Medical College-Hospital Bemina Srinagar, on two year Rate Contract basis to be submitted under **Two Bid Cover System- Cover I "Technical Bid" & Cover II "Price Bid"**. The tender documents/detailed specification are available at www.jktenders.gov.in & www.skims.ac.in

S. No.	Description	Tender Fee	Earnest Money
1.	Supply of Drugs/Medicines.	Rs. 2,000/-	Rs. 1,00,000/-

S.No.	Nomenclature.	Schedule.
1.	Dated of publish	12-12-2020
2.	Tender Download Start Date	12-12-2020 (at 3pm)
3.	Clarification Start date	12-12-2020 (at 3pm)
4.	Last date of clarification if any	19-12-2020 (up to 2pm)
5.	Bid Submission Start Date	23-12-2020 (at 2 pm)
6.	Bid Submission End Date	11-01-2021 (up to 2pm)
7.	Technical Bid Open Date	14-01-2021 (at 11:30am)
8.	Financial Bid Open Date	To be notified separately.

The tenders should be submitted strictly in accordance with the provisions of the detailed e-NIT.

No: SIMS 325 (P1st) Drugs Tender 07 of 2020- 9900-06
Dated: 12.12.2020
Sd/- Materials Management Officer
Purchase I, SKIMS

PUBLIC NOTICE

That my client Sh. Ratan Lal S/o Sh. Ram Chander & his Wife Smt. Rupwati R/o Jhuggi No.909 Block - G Jahangir Puri, Delhi-110033 are Debar their real son PARAS from their all movable and immovable properties and relations due their hostile & cruel behaviour. My client will not be responsible for their any acts.

Madan Gopal Vachar (Advocate)
 Ch. No. 236 Civil Wing, Tis Hazari Court, Delhi-110054

PUBLIC NOTICE

My clients Balraj Kumar & Meera Rani both R/o C-90A, Block-C, Janta Flats, Shivaji Enclave, Raghuraj Nagar, Delhi, have debarred their daughter Koshiki from all their movable and immovable properties and severed their all relations with her, my clients shall not be responsible for any act in future.

Y. K. Sharma (Advocate)
 Ch. No. F-510, F Block, Karkardooma Court Complex, Delhi

PUBLIC NOTICE

This is for information of the general public, that my client Sh. Divakar Sharma S/o Late Shri Ghanashyam Dutt, R/o T-13/703, CWG Village, Delhi is in judicial custody in Mandoli Jail, Delhi. Since 12.06.2018 in FIR No. 66/17, PS EDW, Delhi. It has come to the knowledge of my client that some signed cheques belonging to his personal account and also to the account of the company PSA Impex Pvt. Limited have been misused by the official of the company PSA Impex Pvt. Ltd. Therefore the general public is hereby informed that no cheque belonging to any account and signed by my client be not accepted for payment. In case they do so it will be at their own cost, risk and liability.

Ami Sinha (Advocate)
 Ch. No. G-724, Karkardooma Court Complex, Delhi

NOTICE

Notice of the General Meeting of M/s. ATULYAM MULTI STATE MULTI PURPOSE COOPERATIVE SOCIETY LIMITED

The Annual General Meeting of the Society is going to be held at C-58, FIRST FLOOR, COMMUNITY CENTRE, JANAKPURI, NEW DELHI, DELHI - 110058 on 30.12.2020 at 11:00 AM. Agenda for the meeting is available at the Registered Office of the Society. List of members eligible to vote can be obtained from the registered office of the society, at C-58, FIRST FLOOR, COMMUNITY CENTRE, JANAKPURI, NEW DELHI, DELHI - 110058 on application with payment of Rs. 10/- (Other documents and other details are available on notice board at registered office.

Ms. Shukti O Pandit
 Returning Officer

GOVERNMENT OF JAMMU AND KASHMIR
OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER MECHANICAL
HOSPITAL AND CENTRAL HEATING DIVISION SRINAGAR
Telefax :- 0194-2496089, Email Id:- xenmhchdk@yahoo.in

Gist of e-tender NIT No: MHCHD/TS/2020-21/223/e-tendering
Dated: 11.12.2020

For and on behalf of the Lt. Governor of Jammu and Kashmir UT, e-tenders, valid for 180 days, are invited from the **Registered, reputed & experienced firms** as detailed in the NIT for below mentioned works:

Name of Work:- Installation of Central Heating System and Hot and Cold Air Conditioners at Surgical OPD of SMHS Hospital, Srinagar.
Est. Cost (Rs. in Lacs) :- 5.00
Cost of T/Doc. (In rupees) :- 200
Earnest Money (Lacs of Rs):- 10000
Time of completion (in Days) :- 10
Position of AAA/funds:- Available

1. Downloading of Bids:- The NIT Consisting of qualifying information, eligibility criteria, specifications, Bill of quantities (B.O.Q), Set of terms and conditions of contract and other details can be seen from the departmental website www.jktenders.gov.in from **12.12.2020 (18.00 hrs)** and can be downloaded from **12.12.2020 (18.00 hrs)**.

2. Uploading: The bidders shall deposit their bids in electronic format on the above web site from **14.12.2020 (10.00 hrs) to 21.12.2020 (16:00hrs)** in two (02) covers.

3. Opening of Bids:- The bids received upto due date and time shall be opened on **22.12.2020 at 14.00 hrs or any date convenient to the department in the office of Executive Engineer, MHCHD, Srinagar.**

Sd/- Executive Engineer, MHCHD, Srinagar
 No. DIPK-10381/20 Dated:- 14.12.2020

Tatas, Interups among 'multiple' bidders for AI

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Salt-to-software conglomerate Tata Group and US-based fund Interups Inc were among "multiple" entities that on Monday put in preliminary bids for buying loss-making carrier Air India.

A group of 219 Air India employees submitted an expression of interest (EoI) for the carrier in partnership with Interups at the close of the deadline on Monday.

"Multiple expressions of interest have been received for strategic disinvestment of Air India. The Transaction will now move to the second stage," Department of Investment and Public Asset Management (DIPAM) Secretary Tuhin Kanta Pandey tweeted.

He, however, did not reveal either the identity of the bid-

ders or the number of bids received for buying the national carrier.

Sources said Tata Sons, the holding company of the Tata Group, has put in an EoI and so did Interups, whose chairman Laxmi Prasad had in the run-up to the disinvestment made his intentions clear to bid for Air India.

It was not, however, immediately clear if Tatas have bid alone or through its budget airline AirAsia India.

A group of 219 Air India Ltd employees, each one contributing at least Rs 1 lakh, hold 51 per cent in the bidding consortium. The remaining 49 per cent is with Interups.

An official said the transaction advisor will inform bidders before January 6, if their bids have been qualified.

Qualified bidders will then



be asked to submit financial bids.

The government is selling its entire 100 per cent stake in Air India that has been in losses ever since its 2007 merger with domestic operator Indian Airlines.

The airline, which started as a mail carrier in 1932, will

give a successful bidder control of 4,400 domestic and 1,800 international landing and parking slots at domestic airports, as well as 900 slots at airports overseas.

Besides, the bidder would also get 100 per cent of the low-cost arm Air India Express and

50 per cent of AISATS, which provides cargo and ground handling services at major Indian airports.

With previous attempts since 2017 failing to get any significant interest, the government had this time sweetened the deal by giving freedom to potential suitors to decide how much of the airline's debt they want to take on as part of the transaction.

Previously, the bidders were required to take over the entire Rs 60,074 crore debt.

Tatas operate two airlines - full-service carrier Vistara in partnership with Singapore Airlines, and budget airline AirAsia India in alliance with Malaysia's AirAsia Group.

The DIPAM secretary had earlier said that potential investors in Air India have given feedback that due to the uncer-

tainty created by COVID in the aviation sector the debt should not be fixed at the EoI stage.

Hence, the government late in October decided to do bidding for Air India based on enterprise value, which includes market capitalisation of a company, short-term and long-term debt as well as any cash on the company's balance sheet.

Sale of stake in Air India is part of the government's target to raise a record Rs 2.10 lakh crore from disinvestment proceeds. The target includes Rs 1.20 lakh crore from the sale of shares of central public sector enterprises and Rs 90,000 crore from a share sale in public sector banks and financial institutions, including the listing of insurance behemoth LIC.

So far this fiscal, Rs 6,138 crore has been mopped up through CPSE stake sale.

Retail inflation eases to 6.93% in Nov on softening food prices

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Softening prices of food items like cereals, fruits and milk pulled down retail inflation to 6.93 per cent in November, though it remained above the comfort level of the Reserve Bank of India.

Retail inflation based on the Consumer Price Index (CPI) stood at 7.61 per cent in October and 7.27 per cent in September.

According to data released by the National Statistical Office (NSO) on Monday, inflation in the food basket was 9.43 per cent in November, down from 11 per cent in the previous month.

Inflation in the 'cereals and products' category reduced to 2.32 per cent from 3.39 per cent in October.

The rate of price rise in 'meat and fish' segment was 16.67 per cent in November, as compared to 18.7 per cent in the previous month.

Similarly, inflation in vegetables was lower at 15.63 per cent from 22.51 per cent.

Inflation in fruits and 'milk and products' was also lower over October. The rate of price rise in the 'fuel and light' segment too moderated to 1.9 per cent as against 2.28 per cent in October.

