

OPINION 6
INSTITUTIONAL
SPINE

WORLD 8
US PASSES BILL THAT CALLS OUT
CHINESE AGGRESSION AGAINST INDIA

SPORT 12
SMITH FIT TO PLAY
FIRST TEST

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Stop talks with others: Sanyukt Kisan Morcha to Govt

Union writes to Govt as farmers' bodies from other States talk with Centre and extend support to farm laws with some amendments

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The union of the farmers protesting at the borders of the national Capital against new farm laws, wrote a letter to the Centre on Wednesday, asking it to stop holding parallel talks with other farmer bodies over the deadlock.

With the Government saying that it is waiting for the reply of the farmers' leaders, the Sanyukt Kisan Morcha said there is no question of responding as the farmers' unions had made their stand clear in the last round of meeting with Union Ministers that they want the laws to be repealed.

In the letter to Union Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare Joint Secretary Vivek Aggarwal, the Sanyukt Kisan Morcha, which represents farmers' bodies mostly from Punjab, said the Centre should stop defaming the ongoing protests being held at several Delhi border points against the three farm laws.

The letter comes against the backdrop of the Government holding talks with several farmers' organisations from different States who the Centre claimed have extended their support to the new agriculture laws.

Earlier in the day, Union Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar said that the ongoing farmers' protest at Delhi borders is an "exception" and "limited to one State" and hoped for an early solution as the Government is in talks

with farmer unions. In the letter, Darshan Pal, farmers' leader has recorded in writing the farmer unions' decision to reject a recent Government proposal of amendments in the new laws.

"In reference to the proposal (dated December 9) and your (Agarwal) letter, we want to inform the Government that farmer organisations held a joint meeting to discuss the proposal on the same day and rejected it," he stated in his letter written in Hindi.

"We had already made our stand clear in previous talks that's why we did not send a written reply earlier," he further stated.

Representatives of the Bharatiya Kisan Union (Kisan) from Uttar Pradesh on Tuesday met Tomar and submitted a memorandum with suggestions on the laws and minimum support price (MSP). The Bharatiya Kisan Union (Kisan) has also decided to end for now its protest, which it was holding at district levels in Uttar Pradesh.

Meanwhile, barricades were set up on the Chilla border road, prohibiting vehicular movement from Noida to Delhi, while Delhi to Noida road was open.

Also, traffic was diverted from the Dalit Prerna Sthal, another site of the farmers' protests, to the Delhi-Noida-Direct (DND) flyway in the wake of the situation at the Chilla border.

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Farmers shout slogans during their protest against the new farm laws at Singhu Border in New Delhi on Wednesday

Ranjan Dimri | Pioneer

SC intends to set up Govt-Kisan panel for resolution

Forming new committee no solution, say kisan unions

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Wednesday issued a notice to the Centre and others on a

batch of petitions seeking removal of farmers camping at several roads near Delhi borders in protest against the three new agri laws.

A bench comprising Chief Justice SA Bobde, and Justices AS Bopanna and V Ramasubramanian also indicated that the court may form a committee having representatives of the Government and the farmer unions across the

country to resolve the deadlock over the legislations.

In a hearing conducted via video conferencing, the bench directed the petitioners to make protesting farmer unions parties to the pleas and posted the matter for hearing on Thursday. "Your negotiations with protesting farmers have not worked apparently till now," the bench told the Centre.

Meanwhile, protesting

farmer unions on Wednesday said constituting a new panel to break the stalemate on the three new agri laws, as indicated by the Supreme Court, is not a solution as they want a complete withdrawal of the legislations.

They also said the Government should have formed a committee of farmers and others before the laws were enacted by Parliament.

Sant Baba Ram Singh commits suicide at Delhi border

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

A 65-year-old preacher, described as a "sant", committed suicide by shooting himself dead at Singhu Border on Wednesday evening. The deceased has been identified as Baba Ram Singh of Singhra village in Nissing area of Karnal district.

He was admitted to a private hospital where the doctors declared him brought dead. His followers said he was a sant and was on the seat of Gurdwara Sahib Nanaksar Singhra village. His followers had distributed blankets among protesters.