The RBI, which mainly factors in retail inflation while arriving at key policy rates, has been mandated by the government to keep inflation at 4 per cent (+, - 2 per cent).

The central bank had maintained status quo in the policy rate earlier this month due to high inflation.

Commenting on the data, Sachin Chhabra, Founder of B2B grocery business Peel-Works, said it was heartening to note that the inflation subsided in November, riding pri-

marily on softer food prices.

"We expect inflationary pressure to subside even further in Q4 of the current fiscal. This will provide elbow room to RBI to continue its accommodative stance, which is critical for sustained revival of demand," he added.

Sunil Kumar Sinha, principal economist, India Ratings and Research, said retail inflation at is still outside the comfort zone of the RBI.

However, core inflation (non-food and non-energy) and core-core inflation (non-food, non-energy and transport and communication) are broadly stable in the range of 5 per cent to 5.79 per cent and 4.72 per cent to 4.95 per cent, respectively, since May 2020, he said. India Ratings and Research (Ind-Ra) expects the retail inflation to decline to 5.5 per cent to 6 per cent range in the fourth quarter of the fiscal due to the cooling-off of food prices.

The NSO data further revealed that retail inflation was 7.2 per cent in rural India and 6.73 per cent in urban areas, taking the combined CPI-based inflation to 6.93 per cent. Aditi Nayar, principal economist, ICRA said, "The headline CPI inflation for November 2020 printed appreciably lower than our expectations, benefiting from stable vegetable prices at the retail level.

While this provides welcome relief, it is unlikely to prove adequate for any imminent rate easing."

The price data are collected from representative and selected 1,114 urban markets and 1,181 villages covering all states/union territories through personal visits by field staff of Field Operations Division of the NSO on a weekly roster.

GSTN launches taxpayer communication facility on portal

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The GST Network on Monday said it has launched the "communication between taxpayer" feature on its portal. "The new functionality will provide communication platform for taxpayers where in a recipient/purchaser can ask his supplier/s to upload any particular invoice/s that has not been uploaded but is required by the recipient to avail input tax credit (ITC)," GST Network (GSTN) said in a statement.

Now, businesses can communicate with their supplier on GSTN portal about invoice uploading or any deficiency therein.

Besides, the supplier can send reply to his recipient through the same facility. Similarly, supplier can also send notification to his recipient about any document

uploaded in outward supply statement filed in Form GSTR-1.

GSTN said that whenever a communication is sent by a taxpayer to his counterpart, intimation by GSTN would also be sent to such counterpart through email and SMS on mobile phone.

This facility is expected to help taxpayers in reconciliation of invoices, it added.

"A buyer whose supplier has not uploaded his invoice can use this communication channel to clearly convey his desire to the supplier that the invoices be uploaded forthwith as he is interested in remaining compliant and any their suppliers to report all invoices on which he is availing ITC," GSTN added.

GSTN is also planning more features in this tool such as facility to import invoices from communication facility to GSTR 1, it said.

WhatsApp denies in SC allegations of data hacking by spyware Pegasus

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

WhatsApp on Monday denied in the Supreme Court the allegations that its data can be hacked by Israeli spyware Pegasus, which had led to a controversy last year over breach of privacy following claims that Indian journalists and human rights activists were among those globally spied upon by unnamed entities.

The issue cropped up before a bench headed by Chief Justice S A Bobde which was hearing a plea filed by Rajya Sabha MP Binoy Viswam seeking direction to the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) for framing regulation to ensure that data collected on UPI platforms is not "exploited" or used in any manner other than for processing payments.

"An allegation is that WhatsApp data can be hacked by a software called Pegasus," the bench, also comprising Justices A S Bopanna and V Ramasubramanian, told senior advocate Kapil Sibal, who was appearing for WhatsApp. Sibal said "these are all allegations. None of them are correct."

WhatsApp had said last year that it was suing an Israeli surveillance firm that is reportedly behind the technology that helped unnamed entities' spies to hack into phones of roughly 1,400 users.

During the hearing conducted through video-conferencing on Monday, senior advocate Krishnan Venugopal, appearing for Viswam, told the bench that RBI has filed an affidavit in the matter and the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) should also make its stand clear in the matter.

"Additional safeguards should be there. WhatsApp's security is not up to the mark and the third point is of data

localisation. Data is being shared by companies like Facebook, WhatsApp and Amazon. This is a breach of privacy. All the data are being shared in violation of the NPCI norms," Venugopal said. He referred to the Pegasus controversy and said that WhatsApp's data can be hacked by the spyware.

The counsel appearing for NPCI said that he would file an affidavit in the matter. The bench has posted the matter for further hearing in the fourth week of January.

On October 15, the apex court had sought responses from the Centre, RBI, NPCI and others including Google Inc, Facebook Inc, WhatsApp and Amazon Inc on the plea.

Viswam, the Communist Party of India (CPI) leader, has sought a direction to the RBI and the NPCI to ensure that data collected on Unified Payments Interface (UPI) platforms is not shared with their parent company or any other third party under any circumstances.

"In India, the UPI payments system is being regulated and supervised by Respondent no. 1 (RBI) and Respondent no. 2 (NPCI), however the RBI and the NPCI instead of fulfilling their statutory obligations and protecting and securing the sensitive data of users are compromising the interest of the Indian users by allowing the non-compliant foreign entities to operate its payment services in India," the plea has alleged.

The RBI and NPCI have permitted the three members of 'Big Four Tech Giants' i.e. Amazon, Google and Facebook/WhatsApp (Beta phase) to participate in the UPI ecosystem without much scrutiny and in spite of blatant violations of UPI guidelines and RBI regulations," it has claimed.

TATA-MISTRY CASE CJJ discloses his son appears for SP group firm, lawyers says no objection

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Chief Justice of India Sharad Arvind Bobde, who is heading the bench hearing the high-stake Tata-Mistry case on Monday disclosed that his advocate son Shrinivas Bobde, has been representing a subsidiary company of Shapoorji Pallonji Group in a slum redevelopment matter for about two years.

The top court is hearing cross appeals filed by Tata Sons and Cyrus Investments against appellate tribunal NCLAT's order which had restored Cyrus Mistry as the executive chairman of the over USD 100 billion salt-to-software Tata conglomerate.

A bench of the Chief Justice and Justices AS Bopanna and V Ramasubramanian asked the lawyers appearing for both Tata Group and SP Group, whether they have any objections with the disclosure. Senior advocates Harish Salve, appearing for

Tatas and C A Sundaram, representing SP Group said that they have no objection with the Chief Justice led bench hearing the matter, which continued for the fourth day.

Sensex, Nifty scale new peaks; auto stocks skid

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Equity benchmarks darted up to refresh all-time highs on Monday as investors accumulated energy, infra and banking stocks amid supportive macroeconomic cues.

A strengthening rupee and robust foreign fund inflows further buoyed sentiment, traders said.

After touching its record intra-day peak of 46,373.34, the 30-share BSE Sensex ended 154.45 points or 0.34 per cent higher at 46,253.46, its new closing record.

Similarly, the broader NSE Nifty rose 44.30 points or 0.33 per cent to finish at a record 13,558.15.

It hit a lifetime high of 13,597.50 during the session.

ONGC was the top gainer in the Sensex pack, rallying 4.91 per cent, followed by L&T, NTPC, ICICI Bank, Sun Pharma, HCL Tech, Titan and Asian Paints. On the other hand, M&M, Bajaj Auto, Tech Mahindra, Bajaj Finserv, HDFC Bank and Reliance Industries were among the main laggards, dropping up to 1.98 per cent.

Global markets were on a firm footing as a last-minute extension to Britain-EU talks calmed fears over a no-deal Brexit.

"Domestic equities remained firm and witnessed fresh record highs mainly supported by continued rebound in PSU banks. Barring auto, most of sectoral indices traded in positive range. Notably, volatility index shot up sharply today indicating unease about current

valuations of the market.

"Positive data flows along with persistent FPI flows have been quite supportive for the markets. Further, better than expected IIP data for Oct'20 along with sharp jump in electricity suggests that industrial activities are back on growth track, which bodes well for equities. However, rich valuations of market do not offer much comfort and any threat to earnings recovery may lead to a reversal and broad-based rally will be difficult to sustain," said Binod Modi, Head-Strategy at Reliance Securities.

India's industrial production rose to an eight-month high of 3.6 per cent in October on the back of recovery in manufacturing, consumer goods and power sectors, official data released after market hours on Friday showed.

The wholesale price-based inflation rose to a nine-month high of 1.55 per cent in November as manufactured products turned costlier, while food prices eased, as per data released on Monday.

Sector-wise, BSE capital goods, oil and gas, industrials, utilities, metal, basic materials and bankex rose up to 2.10 per cent, while auto, realty and telecom indices closed with losses.

Broader BSE midcap and smallcap indices spurred up to 0.79 per cent.

Elsewhere in Asia, bourses in Shanghai and Tokyo ended on a positive note, while Hong Kong and Seoul were in the red.

Stock exchanges in Europe were trading with gains in early deals.

Jio alleges rivals inciting public by portraying it anti-farmer; Airtel, VIL refute charges

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Telecom operator Reliance Jio has alleged that industry peers Bharti Airtel and Vodafone Idea Ltd (VIL) are running "vicious and divisive campaign" against it and making preposterous claims that migrating Jio mobile numbers to their networks would be an act of support to farmers' protests.

The country's biggest telecom operator in a letter to the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (Trai) has sought strict action against the two companies and said that such acts of the rival companies can jeopardise safety and security of Jio's employees.

In response to Jio's claims, both Bharti Airtel and Vodafone Idea have termed the complaint as "baseless" and refuted the charges. Reliance Jio further said that earlier also it had written to Trai about "unethical and anti-competitive mobile number portability campaign" by Airtel and VIL to capitalise on farmer protests. "We submit that Airtel and VIL remain unabated in pursuing this vicious and divisive campaign through its employees, agents and retailers. They are inciting the public by making preposterous claims that migrating Jio mobile subscribers to their networks would be an act of support to farmers' protests," Jio said in its latest letter. Thousands of farmers, mostly from Punjab, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh, are protesting at various border points of Delhi against the new farm laws enacted in the Monsoon Session of Parliament.

जल संसाधन विभाग
कार्यपालक अभियंता का कार्यालय
बाढ़ नियंत्रण प्रमंडल, मुजफ्फरपुर
E-mail: wwdvision2014@gmail.com / mobile: 7463889909
अलकानि नदिवा आमंत्रण सूचना संख्या - 07/2020-21
राष्ट्रीय यद्दा निविदा
(केवल ई-टेंडर पद्धति को अनुसर वेबसाईट www.eproc2.bihar.gov.in पर)

क्र. सं.	कार्य का विवरण	प्रकल्पित राशि (लाख रु० में)	अमान की राशि (लाख रु० में)	परिमाण-विषय का मूल्य (केवल ऑन लाईन मोड में भुगतान) रु० में	बैट्टिन को देय बिड प्रोसेसिंग फी (केवल ऑन लाईन मोड में भुगतान) रु० में	कार्य समाप्ति की अर्बि/तिथि
1	बूढ़ी गंडक दोंया तटबंध अखाड़ाघाट से उपर 30.00-31.00 कि०मी० के बीच मोहम्मदपुर घाट, 38.00-39.00 कि०मी० के बीच अजनाकोट, 47.00-48.00 के बीच पहादखक एवं 31.00-32.00 कि०मी० के बीच मोरसकी मटिया स्थल पर कटाव निरोधक कार्य। एजेडा सं०-168/04/2021 एवं एजेडा सं०-168/05/2021	662.19	13.844	10000.00	5900.00	15.05.2021
2	बूढ़ी गंडक दोंया तटबंध अखाड़ाघाट से नीचे 24.00 कि०मी० मोहम्मदपुर एवं 26.30 कि०मी० शिल्डी स्थल पर कटाव निरोधक कार्य। एजेडा सं०-168/13/2021	482.02	9.641	10000.00	5900.00	15.05.2021
3	बूढ़ी गंडक दोंया तटबंध अखाड़ाघाट से उपर 18.00-19.00 कि०मी० के बीच डुमरिया ग्राम स्थल पर कटाव निरोधक कार्य। एजेडा सं०-168/02/20	391.82	7.837	10000.00	5900.00	15.05.2021
4	बूढ़ी गंडक दोंया तटबंध अखाड़ाघाट से उपर 12.00-13.00 कि०मी० के बीच दोपहरा एवं 8.00-10.00 कि०मी० के बीच सलेमपुर एवं गामाई रूहड़ा में स्थल पर कटाव निरोधक कार्य। एजेडा सं०-168/10/2021	387.30	7.746	10000.00	5900.00	15.05.2021

2. निविदा आमंत्रण सूचना निर्गत करने की तिथि : दिनांक: 09.12.2020
3. निविदा कागजात डाउनलोड करने की अर्बि (सिर्फ वेबसाईट www.eproc2.bihar.gov.in पर) : दिनांक: 17.12.2020 से दिनांक-21.12.2020 के 3.00 बजे अपराह्न तक
4. श्री-बिड नीटिंग का समय, स्थान एवं तिथि : दिनांक: 18.12.2020, 3.00 बजे अपराह्न में, कार्यपालक अभियंता का कार्यालय, बाढ़ नियंत्रण प्रमंडल, मुजफ्फरपुर।
5. निविदा अपलोड करने की अंतिम तिथि एवं समय : दिनांक: 22.12.2020 समय 3.00 बजे अपराह्न तक। (सिर्फ वेबसाईट www.eproc2.bihar.gov.in पर)
6. तकनीकी बिड खोलने की तिथि एवं समय : दिनांक: 24.12.2020 समय 3.30 बजे अपराह्न। (सिर्फ वेबसाईट www.eproc2.bihar.gov.in पर)
7. वित्तीय बिड खोलने की तिथि एवं समय : सक्षम पदाधिकारी द्वारा बाद में घोषित की जायेगी। (सिर्फ वेबसाईट www.eproc2.bihar.gov.in पर)
8. निविदा खोलने का स्थान : www.eproc2.bihar.gov.in पर
9. निविदा की वैधता अर्बि (निविदा प्राप्ति की अंतिम तिथि से) : 120 दिन
10. विधानमंडला का पदनाम एवं पता : कार्यपालक अभियंता, बाढ़ नियंत्रण प्रमंडल, मुजफ्फरपुर।
11. विशेष जानकारी प्राप्त करने हेतु वेबसाईट www.eproc2.bihar.gov.in एवं वेबसाईट state.bihar.gov.in/prdbihar पर देखा जा सकता है।

कार्यपालक अभियंता
बाढ़ नियंत्रण प्रमंडल, मुजफ्फरपुर।
PR. No. 009481 (WRD) 2020-21
नौबल कोरोना के संघर्ष में विस्तृत जानकारी एवं सत्यांग हेतु Toll Free No.: 104 पर संपर्क कर सकते हैं।
खाद सामग्री - संवर्धन किमी तरह की जानकारी अंत्यव सुझाव हेतु दूरभाष संख्या 0612-2217636 पर संपर्क कर सकते हैं।

RAJASTHAN STATE ROAD TRANSPORT CORPORATION
OFFICE OF THE GENERAL MANAGER (S/P) JHOTWARA ROAD, JAIPUR
TEL No. 0141-2281912, 2281913
E-Tendering Notice
E-tender invited for the purchase of Tube Less Radial Tyre Size 295/80R-22.5", Radial tyre, tube and flaps & Nylon tyre, tube and flaps
For further details you can visit online website <https://eproc.rajasthan.gov.in> or from e-procurement cell RISL, Yojana Bhawan, Tikak Marg, C-Scheme, Jaipur-302005 and contact on Toll Free number No. 1800-3070-2232 (Help Desk be contacted directly in the following mobile nos. 91-7878007972 and 91-7878007973 10.00 AM to 06.00 PM on all working days), and e-mail- eproc@rajasthan.gov.in
UBN No RTCC2021GLOB00361, RTCC2021GLOB00362 & RTCC2021GLOB00363
Advt. No. 141/2020-21 General Manager (S/P) RSRTC Central Store, Jaipur
Raj.Samwad/C/20/7697

APPEAL FOR IDENTIFICATION
General public is hereby informed that one male namely Nameet S/o Unknown R/o Unknown. Age about 60-65 years, Height about 183 cm, Face oval, Complexion shallow, Built thin wearing Checkdar shirt and Blue colour pajama was admitted in unconscious condition in Babu Jagjeevan Ram Hospital, Jahangirpuri, Delhi on 13.10.2020 vide MLC No. 165360/20. During the treatment he got expired on 16.11.2020. In this regard a DD No. 117-A dated 13.10.2020 and 110-A dated 16.11.2020 has been lodged at PS Jahangir Puri, Delhi.
Any person having any information or clue about this deceased person may kindly inform to the undersigned at the address or telephone nos. given below.
SHO
PS Jahangir Puri, Delhi
Ph. 011-27631600, 27636000
DPI/537/INW/2020

GUJARAT WATER RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION LTD
Executive Engineer, Unit No-2 (Sujlam Suflam), Gandhinagar.
State Water Data centre building, Sector-8, Gandhinagar
Ph No. 079-23236711/23236712
Tender Notice No. 02-2020-11
The Executive Engineer, Unit No-2 (Sujlam Suflam) 2nd floor State Water data centre building Sector-8 Gandhinagar PIN-380008. Gujarat State invites on line tender (E-Tendering) for following works (EPC works) in three bids system from experienced and resourceful agencies as under:
Sr. No. Name of work Estimated cost (Rs in crore) Qualification of bidder (1) Class (2) EMD (3) Tender fee (4) Time limit (5) Solvency