The body of Baba Ram Singh arrived at KCGMC, but the followers (sangat) refused to get his post-mortem conducted. His body is being taken to Nanaksar Gurdwara Singhra, where thousands of followers gathered. Tense situations prevailed on the gurdwara premises. One of the followers said, "Maharaj ji sacrificed for farmers, Modi ji, now listen to the farmers. He left behind a suicide note in Punjabi language."

Baba Ram Singh came to Nanaksar Gurdwara Singhra in 1990 from Nanaksar Gurdwara Jagraon in Punjab.

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SC expresses displeasure over repeated requests for allowing Salve to argue

New Delhi: The Supreme Court on Wednesday expressed displeasure over repeated requests that senior lawyer Harish Salve be unmuted and allowed to raise some "legal issue" during the hearing of pleas seeking removal of protesting farmers camping at borders of the national Capital.

A bench headed by Chief Justice SA Bobde told Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, representing the Centre, that Salve can join the proceedings on Thursday when the pleas would be heard again.

Day of special joy for kisan, says PM on ₹3,500 crore subsidy for sugar mills

New Delhi: It is a day of "special joy" for crore of farmers, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Wednesday soon after the government approved a subsidy of ₹3,500 crore to sugar mills for clearing the dues of farmers and asserted that it will also help lakhs of workers associated with these mills. The Government approved the subsidy for the export of 60 lakh tonnes of sugar during the ongoing marketing year 2020-21 as part of its efforts to help them clear outstanding dues to sugarcane farmers.

46% of Indians consult doctors online out of Covid fear: Survey

India ready to take telemedicine to next level, say docs

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Fearing Covid-19 infection, more Indians, prefer front-line tools — smartphones — to consult their doctors, instead of meeting them in person.

At least 46 per cent Indians have favoured telemedicine option, as per a survey conducted by online doctor con-

sultation platform — Mount Virtual Hospital — done across metros covering Delhi-NCR, Mumbai, Kolkata, Chennai, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar.

Telemedicine entails delivery of health services from a distance using internet and it not only extends the reach of health services but also improves quality of health services besides saving time and money, according to experts.

The survey comes days after the Union Health Ministry said that its

eSanjeevani telemedicine service has recorded 1 million consultations. In the wake of Covid-19 crisis, the Ministry approved the guidelines on telemedicine allowing any registered medical practitioner remotely or by using telemedicine tools.

The data was collected from an age-group of 20 to 85 years. The total respondents in the survey were 2,406 which included 1,455 males and around 951 females.

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Covid-19 IN INDIA

TOTAL
CASES: 99,51,072
DEATHS: 1,44,487
RECOVERED: 94,89,143
ACTIVE: 3,14,831

STATES	TOTAL CASES	DEATHS	RECOVERED
Maharashtra	18,80,893	48,434	17,69,897
Karnataka	9,04,665	11,971	8,77,199
Andhra Pradesh	8,76,814	7,067	8,65,327
Tamil Nadu	8,02,342	11,931	7,80,531
Kerala	6,83,441	2,708	6,22,394
Delhi	6,11,994	10,147	5,88,586
Uttar Pradesh	5,69,263	8,118	5,43,344
West Bengal	5,28,211	9,191	4,98,877
Odisha	3,24,796	1,873	3,19,850
Rajasthan	2,94,831	2,578	2,77,743
Telangana	2,79,135	1,502	2,70,450
Chhattisgarh	2,61,901	3,145	2,41,288
Haryana	2,55,014	2,765	2,44,676
Bihar	2,44,810	1,332	2,38,462
Gujarat	2,31,073	4,203	2,14,323
Madhya Pradesh	2,26,788	3,433	2,11,025

Against graft odds, CPM's impressive win in Kerala local polls

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

The CPI(M)-led Left Democratic Front (LDF), despite handicapped by the gold smuggling scam and allegations of massive corruption, managed to score impressive win in most of the local bodies in the State which went to the three-phase polls during the last week.

Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, in a late evening media briefing, thanked the people of the State for reasserting their trust and confidence in the LDF. "The results show that the Congress-led UDF has become irrelevant in the State while the BJP is not a factor in Kerala. What adds to the beauty of the win is that this has happened despite the best efforts by Central agencies to spread canards and falsehoods about the Kerala Government," said Vijayan.

According to reports from the Kerala State Election Commission,



LDF supporters celebrate their party's victory in the Kerala local body elections in Kochi, on Wednesday

Kannur corporation with big margin. But the corporations of Kochi and Thrissur have ended up as hung houses with both the fronts failing to cross the half-way mark.

Out of the 14 district panchayats in the State, the LDF and UDF won nine and five districts respectively while the BJP-led NDA drew blank. The Congress-led UDF did well by winning 45 of the 86 municipalities while the LDF finished as runner-up by bagging 35 municipal councils. The NDA wrested Pandharam and retained Palakkadu municipal councils with absolute majority. It also managed to emerge as the single largest unit in two more municipal councils.

The LDF retained its hold in village panchayats. The front bagged 516 of the 941 village panchayats that went to the polls while the UDF had to content with 375 panchayats.

Continued on Page 2

FB India chief deposes before House panel

Quizzed about its alleged reluctance to ban Bajrang Dal

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Facebook's India head Ajit Mohan on Wednesday deposed before the Information Technology Parliamentary Committee where he was questioned about a recent report that the social media giant is reluctant to ban the Bajrang Dal due to concerns over the security of its staff.

Mohan deposed before the panel chaired by Congress leader Shashi Tharoor. The panel had called him on the issue of the citizens' data safety.

Mohan was accompanied by Shivnath Thukral, the public policy director of Facebook. Congress MP Karti Chidambaram, along with Tharoor, questioned Mohan about a recent Wall Street Journal (WSJ) report on banning the Bajrang Dal on Facebook, sources said.

The WSJ report suggested that despite an internal assessment calling for a ban on the Bajrang Dal, Facebook has not cracked down on the Hindu nationalist group due to financial considerations and concerns over the safety of its

employees.

Replying to queries, Mohan suggested to the panel members that the Facebook fact team consultant has so far not found any such element in the content posted by the Bajrang Dal that is violative of its social media policies. Further quizzing him, BJP MP Nishikant Dubey asked if the Bajrang Dal content was not found to be violative of its social media policies, then why the Facebook did not deny the WSJ report and termed it fake.

Last month, a former Facebook employee made startling revelations before the Delhi Assembly's Committee on Peace and Harmony about the functioning of the platform and its biases towards politically-connected people. Ex-employee Mark Luckie claimed top managerial posts at Facebook are given to those who have good political affiliations.

Facebook Inc is also facing the legal ire in the United States and it could be forced to sell WhatsApp and Instagram after the US Federal Trade Commission and almost all US States have filed lawsuits against the social media platform, claiming it used a "buy or bury" strategy to kill rivals and keep smaller competitors at bay.

1971 victory anniversary: PM lights Swarnim Vijay Mashaal

Soil from villages of martyrs being brought to National War Memorial

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday lit the "Swarnim Vijay Mashaal" from the eternal flame of the National War Memorial here, marking the beginning of the 50th anniversary year celebrations of India's victory over Pakistan in 1971.

In a tweet, Modi said, "On Vijay Diwas we recall the unwavering courage of our armed forces that resulted in a decisive victory for our nation in the 1971 war. On this special Vijay Diwas, had the honour of lighting the 'Swarnim Vijay Mashaal' at the National War Memorial."

The Prime Minister was joined by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, the chief of defence staff and tri-service chiefs as he laid wreath and paid homage to the soldiers who made the supreme sacrifice for the country.

Four victory mashaals (flaming torches) will be carried to various parts of India, including to the villages of



Prime Minister Narendra Modi lights flames which are to be carried to different parts of India from National War memorial on the occasion Victory Day in New Delhi on Wednesday

Param Vir Chakra and Maha Vir Chakra awardees of the 1971 war, the Defence Ministry has said.

"Soil from the villages of these awardees and from areas where major battles were fought in 1971 are being brought to the National War Memorial (NWM)," it said.