1.	Engineering Procurement and Construction (EPC) Contract for Construction of Pumping Station-2 Nos at various locations and supplying and laying M.S. pipeline (ID of various dia such as 1500 mm dia, 950 mm dia & 800 mm dia of various thickness such as 11 mm, 10.5 mm, 7 mm & 6.5 mm including designing providing lowering & laying underground pipeline with allied works etc with operation and maintenance of commissioned project for 10 years including 3 years. Defect liability period for Madhavghad Taluka Talod to Raygadh Taluka Himmatnagar Dist Sabarkantha Pipeline Project.	Rs. 170.53 crore	(1) AA class (2) Rs. 170.53 lacs (3) Rs. 21240/- (Rs. 18000+3240 GST) (4) 24 month (excluding 10 year O & M period) (5) 34.11 Crores
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1. Date of obsoleting - 15/12/2020
2. Pre-Bid Meeting - Dt-02/01/2021 at 12.00 hrs
3. Last date for downloading tender document and On line submission of tender date 19/01/2021 upto 18.00 hrs.
4. Physical submission of tender of Tender fees, EMD & Other document Only by speed post R.P.A. D/counter-from Dt. 20/01/2021 to 28/01/2021 upto 18.00 Hrs. The EMD exemption certificate will not be accepted.
5. The EMD less than 180 days validity will not be accepted and offer will not be considered
6. The details of above tender will be available on www.statetender.com, www.gwrdc.gujarat.gov.in and www.gwrdc.nprocure.com. The tender will be accepted only on line.
Sd/-
Executive Engineer,
Unit No-2 (Sujlam Suflam)
Gandhinagar
No/INF/VPN/2020/G/1480

THE FEDERATION OF HOTEL & RESTAURANT ASSOCIATIONS OF INDIA
Regd. Office : B-82, 8th Floor, Himalaya House, 23 Kasturba Gandhi Marg, New Delhi-110001
Tel : 011-40780780, Fax : 011-40780777
Website : www.fhrai.com, Email : fhrai@fhrai.com
NOTICE OF 64th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
Notice is hereby given that the 64th Annual General Meeting of the members of The Federation of Hotel & Restaurant Associations of India (FHRAI) will be through Video Conferencing on Zoom Platform, on Wednesday, 30th December, 2020 at 02.30 P.M. in accordance with the applicable provisions of the Companies Act, 2013 read with MCA General Circular No. 20/2020, 14/2020 and 17/2020 dated 5th May, 2020, 8th April, 2020 and 13th April, 2020 respectively, to transact the following businesses:-
ORDINARY BUSINESS:
ITEM NO.1 : ADOPTION OF FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
ITEM NO.2 : APPOINTMENT OF AUDITORS
i. In accordance with the aforementioned MCA Circulars, the Federation has engaged the services of M/s Karvy Fintech Technologies Private Limited ("KFin") as the Agency to provide remote e-voting and electronic voting facilities. The user ID & password will be sent through the agency separately.
ii. The remote e-voting facility commences at 9:30 a.m. on Sunday, 27th day of December, 2020 and will end at 5:30 p.m. on Tuesday, 29th day of December, 2020.
iii. The cut-off date for the purpose of completing all formalities for renewal of membership and thereby being eligible for remote e-voting and voting at the Annual General Meeting is Wednesday, 23rd December, 2020.
iv. The facility of e-voting during the AGM will also be provided by M/s Karvy Fintech Private Limited. Members attending the meeting, who have not already cast their vote by remote e-voting, shall be able to exercise their right at the meeting.
v. A member may participate in the meeting even after exercising his right to vote through remote e-voting, but shall not be allowed to vote again at the meeting.
vi. Notice of 64th AGM is available on company website www.fhrai.com and on the website of M/s Karvy Fintech Private Limited, <https://kfintech.com>
vii. In case you have any queries or issues regarding e-voting, write an email to evoting@kfintech.com or contact Mr. S.V. Raju, Deputy General Manager, Karvy Fintech Private Limited, Karvy Scintium Tower B, Plot 31-32, Ganokhimi, Financial District, Nanakramguda, Hyderabad - 500 032 or at evoting@kfintech.com or phone no. 040-6716 1569 or at 1-800-34-54-001 (toll free) for any further clarifications.
For the Federation of Hotel & Restaurant Associations of India
Sd/-
Jaison Chacko
Secretary General
Date : 15.12.2020
Place : New Delhi

HEALTH

Pets & Corona

Humans, followed by ferrets and to a lesser extent cats, civets and dogs are the most susceptible animals to SARS-CoV-2 infection, the virus behind the Covid-19 disease, say researchers. The study, published in the journal PLOS Computational Biology, found that ducks, rats, mice, pigs and chickens had lower or no susceptibility to infection compared to humans



YOUR SPECIAL ONES NEED CARE

The pandemic has led to further deteriorating the condition of special needs children. DR ANIL SHARMA shares tips that can help not only the children but their parents too



India has the most number of children with developmental disabilities (about 1.15 crore) out of 195 countries surveyed according to a 2018 study by the medical journal *The Lancet*. These are children with physical, mental, or emotional difficulties who require constant care and check on their progress in order to get better. Fast forward to 2020, the pandemic has taken a hit on the lives of everyone in the world and has resulted in these children losing out on education and regular skill development therapy sessions.

The COVID-19 has confined people to their homes. Work-from-home and social distancing have become the new normal. While people, in general, are feeling mentally exhausted, the pandemic has led to further deteriorating the condition of special needs children.

Social skills and interaction are one of the hardest for these children and no outdoor exposure has added to the struggle. Professional in-person therapy has seen a drastic decline as therapy centres have remained closed for months and even now as they are gradually reopening, parents are choosing to continue with virtual therapy sessions in fear of contracting the virus.

However, the world has adapted to the new norms and soon will the children, with their parent's support and active involvement in helping them adjust to the current circumstances. The best pedagogy in such difficult times is to adapt and implement a model where the parent become the child's co-therapist and keep them engaged as much as possible to encourage skill development.

It's time we go digital: Digital has become the reality of the world during the pandemic. Enabling the child with digital practices and actively getting involved with them can improve their condition immensely. These online therapy sessions not only help children but also help parents to learn and work with the children themselves.

Focusing on mildly challenging activities: These times have already put a lot of burden on children. Losing on social engagement, outdoor games and proper training has led to a lot of children experiencing angry outbursts, disruption in the routine, and negative impact on their health. To ensure that the child is coping the right way, focusing on mildly challenging activities that are not too demanding can be of great help.

It's important to stimulate the child cognitively at all times. From activities as simple as sorting, matching, pattern building to complex cognitive tasks, depending on the potential of the child, something should definitely be included in the child's daily intervention plan in some way or the other.

Build on already developed strengths: A parent should also focus on coping better with their own stress and continuing to build the strengths of their child. This will not only help them get better while staying at home but will also make sure there is not too much pressure on the child when they get back to regular therapy.

The writer is Clinical Director at Mom's Belief

DOCYARD

DR ROHINI PATIL

MBBS, specialises in Diet & Nutrition, Founder-CEO

NUTRACY LIFESTYLE



Vital to be with Vitamins



India is considered to be the fifth most polluted country in the world. We can witness the thick layer of hazy air which causes difficulties in breathing for not only the working people but also for the children and aged people. With the increasing instances of global warming, the situation is getting worse. This is the time for us to take initiative for our health by having healthy food and take precautions. Here are some vitamins which help to fight the effects of air pollution.

Vitamin A: Vitamin A enriched food items especially leafy green vegetables like spinach, lettuce, radish leaves and root vegetables like beetroot, carrot etc help to fight the inflammation caused by air pollution. The beta carotene in these food items help to boost the overall immune system. Vitamin A also protects eyes and skin from the harmful particles in the air.

Vitamin B: Regular consumption of vitamin B helps to protect the respiratory system. There are various tiny particles in the outside air. Vitamin B prevents them from entering into the body. Even if they enter, it reduces their negative impact on body. Vitamin B is called the diverse vitamin as it is divided into six forms such as B1, B2, B3, B5, B6 and B12. It has a wide range of functions from producing different hormones, healthy cholesterol, helping in the replication of DNA to the maintenance of the nerve cell, synthesizing carbohydrates and fats in order to produce energy and producing RBCs. Vitamin B deficiency can cause severe diseases like megaloblastic anemia, dementia, paranoia, fatigue, nausea, depression, dermatitis etc. There are various vitamin B supplements available in market. Vitamin B is present in a wide range of food products like whole grains, lentils, beans, different kinds of seeds and nuts, dark leafy vegetables, avocados, bananas etc. along with animal products like eggs, red meat, poultry, oily fishes, milk, cheese etc.

Vitamin A enriched food items especially leafy green vegetables like spinach, lettuce, radish leaves and root vegetables like beetroot and carrot help to fight the inflammation caused by air pollution

Vitamin C: This is a miraculous anti-oxidant vitamin which is capable to slow down the aging process. It eradicates the free radicals from the body. Vitamin C helps to heal injuries and produces collagen that plays a major role in boosting the immunity. It prepares the body to fight the harmful gases outside. It forms iron in the body, an important component to distribute the oxygen to different body parts. It helps to maintain healthy lungs. Vitamin C deficiency causes diseases like fatigue, scurvy, depression, internal bleeding, delayed wound healing, gingivitis, internal bleeding so on and so forth. We can get vitamin C from citrus fruits like orange, kiwi, strawberries, sweet potatoes, Brussels, and green peppers, spinach, tomatoes, cabbage, cauliflower, broccoli, sprouts, leafy vegetables, squash etc.

Vitamin E: This anti-oxidant enriched vitamin is responsible for a better defense and prevents the skin damage caused by air pollution. It also helps in repairing muscle cells and boosting the effectiveness of vitamin K. The deficiency of vitamin E causes Crohn's disease, poor skin, cuticles; cystic fibrosis along with some generic diseases like ataxia etc. Vitamin E is present in food items like asparagus, spinach, nuts, almonds, sunflower seeds, corn, turnip greens, soybeans, bell peppers, breakfast cereals, margarine, spreads, juices etc. There are also spices which you must keep in your diet to strengthen your immunity such as cloves, chili powder, oregano, paprika, parsley etc. Replace your normal cooking oil with plant based oils like peanut and olive orcanola.

WARMFOODS

NUTMEG: This spice is believed to be the warmest of all. Nutmeg is considered to be high in potassium, calcium, iron and manganese, and Vitamin C and B. Consuming a pinch of it daily can not only stimulate digestion but can treat intestinal problems as well.

Nutmeg can contribute to treating various oral problems such as cavities, bleeding gums and toothache. It can prevent your liver from the adverse effects of environmental pollution, stress and unbalanced diet.

Copper is an important nutrient in nutmeg which helps to balance the blood pressure and consequently helps in the maintenance of heart rate. It



reduces hair fall by increasing blood circulation and enhancing hair growth. It is also rich in minerals that help in keeping the immune system of the body robust.

Last but not the least, nutmeg is a good ingredient for skincare because of its antimicrobial and anti-inflammatory properties as well as its ability to remove blackheads, treat acne and clogged pores.



WHAT'S YOUR GUT FEELING?

Experts say that your immunity is related to how healthy your gut is. Hence, it is important to identify all the gut-friendly foods and include them in your diet to keep several diseases, including COVID-19 infection, at bay. MUSBA HASHMI brings you a report

It's a no-brainer that the root cause of all our problems is in our gut. A happy gut means a happy and healthy body. In a time when immunity has taken the driver's seat and anything and everything that claims to be immunity booster is running out of the shelves at lightning speed.

But what if we tell you for a stronger immune system, all you need is to take good care of your gut. Would you mind believing it? If one has to go by the experts' words COVID-19 is definitely related to our gut and several studies have proven it.

"Gut releases more antibodies. Hence, strengthening the gut means strengthening immunity," Ishi Khosla, a practicing clinical nutritionist, columnist, author, an entrepreneur, researcher and welfare worker, said addressing a webinar COVID & Gut, organised by the Celiac Society of India.

Dr Neerja Hajela, Head, Science, Yakult Danone India Private Ltd, explained that there is a connection between the gut and the lungs. "Before one is tested positive for COVID, there are always some GI symptoms," Hajela said.

Dr Pankaj Verma, Consultant Physician & Head of Department, Integrative Medicine, Mahavir Jaipuria Rajasthan Hospital, agreed with Hajela and added that almost 30 to 50 per cent COVID patients experience some kind of GI symptoms, including abdominal pain, diarrhoea and vomiting.

"Also, the most common symptom is anorexia. Almost 80 per cent of patients are complaining of this symptom. It has also been observed that people with GI symptoms present with more severe form of COVID and of course a prolonged course of illness. Moreover, the susceptible group, including the elderly, Diabetics and patients with heart diseases, have some problem of the gut. So, definitely it has to be linked with COVID," Verma explained.

In such a case, it is advisable for patients to eat light food like *daliya*, replenish water intake and avoid having a lot of high protein diet. "If we combine diet modification with COVID treatment, symptoms decrease and the course of the illness also shortens," Verma said.

When one talks about gut health, it is impossible to miss the use of pre and probiotics. "The balance of good and bad bacteria is important in the gut. Probiotics mean for life. They go into the gut alive unlike other gut friendly supplements and balance the bacterial growth. They improve gut health and build gut flora and thereby helps in building immunity," Hajela said.

Dr Tom O'Bryan, a world-renowned expert in the field of gluten-related disorders, Non-

FOLLOW THE HALF PLATE RULE, FILL UP HALF OF YOUR PLATE WITH VEGETABLES OF DIFFERENT COLOURS AND THEN EVERYTHING ELSE, INCLUDING RICE AND CHAPATIS, ON THE OTHER SIDE. MAKE SURE YOU ARE HAVING ALL THE COLOURS IN A DAY — ISHI KHOSLA, NUTRITIONIST, AUTHOR & ENTREPRENEUR

Celiac Gluten Sensitivity, Celiac Disease and their link to other chronic conditions, including autoimmune disorders and diseases, explained that the reason behind having more bad bacteria in the gut is because of eating wrong and unhealthy food.

"All we tell people is to aim for a healthy gut. If you have arthritis or weak immune system, just build a healthy gut. It is the ultimate solution. For this, we recommend a rainbow diet, which comprise of different types of fruits and vegetables," he said.

More often than not, we focus on adding all the greens in our diet. But Celebrity Chef Sanjeev Kapoor tells you that it is probably a Western concept and that not only the greens, but all the different colours of colour make for a rainbow diet. "Onion, garlic, tomatoes, coconut, unripe bananas, unripe mangoes and apples all work wonders. These are probiotic rich and are extremely good for the gut," Kapoor said.

For those who wonder, what is the right amount of fruits and vegetables that one has to have daily, Khosla had a piece of advice for them. "Follow the half plate rule, fill up half of your plate with vegetables of different colours and then everything else, including rice and *chapatis*, on the other side. Make sure you are having all the colours in a day," she advised.

DadiKaKehna

Many people suffer from dry cough at night. The most common reason for this is GERD. ROSHANI DEVI shares easy home remedies that can help relieve it



While catching a cough and cold is the worst thing to have during this pandemic, it is not always because of the COVID-19 infection. If you face the problem of dry cough at night and don't what the reason is, it might be because of Gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD). However, it is always advisable to consult your doctor because there can be may underlying reasons for it.

doctor's prescription can help. Drink plenty of water. Water has a solution to many problems. Keep yourself hydrated throughout the day and increase the intake during the periods of cough. Water will help to neutralise the acid reflux.

Try honey. You can try taking honey by the teaspoon several times daily, or add it to tea or warm water to drink.

Turmeric can help. It contains curcumin, a compound which may have anti-inflammatory, antiviral, and antibacterial properties. It may also be beneficial for dry cough.

Dig out the truth

Nothing can be as bad as falling for a myth. DR PRADEEP SETHI busts a few and helps you bring out the truth

Getting a hair transplant comes with a lot of angst and confusion. Here are a few myths and facts about the procedure.

Myth: The process is very painful.

Fact: Like every other surgical process, there is an underlying conception for hair transplant to be painful which is not true. The procedure begins with inducing local anesthesia which is a pinprick with a very fine needle following which the procedure of transplant is rather comfortable and painless.

Myth: Causes headaches and migraine.

Fact: People anticipate that the procedure might cause headache or migraines which is not true. There have never been a case as such where people who have had hair transplant complain about conditions as such.

Myth: Hair don't grow long

Fact: Post transplant you can grow your hair as long as you want without any further

treatment or procedures. Once grafted they become as natural as your existing hair.

Myth: One can make out they are not naturally grown hair.

Fact: This entirely depends on the person who performs the procedure. If done by a well experienced professional, an onlooker cannot make out if the hair has been transplanted. It is highly recommended to do a proper research before opting in for the procedure.

Myth: Related to cancer.

Fact: There is no relation to cancer at all. The transplant doesn't cause any health conditions.

Myth: The transplant is temporary.

Fact: The hair is taken from the safe zone and will remain life long without any losses. Whereas, there is nothing temporary about transplanted hair, the characteristics might change with age like whitening of hair.

Myth: Old people cannot have a hair transplant.

Fact: As long as you are not

suffering from any uncontrolled pre-existing health conditions, advancing age is not bar

Myth: Donor can be anyone.

Fact: Only your own hair can be transplanted on you.

Myth: The procedure leaves scars.

Fact: Scars are generally not seen on the scalp if extracted in a proper manner. There are seldom a few chest extractions cases that leave scars on patients with a tendency for keloids. Whereas any break in skin leaves a scar which are generally lifelong, with a professionally done hair transplant, there will hardly be any visible scarring.

Myth: Cut and stitch.

Fact: The cut and stitch technique has now been replaced and individual grafts are extracted by aided equipment, an entirely modernised procedure with absolute precision.

The writer is Professor Hair Transplantation/Dermatology, Co-Founder, Eugenix Hair Sciences

INBRIEF

The UK's leading sports and nutrition brand has now made its entry to India and has launched few unique products with interesting flavours to treat the taste buds of all the fitness enthusiasts.

Impact Whey Protein — Masala Chai Flavour: It is a tribute to the country's love for a cuppa. Every serving features 21g of protein, with less than 1g of carbs and 1.9g of fats, and only 103 calories. Perfect for lovers of tea who are looking to build muscle and supplement their protein.

Six layered protein bar: Another recent release in India is Myprotein's Layered Protein Bar. Each bar features six layers of taste and texture to provide a hit of protein, carbohydrates, and fibre. Packed with over 20g protein, essential minerals calcium and copper, these mouth-watering treats are the ideal way to upgrade your healthy snacking.

Clear Whey Isolate — Lychee Flavour: Hugely popular Clear Whey will now be available in Lychee flavour, also an Indian favourite. This light and refreshing health drink has absolutely no milky taste or texture and is very low in sugar.

There is more to the list — IWP Rocky Road. All these products are available at www.myprotein.in.

Trend Blazer

Urvashi's 2021 goal is self-love

Actor **URVASHI RAUTELA** has announced her goals for the forthcoming year on social media, and it is all about self-love.