India celebrates December 16 as Vijay Diwas to commemorate its victory over Pakistan during the 1971 war that led to the creation of Bangladesh.

As December 16 marks the anniversary of the military victory, the nation will celebrate "Swarnim Vijay Varsh" (golden victory year) through several events across the country, and it will continue for a year.

Various commemorative events will be conducted pan-India wherein war veterans will be felicitated, the statement said, adding that band displays, seminars, exhibitions, equipment displays, film festivals, conclaves and adventure activities will also be held.

Pakistan to fence off Gwadar port city to secure Chinese interests

RAKESH K SINGH ■ NEW DELHI

Pakistan has decided to convert Gwadar port city into an open jail by fencing the areas around it. The decision came following a recent visit by the Chinese Defence Minister.

In doing so, Islamabad has adopted an age-old Chinese tactic of securing a region through fencing as even the Great Wall of China was built with a similar intention.

The proposed fencing is modeled on the lines of similar measures by the Chinese government in villages in Tibet and Xinxiang and is aimed at securing the Chinese investments in the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor that faces threat from Baloch insurgents.

The Chinese Government has fenced many of the villages in Tibet

and converted them into open jails as prior permission is required to get in or out of these villages by the authorities there.

The fenced areas in Gwadar city will be put under curfew when it faces a heightened security threat and the security agencies there will be able to easily clamp curfew and enforce a crackdown against the Balochs. The move to fence the Gwadar will ensure segregation of the port city from other adjoining areas inhabited by the Balochs who often enter the city for various activities, expert tracking the development in the region said.

The Gwadar port city is connected to China via a six-lane highway and a gas pipeline which Beijing apprehends will be hit by the Baloch insurgents.

The Chinese Defence Minister Wei Fenghe has signed an agreement with his Pak to deploy 20,000 personnel of Pakistan's Frontier Corps to secure the highway and the pipeline between the two countries.

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Pak anti-terrorism squad member killed

New Delhi: Pashtun insurgents on Friday killed a member of a team of the Counter-Terrorism Department of Pakistan and disrobed other members of the unit and released them with the warning not to visit the area again. The incident occurred at Kachai village in Kohat district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

CAPSULE

8 DEAD AS BUS COLLIDES WITH GAS TANKER IN UP
Sambhal: Eight people died while 21 sustained injuries here on Wednesday morning when an Uttar Pradesh Roadways bus collided with a gas tanker.

SC REJECTS CHALLENGE TO HC ORDER ON CONVERSION
New Delhi: The Supreme Court on Wednesday refused to entertain a plea seeking to challenge Allahabad High Court order by which it had held that "conversion just for the purpose of marriage is unacceptable".

MVA JOLTED AS HC STAYS LAND TRANSFER
Mumbai: The Bombay High Court on Wednesday granted an interim stay on transfer of 102 acres of saltpan lands at Kanjurmarg for metro carshed.

Expedite allotment of flats for slum dwellers: Kejriwal to DUSIB

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Wednesday chaired a review meeting of the 'Delhi Urban Shelter Improvement Board' (DUSIB) and instructed them to expedite allotment of flats that have been constructed for the

'Economic Weaker Section' (EWS) and slum dwellers.

Kejriwal instructed the officials to ensure the allotment of the flats within five kms of where their slums were located and directed to allot land for the purpose as soon as possible.

The chief minister also said that all obstacles in allot-

ment of land required for the construction of these flats should be removed. "The 89400 flats will be constructed in three phases in a total of 237 acres, with a deadline of 2022-2025," he said.

The meeting was also attended by Delhi Urban Development Minister and DUSIB Vice-Chairperson

Satyendar Jain, UD Principal Secretary Renu Sharma along with other Delhi government officials and DUSIB board members.

Kejriwal said, "The 'Jahan Jhuggi Wahin Makaan' policy is the flagship policy of the Delhi government. We have to ensure that the construction of the EWS flats for the in-situ

rehabilitation of the people, should be completed in its due timeline. This has to be ensured so that we can provide shelter for every poor in Delhi."