Urvashi posted a portrait picture on Instagram, where she is seen smiling at the camera dressed in a saree.

"Setting unconditional self-love as one of my 2021 goals," she wrote alongside the image.

She shared another picture in the same outfit and wrote:

"Current status: Fearlessly unbothered by the opinion of others. How much of your personality are you hiding because of a fear of other people's judgement?"



'I am playing a clean and flamboyantly dressed superstar named Saleem, who

has the superstardom of a hero in my next film. He is either unpredictable or tries to do a performance of unpredictability. He is a superstar who acts on screen and off screen. I had a lot of fun.'

—Pankaj Tripathi

Actor **NEENA GUPTA** says her version of a perfect date is one where she can eat and drink anything she likes.



"(My idea of a perfect date is) That someone will take me to a beautiful place for a candle light dinner and we could talk about many things. I should be able to order what I want to eat or drink," Neena said.

She will be seen having a conversation about dating in Bumble's web show *Dating These Days*. The show will also see stars such as Sanya Malhotra, Kirti Kulhara, Sushant Divgikar and Maanvi Gargroo opening up about various challenges around dating.

Priyanka Chopra is 'blue jean baby'

Actor **PRIYANKA CHOPRA JONAS** is in the mood for casual chic in her new post on social media. She wittily calls herself a blue jean baby describing the style.

Priyanka posted a picture on Instagram, where she is seen dressed in a white T-shirt paired with blue jeans. She completed her look with powder grey boots and basic make-up.

Alongside the image, she wrote: "Blue jean baby."

On the work front, Priyanka has started shooting for the forthcoming Hollywood romantic drama, tentatively titled *Text For You*.

Written and directed by Jim Strouse, the film is an English remake of the German-language film *SMS Fur Dich*, based on Sofie Cramer's novel.



Rejoice but safely

Singer **LUCKY ALI's** impromptu gig in Goa makes netizens raise questions about his fans, who were seen sitting close to each other without any social distancing

A video of Indipop singer Lucky Ali recently went viral, in which he can be seen performing his hit number, *O Sanam*, in front of a small crowd in Arambol, Goa. Shared by Twitter user and actor Nafisa Ali Sodhi, the video features a group of people sitting close to each other. While netizens seemed to be in awe of the singer giving an impromptu performance, soon, comments questioning the social distancing norms started to pour in. During his performance, which seems like a very intimate affair in the video, nobody in the

crowd is seen wearing masks or following the distancing protocol, owing to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Nafisa, who is currently residing in Goa, shared the video in which the singer is seen treating his fans with another soulful rendition of the song. She wrote, "Lucky Ali's live and impromptu performance at Arambol. At the Garden of Dreams @official_luckyali #goa." The 62-year-old singer is dressed in casuals as he plays the tunes on his guitar. When he pauses after singing, "nazron se ab na humko giraana",



the crowd completes by singing "toh bhool na jaana" in unison. "Love... Please tell him I'm his biggest fan," wrote a user, while another user shared, "O Lucky, how wonderfully you sang! Straight from the heart." "So good to see him. I am a die-hard fan of Lucky sir. My child-

hood memories are filled with each and every song of his," shared another user. One user wrote, "The crowd must have gone crazy and one is in awe of Lucky's magical voice."

One user commented, "Lucky Ali always such a delight to hear. But that latest video is

scaring me. Not one person is wearing a mask, no social distancing. Is COVID over in Goa?" Another wrote, "So many people are retweeting the Lucky Ali video, no one is asking questions about not one person is wearing a mask. Is this from 2020 or an old video? Or did everyone in Goa already get the vaccine?"

Taking a dig at scene, a Twitter user retweeted with comment, "Goa is now post-COVID, it seems!"

"Lovely song, lovely setting and all, yes, but why no masks on anyone? This video is really pissing me off. Some of us haven't met loved ones in months because there's a pandemic on and we are too scared of what might happen if we are even the tiniest bit careless," commented another user on Twitter.

The cases are still rising but the people in the video are too engrossed to care about the pandemic. "Lovely! But why none of the people in the audience are wearing masks and what about social distancing? Why are they sitting so close? Am I the only one left with this consciousness now?" another user questioned.

Last month, a video of the singer crooning this hit and playing it on the guitar had gone viral. In the video, the singer stops at a line where there is a mention of the word 'death', drawing widespread emotional response from fans.

Well, this makes it evident how precautionary measures keeping in mind the COVID situation have taken to our consciousness and are being prioritised over a social gathering that looks less preferable now.

—With inputs from agencies

No more home-bound

A travel trend report reveals that one in every third Indian is planning to go on a vacation in the year's last holiday season

As the world gears up to welcome the New Year with hope, optimism and renewed vigour, one in every three Indian is planning to travel and take a holiday during the forthcoming Christmas and New Year season. A recent survey conducted by a travel company, Goibibo indicates that 60 per cent respondents are willing to travel during the winter holiday season and spend the vacationing in the hills or by the beach. Among the surveyed, more than 70 per cent are hoping to relax and celebrate this season with their family or partner while the rest are looking to end the year travelling with friends and long-not-met colleagues.

While travellers are equally split between beaches and mountains as holiday destination choice in India, they concur that the destination has to bring them closer to nature and be scenic, more than anything else. It is to note that nearly 70 per cent respondents want to spend time outdoors, soaking in the sights or doing adventure activities like rafting, hiking, water sport or just sightseeing. Only 20 per cent are looking to wrap the year at bars or parties.

Commenting on the travel trends, Rajesh Magow, Co-Founder & Group CEO, MakeMyTrip



Limited, goibibo shared, "Pent-up wanderlust is real and these survey findings reflect that Indians are finding new ways to fulfill their travel aspirations and are confidently stepping forward when assured of safe travel choices. Over the past few months, we have worked closely and creatively with the



entire travel and hospitality value chain to raise safety standards and help customers make the journey from being homebound to being travellers again. Bookings for the winter festive holiday season on our site indicate an increase in travel to domestic leisure destinations including Goa, Lonavala, Mahabaleshwar, Pondicherry, Coorg, Shimla, Manali and Darjeeling. As we step into 2021, we are confident of a continued upward travel trend that will find more force as mass vaccine roll-out plan materialises."

The survey conducted among 2000+ respondents between November 15 to December 5 further indicates some trends:

Long distance leisure travel makes a comeback

The trends indicate that the season will witness leisure travellers booking a trip for two or more days. Among them, 50 per cent are willing to opt for air travel signaling a boost in passenger confidence and trust in hopping on to a flight post-pandemic. With flight holidays in equal consideration as drive-through holidays, the preference to air travel can also be attributed to the mini-road trips undertaken by people since unlock was announced in July.

Relax and unwind

More than 80 per cent respondents are looking for on-premise engagement activities. Findings reveal that almost 50 per cent of the surveyed are keen on opting for properties that offer bonfire, barbecue options and a private party place options on Christmas and New Year's Eve; and 37 per cent are looking for in-house dining options that serve

a variety of local delicacies allowing travellers to indulge in local delicacies of the destination.

Prioritise safety

As safety remains paramount, survey responders gave highest preference to sanitisation, hygiene and safety certification in their order of priority while choosing their stay option. 90 per cent respondents are willing to spend more on safety, hygiene and sanitisation facilities during their stay. Some of the parameters that travellers are actively considering while booking a hotel include availability of sanitised and trained staff with protective gears (46 per cent), regular deep cleaning and sanitisation of rooms (46 per cent) and COVID free certified hotels (41 per cent) among others. Additionally, as people now spend more time weighing various travel parameters before firming up their travel plans they are looking for easy and flexible booking options with 86 per cent opting for fully refundable air tickets and hotel vouchers for their next travel booking.

It is the perfect time to get ready for the post-pandemic blow. Beach bars, cocktails, adventure and new experiences will certainly make you feel that the lockdown days and isolation is far away.

More than what meets the eye

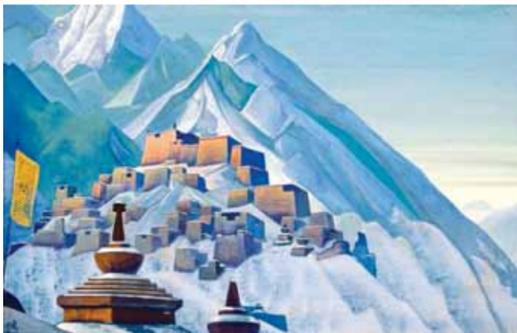
The online auction of AstaGuru features rare masterpieces of modern Indian art

A comprehensive collection of masterpieces and rare works in its forthcoming *Modern Indian Art Auction*. The auction catalogue has been carefully curated and includes iconic artworks of historical importance and those that shine a spotlight on the pioneers of Indian modernism. It further presents an extraordinary opportunity to acquire several remarkable works from National Treasure artworks to Indian Masters.

Tushar Sethi, CEO, AstaGuru said, "Our primary objective while compiling the Modern Indian Art catalogue was to showcase the versatility that Indian modernism has to offer. Presenting a comprehensive catalogue is always a challenge given the scarcity of important works by modern masters. However, our dedicated research team makes it possible to procure these rare works. Our forthcoming sale offers several works of historical importance of which many will be making their auction debut. I am confident that the selected works will intrigue the imagination of art aficionados. We eagerly look forward to the auction."