In a meeting held last month, it was decided that the construction project of the EWS flats will be carried out on the vacant land of DUSIB. Out of 221 acres of land available

with DUSIB, at present 115 acre land is being considered for construction of EWS houses, the land use of the land available with the DUSIB will be changed by the Municipal Corporations, Delhi Development Authority or any other authority and the construction project will also be carried out on the vacant land

from where the people have been shifted.

As per the project, architect consultants will be appointed for the project in two months.

The 89400 houses will be constructed in three phases. In the first phase, 41400 houses will be constructed by the year 2022. In the second phase, 18000 houses will be con-

structed. In the third phase, 30000 EWS houses will be constructed across Delhi. The houses will be multi-storied, and five separate tenders will be called each in a lot of 8000 houses. The time frame for the construction of houses in the first phase is 24 months, with a construction cost of Rs. 3312 Crores for 41400 flats.

Two fake call centres busted in G'gram, 3 held

PARVESH SHARMA ■ GURUGRAM

The Chief Minister's flying squad busted two illegal call centres operating in Spaze IT Park, Sohna Road Sector-49 in Gurugram on Tuesday evening.

The Gurugram Police said on Wednesday that they have busted more than 25 fake call center rackets which were being run in Gurugram this year till December 13.

The call centres mostly used to cheat US nationals on the pretext of redeemed gift coupons of values ranging from one thousand to five thousand dollars and used to charge 100 to 500 dollars as service charge per client, the police said.

The police have recovered Rs 8.50 lakh and two laptops and a hard-disk along with other electronic gadgets.

According to the police, a team from the CM flying squad led by ACP Inderjeet raided the call centres which were running on the fourth floor office number 401 and 404, in Spaze IT Park building at Sector-49 in Gurugram following a tip-off.

During the first raid, the police noticed that 10 people including four girls were working in office no 401 while 12 youths including two girls were working in office no 404 who were working at the fake call centers and were communicating with US nationals. However, after questioning the police have released youths who were working there.

In connection with the incidents, the CM flying wing arrested two brothers identified as Anshu Mehta (33) and

Akshay Mehta (34) of Laxmi Nagar, Delhi, the owners of the call centre operated in 401 from the spot and recovered Rs 8.50 lakh from their possession.

While the owner of the second call centre was identified as Ansh Saxena (28), a resident of Indrapuram in Ghaziabad, Uttar Pradesh, who was not found on the spot but was arrested from the vicinity after a few hours.

The culprits disclosed before the police that they used to work at a city based call center six years ago during which they got an idea of opening a call center. Both the call centers were being operated since last month.

"These fake call centres have cheated several US citizens on the pretext of providing gift coupons. The youths were employed at the call centres, which were being operated without a license issued by the Department of Telecommunications (DOT)," said Inderjeet ACP, (CM flying squad).

"During the questioning, the accused revealed that they lured their target on pretext of lucrative gift coupons online and used to charge nearly 100 to 500 dollars per client as service charge" he added.

"The matter is under investigation. How the accused was operating the fake call centre it's a part of an investigation. The involvement of other people cannot be ruled out," the officer said. In both cases, FIRs under relevant sections of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) and the IT Act were registered at the Cyber Crime police station for further investigation.

Man held for forging property papers, selling them to buyers

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Economic Offences Wing (EOW) of Delhi Police has arrested a 72 year old man for forging fake property documents and selling them to innocent buyers.

The accused has been identified as Karshan Singh, a resident of Kailash Nagar Colony, Shahdara.

According to Dr O P Mishra, the Joint Commissioner of Police, EOW,



a case was registered after a complainant company Capital Land & Builders engaged in the business of colonizing in the area of Village Gokal Pur Shahdara alleged that the accused Darshan Singh along with others have fraudulently sold properties belonging to the company.

"Singh on the pretext of being GPA holder of directors of the complainant company fraudulently sold some properties belonging to the company in connivance with others," said the Joint CP.

"The accused was arrested on December 15 and was also released on a bail from local court. The accused had sold some plots and in the process he got possession of some GPAs which he used to prepare further forged GPAs and grabbed some properties and sold to innocent purchasers," said the Joint CP.