The online auction is led by Lot 28, a portrait of Victor Egan by Amrita Sher-Gil, *Circa 1939*. This rare Amrita Sher-Gil, oil on canvas will be making its first ever auction appearance. The presented lot (Lot 28) is intertwined with the artist's personal life and has emotional sentiments attached to it since it's a portrait of her husband painted by her. Amrita Sher-Gil created the work as a parting gift to her husband, Victor Egan's family. After they got married, Victor and Amrita lived in Hungary. However, due to the looming war situation, they decided to shift to India in the year 1939 to Amrita Sher-Gil's parental home in Uttar Pradesh, thereafter moving to Lahore in 1941. Victor Egan was a Hungarian Army doctor and therefore, while executing this work, she captured her husband, clad in his Army uniform. They shared a spiritual bond, which inspired her to capture his presence in glory. Estimated at ₹10-15 crores. Born in 1913 in Budapest, she was the first significant woman artist from India to attain fame internationally in the 1930s.

Appearing in the auction is *Himalayas* by Nicholas Roerich



(Lot 20), a great artist, scholar, writer and humanitarian. His legacy of works and inimitable ideology till date awaits a predecessor of stature. He was pre-eminently a symbolic painter, one whose hues of sapphire and clan-destine clouds of white will forever be etched as magnificent representations of the Himalayan range. Nicholas Roerich's association with India began during his childhood, when he came across a portrait of a majestic mountain range that enthralled him. He eventually found out that it was a painting of Kanchenjunga in the Himalayas, and knew then it

was where he had to be. His colour compositions and vivid imagery were all derivatives of a mind that perceived much more than what meets the eye. It is estimated between ₹5-7 crores.

One of the key Lots debuting in this auction is SH Raza's *Sanshari* (Lot 27) (150 x 150 cm), created in 1994. Raza experimented with a number of modernist styles, however, he is best known for his *Bindu* series. It is estimated at ₹3-4 crores.

Also making its debut will be Jehangir Sabavala's *Under the Shadow Of... II*, (Lot 13). His art is defined by its attributes of soli-



tude in the midst of elegance. The subdued colour composition establishes his inclination towards the triggers of light and shadow. The presented landscape (Lot 13), composed with the aid of fragmented geometry, has a multi-facet imagery of continuity. Jehangir Sabavala puts together the elements of despaired land surface only to redeem them with uninhibited beauty and thus, proves his mastery in terms of colouring, texture and lighting.

Next in the presented lot is Prabhakar Barwe's *The Landscape* (Lot 8). He was an abstraction-

ist who was influenced by *Tantric* symbolism and played with space and form like free verse. Also making its auction debut is MF Husain's *Untitled Ganesha* (Lot 7), from 1979, an acrylic on canvas, estimated at ₹30-40 lakh. Husain's repertoire is rich in its depiction of Hindu deities. Of these, the artist gives the elephant-headed god Ganesha a special and prominent place. In particular, Ganesha works are very popular among collectors and highly sought after.

(The auction will take place online on www.astaguru.com on December 19 and 20.)

Oz better teamed than in 2018: Lyon Wriddhiman may get nod over Pant in D/N Test



This summer is chance to rectify our mistakes: Starc

ADELAIDE: Smarting from the series defeat to India at home two summers ago, Australian speed merchant Mitchell Starc is ready to make amends in the upcoming four-match rubber against one of their biggest rivals, terming it a chance to "rectify" that.

Under Virat Kohli's captaincy, India humbled hosts Australia 2-1 in 2018-19 for their first series win Down Under after seventy years of trying.

"You never want to lose a series and you certainly never want to lose one in Australia," Starc told ESPN's *The Cricket Monthly*.

"India were just better than us throughout the (2018-19) series with bat and ball.

"Sure, we haven't hidden away from that. We needed to be better in all facets of the game and this summer's certainly a chance to rectify that," the pace ace added. **PTI**

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Wriddhiman Saha's far superior glovework may be given preference over Rishabh Pant's blazing blade in India's opening day/night Test against Australia, starting at the Adelaide Oval from Thursday.

One of the most hotly debated topics going into the first Test has been the Indian team's probable playing XI, with the jury still out on whether the better keeper in 36-year-old Saha pips the better batsman that the 23-year-old Pant is.

There is a school of thought in the team that Saha's superior glovework and also safe batting should be valued more at this point of time.

Coach Ravi Shastri, captain Virat Kohli, assistant coaches Vikram Rathour, Bharat Arun and travelling selector Harvinder Singh will be assessing both Pant and Saha's performance based on their individual contributions in match situations.

Saha's 54 came when India could have lost the game and he bailed the team out while facing a top-quality attack. The score read 143 for nine and the team could have lost to Australia A, but he guided a young Kartik Tyagi, scored his runs and saved the game.

The attack that Saha faced had James Pattinson, Michael Neser and Cameron Green, which was international standard.

Compared to that, Pant came after India had already taken control of the pink ball dress rehearsal with leg-spinner Mitchell Swepson and part-timer Nick Maddinson in operation.

All the hard work was done by Shubman Gill, Mayank Agarwal and Hanuma Vihari before Pant joined the proceedings.

Saha averages 30 plus in 37 Tests with 1238 runs and three hundreds in his kitty. Besides, he has 103 dismissals behind the stumps, including



Wriddhiman Saha plays shot during his innings against Australia A in the first warm-up game in Sydney **BCCI/Twitter**

92 catches and 11 stumpings. Still, even if Saha goes on to play the first Test, it wouldn't mean that Pant would be out of equation as the Bengal stumper would need to perform decently with the bat to keep his younger competitor out of reckoning for a place in the first XI.

PTI ■ SYDNEY

Injury-ravaged it might be but senior off-spinner Nathan Lyon feels that the current Australian team is the "tightest group" that he has been a part of and is certainly in a much better space than what it was two years back, when India triumphed 1-2 in Tests.

The veteran of 96 Test matches is expected to play a key role for Australia in the upcoming four Tests against India, starting with the Day-Night game in Adelaide from December 17.

"We obviously know what happened in the last series against India and how well they played. We have spoken about that and come up with few different plans," Lyon said during a virtual media conference.

While Lyon didn't reveal his gamelan but did mention that the whole team is in a better head space even though it will be missing key players like David Warner due to injury.

"I can't reveal my plans for

Henriques in, Abbott out

PTI ■ SYDNEY

All-rounder Moises Henriques was on Monday added to Australia's injury-hit squad for the opening Test against India while pacer Sean Abbott was ruled out of the match due to a calf strain.

Henriques, who had missed the three-day second practice game due to a low-grade hamstring strain, cleared the fitness Test on Monday to return to the Test squad after a gap of four years.

"All-rounder Moises Henriques has been added to Australia's squad for the first Vodafone Test against India after the hosts' camp continues to be hit with injury," a report in *cricket.com.au*. Said.

Indians to read about but there is a great vibe in this Australian team and we are in far better place than we were two years



Abbott became the latest Australian player to join the injury list after being picked up the strain during the second warm-up game in Sydney which ended in a draw. He is, however, expected to be available for the second Test in Melbourne, which begins on December 26.

ago. It's exciting and the tightest Aussie team that I have been a part of," Lyon said.

"We have done a bit of

homework and ready to go. It's disappointing when you lose guys to injuries and we all know what quality of player Warner is," he added.

He is happy that one of his close friends, Mitchell Starc, is back in the mix for the first Test and revealed how he intends to trouble the Indian right-handers. "Obviously, I will try to get edges on both sides, catches around the bat. I love footmarks created by Starc. He (Starc) is pretty pumped up and not only a quality player but also a quality bloke," said Lyon.

He is also not unduly worried about Starc not having a lot of preparation due to the break he got on compassionate ground due to an illness in the family.

"Mitch has played a lot of cricket. He played three Shield games. I am not worried about lack of preparation and in fact he bowled with the pink ball at the Sydney nets. We all know how good he is with the pink ball," he said.

For someone with seven

five-wicket hauls against India, Lyon loves the challenge of attacking the defence of Indian batsmen for long periods of time.

"We have best bowling attack in the world, so we should make sure that we do our stuff, challenging the Indian (batters) defence for long periods of time," he said.

"For me, it's not about my success but about playing my role and helping in picking 20 wickets."

Lyon is only 10 wickets short of 400 Test scalps. He said he is quite chuffed about being just the second Australian spinner after Shane Warne to get there.

"From where I had started to where I am at present, it is pretty exciting. Hopefully, I can create chances and get close to 400 wicket mark," he said.

"In the last five years, my bowling has gone to an altogether new level. I love the challenge of playing an attacking side like India."

Quick century in warm-up game was big confidence-booster: Rishabh

PTI ■ SYDNEY

Indian wicketkeeper-batsman Rishabh Pant says the hundred that he struck in the recently-concluded pink-ball warm-up game was just the confidence-booster he needed ahead of the Test series against Australia starting December 17.

Pant, who struggled with fitness and form in this year's IPL in the UAE, created a happy selection dilemma for the Indian team management by smashing a 73-ball 103 in the visitors' second innings against Australia A in the second practice game.

"When I went out to bat a lot of overs were left, so (Hanuma) Vihari and I wanted to build a good partnership. We wanted to bat as much as possible. I was just trying to

give myself as much time as possible and slowly I started to develop confidence," Pant told the BCCI's official website.