BJP netas continue protest outside Delhi CM's house

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Bhartiya Janta Party (BJP) continued their protest outside Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's house demanding the release of the outstanding fund of Rs 13,000 crores for the tenth day.

The opposition leaders in Delhi addressed the press conference from the dharna site and exposed the malicious functioning of the Kejriwal government.

State Vice President Rajiv Babbar, State Treasurer Vishnu Mittal and State Media Head Naveen Kumar were present.

Delhi State President Adesh Gupta said that, there is frustration and despair within the Aam Aadmi Party of Delhi today and in this desperation, they are making unwarranted and ludicrous allegations of Rs 2500 crore scam on the North and South Delhi Municipal Corporations.

"We challenge CM Arvind Kejriwal to get the CBI or any independent agency to investigate the allegations leveled against the municipal corporations and if the allegations turn out to be false, the CM should be ready to resign. Corporation leaders are sitting on a dharna outside the CM's residence to demand the rights of the corporation workers under the open sky in the cold winter, the continuous campaign of the BJP has established the fact that in the last 6 years, Delhi Jal Board, under the patronage of Kejriwal government, both the political leadership and officials have scammed not only the capital of the Jal Board but also the loan money of Rs 50,000 crore received from it. The Delhi BJP President has said that, the people of Delhi very well know that a proposed settlement of

rent dues between two constitutional bodies North & South DMCs does not involve transaction of a single penny and hence involves no scam."

Gupta said that, Municipal Corporation of Delhi was trifurcated in 2012 and in this trifurcation East & North DMCs got their own buildings to house their Head Quarters but South DMC did not get an office. The then Delhi Government of Sheila Dikshit so manipulated the affairs that South DMC got space to house its headquarters in the Civic Centre owned by North DMC.

Sheila Dikshit's Government fixed a high commercial value rent amount which South DMC was supposed to pay to North DMC.

He said that, CM Kejriwal wants to create a state of anarchy in Delhi. Ever since the Arvind Kejriwal government came to power, it has consistently cut constitutional funds of municipal corporations.

Ever since Arvind Kejriwal Government came to power in Delhi it stopped paying full regular constitutional funds to the Municipal Bodies. The Delhi Government did not implement the 4th Delhi Finance Commission recommendations on municipal funds thus paying hardly 50 percent of actually due funds. In fact in the current financial year 2020-21 Delhi Government has released hardly 25% of due funds even as 3/4 year has gone by. He said that, the Delhi government officials appointed in the corporation made a provision within the budget that the dues of the North Delhi Municipal Corporation should be reduced to zero but the standing committee of the corporation rejected that proposal and this

time also no such proposal has been accepted.

He said that a special session of one day assembly has been convened tomorrow, but Kejriwal has not called a special session till date to save Delhi, especially when the people were struggling with Corona. It has been proved that baseless allegations have been leveled against corporations because the Kejriwal government wants to stop the constitutional funds of the municipal corporations and divert public attention from the corruption of Delhi Jal Board. The people of Delhi have come to know the truth of CM Kejriwal and are not going to be caught into his trap.

Slamming CM Kejriwal, MP Meenakshi Lekhi said that, "Dikha Di Hai Isteyaron Ne Kuch Chehron Ki Haqiqat, Jo Topi Pehankar Topi Pehane Ka Kaam Karte Hain." The Aam Aadmi Party has put up posters of the allegations leveled against the corporation, but has not put its name anywhere, because they too know that these allegations are false and are fraudulent with the people of Delhi which lead to defamation case. She said that before partition there was only one corporation and after partition in 2012 the EDMC had its own office, NDMC had Pt Shyama Prasad Mukherjee Bhawan and SDMC had a land in Dwarka. In which no office was built. On 16 March 2012, it was decided in the Cabinet that till the office is built, the SDMC will run the office from Pt. Shyama Prasad Mukherjee Bhawan. The real issue is the corporation's dues of Rs 13,000 crore and to divert from the issue, the Govt is making unwarranted charge of scam of Rs 2500 crore.

DJB, electricity dept workers to receive Covid vaccine in first phase of rollout

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Minister of Health and Family Welfare Satyendar Jain on Wednesday said that the Delhi Government has issued orders to add Delhi Jal Board and electricity department workers in the list of frontline warriors who will receive the covid vaccine in the first phase of the rollout.

Jain said that positivity rate was for the first time since May, has come below two per cent and this is a sign of relief. "Third wave is not over yet but it is definitely on the wane. According to WHO parameters, Delhi is in safe zone. On the ongoing farmer agitation, he said that BJP must address the issue at Singhu Border itself instead of holding panchayats. The farmer laws should be withdrawn," he said.

He said that there were 1617 new cases in Delhi on Tuesday and positivity rate was below two percent.

"WHO states that positivity rate should be below eight percent, and optimum should be five per cent. If a city has five per cent positivity rate then it means the tests being carried out are enough. Delhi is at two per cent. Since the past 5 days, positivity rate has been less than three per cent since the past 15 days, it has been less than five percent," he said.

Commenting on the availability of beds, he said, "Almost 50 percent ICU beds are available, but in private hospitals, occupancy lies somewhere between 80-90 percent."

On BJP organising panchayat meeting to explain farmer laws, Jain said, "They should do it at Singhu border. They are not addressing the focal point, but are going around in circles. If they want to talk, they should meet the farmers at Singhu Border. And according to me, there should be no room for discussion. The farmer laws should be withdrawn."

Sant Baba Ram Singh...

From Page 1

He had on Tuesday asked the Central Government to resolve farmers' concerns. He had also extended support of Rs 5 lakh to the farmers' agitation this week at Singhu border. He had also distributed 500 blankets on Tuesday to farmers at Singhu border, said one of his followers.

Meanwhile, a shockwave swept across Punjab and Haryana, especially among the Sikh community. Leaders, cutting across party lines from both States, expressed shock and grief over the incident, asking the BJP-led Central Government to "wake-up" before it was too late.

Former Union Minister and SAD MP from Bathinda Harsimrat Kaur Badal, taking to Twitter, said, "Even as GOI remains stubborn & refuses to be moved by suffering of #farmers, Baba Ram Singh ji Singhra wale has committed suicide after being unable to see the suffering around him at Kundli border. Hope GOI wakes up to the tragedy & repeals the 3 agri laws before it's too late." Senior Congress leader and Haryana's former

Minister Randeep Singh Surjewala, paying tributes to the deceased, asked the Prime Minister Narendra Modi to "immediately stop playing with the feelings of farmers amidst the intense cold wave... This royal obstinacy or stubbornness is suicidal because it has become an enemy of the country's soul and food provider".

Congress' senior leader and former party affairs in-charge in Punjab Shakeel Ahmed questioned the Modi Government over a "farmer leader's suicide". "May his soul rest in peace. But the Modi Government is saying that these three laws are not made for the service of Adani-Ambani sahiban, but for the benefit of the farmers. Then why did the farmer leader commit suicide?" tweeted Ahmed.

Lok Insaaf Party president and MLA from Ludhiana Simarjeet Singh Bains too took to Twitter to "salute the salute the martyrdom of Sant Baba Ram Singh" while hoping for the "restoration of strong democracy by overthrowing the dominant dictatorial system in India".

46% of Indians consult doctors online...

From Page 1

The survey conducted by online doctor consultation platform Mount Virtual Hospital showed that about 70 per cent of the respondents who had diabetes, heart problems, blood pressure issues, cancer or kidney diseases, who are at increased risk of severe illness from the Covid-19, still want to get the consultation done with their doctors over call — be it for follow-up consultation or new consultation.

"With people using digital mediums to connect to doctors, we are observing behavioural change, and it will impact the health care sector positively in times to come," Sanjay Singh,

Founder of Mount Virtual Hospital, said in a statement.

According to the report, 60 per cent of the women surveyed in the age group of 18-45 years, wanted to connect digitally with their doctors for consultation related to dermatology, nutrition and diet and mental health issues, while 80 per cent of the men (45-85 years of age) still prefer to have online consultation due to fear of Covid-19 infection keeping their age in mind.