"This hundred has been a big confidence-booster for me. It's been a month, I am in Australia but I didn't get the chance to play in the first practice match because of a stiff neck.

"In the first innings here I was unlucky as I felt the LBW decision was wrong from the umpire. In the second innings, my focus was to spend as much time as possible and the result is I got a good innings under my belt," he said.

The 23-year-old left-hander said the team's main focus in the second practice game, as a batting unit, was to spend time in the middle against the pink ball.



Neymar stretchered off in PSG defeat

PARIS (AP): Paris Saint-Germain surrendered top spot in Ligue 1 after losing 1-0 at home to Lyon on Sunday but potentially suffered a more devastating blow as an anguished Neymar was stretchered off with an ankle injury.

Tino Kadewere's first-half goal secured Lyon a seventh win in eight matches as they moved level with Lille, who took over first place earlier in the day following a 2-1 home victory over Bordeaux.

PSG dropped to third after losing for the fourth time in 14 games this season, but the far greater concern will be the health of Neymar after his ankle appeared to twist awkwardly under a challenge from Thiago Mendes in stoppage time.

The Lyon midfielder was sent off for the tackle following a VAR review while a distraught Neymar, in considerable pain, was taken off on a stretcher having immediately signalled for medical assistance.

Lyon's first win away to PSG since October 2007, provided fresh hope of a genuine title race this term with the top five teams separated by just three points.

STILL UNBEATEN

Hernandez's late brace rescues Rossoneri

AFP ■ TURIN

Cristiano Ronaldo marked his 100th game for Juventus with a pair of penalties in a 3-1 success over Genoa on Sunday, as the champions closed the gap on Serie A leaders AC Milan who were held at home against Parma.

French defender Theo Hernandez's brace rescued a point at the death for AC Milan who came from two goals down to draw 2-2 in the San Siro.

Milan's lead on second-placed Inter was cut to three points after Antonio Conte's side staged a 3-1 comeback win at Cagliari.

Playing without injured top scorer Zlatan Ibrahimovic, Milan had looked set for their first league defeat this season.

Hakan Calhanoglu rattled the woodwork three times with Brahim Diaz also hitting the post for the hosts before Hernani put Parma ahead after quarter of an hour.

The Brazilian midfielder then set up Jasin Kurtic for the second after 56 minutes.

But two minutes later Hernandez headed in off a Calhanoglu corner with the French defender adding a second in injury time off a rebound.



Chasing a first league title since 2011, Milan are unbeaten in the first 11 matches of a Serie A season since the 2003/2004, when they also won the *Scudetto*.

In Genoa, Juventus were boosted after their 3-0 Champions League win in Barcelona, with Paulo Dybala getting his first goal this season.

Stefano Sturaro levelled for the hosts after an hour.

But Nicolo Rovella's foul on Juan Cuadrado allowed Ronaldo to slot in his first penalty after 78 minutes with the second coming a minute from time after goalkeeper Mattia Perin brought down Alvaro Morata.

Kiwis complete another whitewash

AFP ■ WELLINGTON

New Zealand shot to the top of the world Test rankings on Monday when they thrashed the West Indies by an innings and 12 runs to wrap up an emphatic series win.

It lifted the Black Caps to 116 points, equal with Australia at the head of the rankings table, and also extended their unbeaten home run to 15 Tests.

New Zealand also stayed in the hunt for the inaugural World Test Championship final as they overtook England to move into third in the standings behind Australia and India, who start a four-Test series this week.

"It does sound pretty cool," said Tom Latham, New Zealand's stand-in captain while Kane Williamson is on paternity leave.

"I didn't realise that until this morning," he said of the rankings boost. "We have been playing some good cricket as of late in our conditions, and away for that matter, and it's a pretty cool thing."

After Williamson pulled out on the eve of the second



New Zealand's captain Tom Latham, second left, shakes hands with his Windies' counterpart, Jason Holder after end of 2nd Test in Wellington on Monday **AP**

Test, Latham said the team stepped up with Henry Nicholls overcoming a form slump to score 174 and lay the foundations of the victory.

Kyle Jamieson, in only his fourth Test, took five wickets in the first innings and two in the second to be man of the series.

Tim Southee took seven in the Test. New Zealand also won the first Test in Hamilton by an innings.

blame.

"It's just tough when we didn't take our opportunities when they came. We were good in patches but still not good enough," he said.

After losing the first Test in New Zealand by an innings and 134 runs, and being rolled for 131 in the first innings of the second Test, they saved their best for their final bat on tour, scoring 317 all out in their second innings.

The tourists resumed the day at 244/6, needing a further 85 runs to make New Zealand bat again and with Jason Holder on 60 and Joshua da Silva on 25.

Holder added one to his overnight 60 before he was bowled by Tim Southee, who also had Alzarri Joseph caught behind after an entertaining 24 — all from boundaries.

Da Silva marked his maiden Test with a half-century but on 57 he fell lbw to Neil Wagner, who also bowled Shannon Gabriel without scoring to leave Chemar Holder not out 13.

For New Zealand, Wagner took three for 54 and Trent Boult finished with three for 96.

Barca-PSG clash headlines CL draw

AFP ■ NYON

Barcelona's clash against last season's runner-up Paris Saint-Germain headlines the Uefa Champions League round of 16 fixtures as the draw for the first knockout round was completed on Monday.

Defending champions Bayern Munich, who are yet to lose a match since the beginning of the last season in the Champions League and beat PSG in the 2020 final, face Italy's Lazio in what will be the first meeting between the two sides in this event.

Frank Lampard's Chelsea were handed a tough draw, facing Atletico Madrid in the first knockout round of Europe's most coveted club competition.

English giants Manchester City and Liverpool will both be facing Bundesliga clubs, taking on Borussia Monchengladbach and RB Leipzig respectively.

Cristiano Ronaldo and Juventus will play Portuguese



Neymar celebrates with Barca teammate Lionel Messi after leading Catalans to 6-1 win over PSG in 2016-17 Champions League R16 match **©UEFA**

side Porto, winners in 2004, while the competition's most successful side Madrid take on last season's surprise quarter-finalists Atalanta.

The round of 16 first legs are scheduled for 16/17/23/24 February, with the second legs on 9/10/16/17 March. The teams that finished first in their groups will play the second leg at home.

TOUGH FOR UNITED, ARSENAL

In Europa League, struggling in the domestic league, Manchester United and Arsenal have been handed tough matches in the round of 32.

United, having slipped into Europa League after crashing out of their group in the Champions League, face high-flying La Liga side Real Sociedad.

Meanwhile Arsenal, who are in crisis in the Premier League but had a perfect record in Europe, take on Portuguese giants Benfica. The latter are placed second in Portugal's top flight while Arsenal are starting at a relegation battle in the Premier League.

Tottenham face Austrian side Wolfsberger and Leicester City will take on Slavia Prague, while Scottish Premiership leaders Rangers play Belgian side Royal Antwerp.

Winners of Europa League get direct entry into next season's Champions League.

The first legs of the knockout fixtures are scheduled for Thursday 18 February, with the second legs on 25 February. Seeded teams are at home in the second legs.

Same old story 10-man Arsenal lose again

Messi steps up to end Barca's losing skid **AFP ■ BARCELONA**

Lionel Messi saved Barcelona from another demoralising result by scoring the decisive goal in a 1-0 win over lowly Levante on Sunday.

Messi struck with 14 minutes remaining of a lacklustre display from Barca at the Camp Nou which will do little to ease fan fears following their 3-0 hammering at the hands of Juventus.

Ronald Koeman's side are still way off the pace in the title race, nine points behind Sociedad who reclaimed first place despite only drawing 1-1 with Eibar.

Barcelona do however have two games in hand on the Basque outfit.

Atletico are level on 26 points with Sociedad and also have two games in hand while Real Madrid are now just three points behind the leaders having played one less after beating their local rivals 2-0 on Saturday.

Villarreal are four points off the lead in fourth after drawing 1-1 at Real Betis, who are one point behind Barca in ninth.

AP ■ LONDON

Arsenal's season went from poor to dreadful as captain Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang scored an own-goal and the Gunners were reduced to 10 men in a 1-0 loss to Burnley in the Premier League.

Aubameyang had been looking to end his goal drought, but at the other end of the field at Emirates Stadium on Sunday. But the striker headed the ball into his own net while defending a Burnley corner in the 73rd minute.

Boos rang out from the home crowd with 2,000 fans allowed under coronavirus restrictions.

Arsenal manager Mikel Arteta is under increasing pressure with his team 15th in the 20-team division with 13 points from 12 games — four points more than Burnley which climbed out of the relegation zone.

Arsenal was already down a man after Granit Xhaka was sent off for violent conduct in the 58th after a VAR check and a review by the referee on the sidelines. Xhaka had grabbed Ashley Westwood by the throat and pushed him to the ground after a challenge on another player.



Burnley's Ashley Westwood, centre reacts after being grabbed by the throat by Arsenal's Granit Xhaka **AP**

The Gunners were lucky not to be down to nine men after VAR deemed that Mohamed Elneny wasn't guilty of violent conduct just before the corner was taken that led to the goal. Replays showed Elneny appearing to push defender James Tarkowski in the face. He ended up with a yellow card instead.

The Gunners have now lost four consecutive home league games.