"We have observed almost 200 per cent jump in demand for online consultation. Many cancer patients who want to avoid risk of Covid-19 infection are connecting to us over video

calls to discuss their problems," said Dr Rahul Bhargava, Director, Department of Clinical Hematology & Bone Marrow Transplant, Fortis Hospital. "With a large educated and technology-friendly population, India is now ready to take tele-consultations to the next level and utilise it for complex super specialities as well," Bhargava added.

No wonder, telemedicine is becoming a hugely popular offering in healthcare. A recent Global Market Insights report found that the sector was worth about USD38.3 billion in 2018, and that figure is projected to swell to USD130.5 billion by 2025.

Against graft odds, CPM's impressive win in Kerala local polls

From Page 1

The NDA won 22 village panchayats with other parties bagging the remaining 28 panchayats.

The LDF continued its good show in block panchayats also. Out of the 152 block panchayats, the LDF won 108 panchayats with the UDF finishing runners-up by bagging 44 panchayats.

Though the CPI(M) succeeded in winning the Thiruvananthapuram Corporation, the reigning mayor Sreekumar was defeated by the BJP candidate Kumaran. The two women candidates of the CPI(M) who were seen as front runners for the mayoral chair too fell by the wayside. In a similar incident, N Venugopal, the mayoral candidate of the Congress for the Kochi Corporation council lost by a single vote to the BJP candidate.

Ramesh Chennithala, Leader of the Opposition, said that the BJP has been a total failure in the State. He claimed the Congress has improved its performance compared to 2015 local body election. "We won more village panchayats, municipal councils and block panchayats," claimed Chennithala.

But the BJP president K Surendran charged that there was open trade of votes between the CPI(M) and the Congress to defeat the BJP. "The BJP lost in Thiruvananthapuram Corporation Council only because of this unholy alliance between these two parties. The CPI(M) had shifted their votes to the Congress and vice versa in seats where the BJP was certain to win," charged Surendran.

Pakistan to fence off...

From Page 1

The Frontier Corps which largely operated with archaic means like batons (lathis) and obsolete weapons is likely to be weaponized in a modern manner with total funding from Beijing, they said.

Assessments suggest the

Balochs are likely to target more Chinese convoys as they will be free from factoring in negotiations with the Pak authorities to free captured Chinese engineers and technicians in a bargain for money which was the practice till now.

Stop talks...

From Page 1

"The route was closed around 11 am. The DND and the Kalindi Kunj routes are operational and commuters are advised to take these routes for travelling to and from Delhi," said Noida Traffic Police official.

The Chilla route had remained obstructed since December 1 when the protest started here. One side of the road (Noida to Delhi) had remained closed during a large part of the period until December 12, when protesters agreed to open it for the sake of commuters but stayed put at the border.

Meanwhile, Delhi Police also took on to Twitter and informed commuters regarding border closed and its alternative routes.

"Tikri, Dhansa Borders are closed for any Traffic Movement. Jhatikara Borders is open only for two wheelers and pedestrian movement," Delhi Traffic Police tweeted.

"Available Open Borders Haryana are following Borders. Jharoda (Only Single Carriageway/Road), Daurala, Kapashera, Badusarai, Rajokri NH 8, Bijwasan/Bajghera, Palam Vihar and Dundaheera Borders," it further tweeted.

They also said the Government should have formed a committee of farmers and others before the laws were enacted by Parliament.

His assertions came after the Supreme Court indicated earlier in the day that it may form a panel having representatives of the Government and farmer unions to resolve the deadlock.

Enacted in September, the three farm laws have been projected by the Government as major reforms in the agriculture sector that will remove the middlemen and allow farmers to sell anywhere in the country.

However, the protesting farmers have expressed apprehension that the new laws would pave the way for eliminating the safety cushion of MSP and do away with the mandis, leaving them at the mercy of big corporates.

Superintending Engineer (P&W)
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF ENGINEER (GENERATION)
SGTPS: MPPGCL: BIRSINGHPUR DISTT-UMARIA 484552
 PH & FAX NO.: 07655-260226 Email: sepnw.sgtpsbrs@gmail.com
 NO 511-0100/SGTPS/P&W/E-NIT-28/3229 Birsinghpur, dtd 14.12.2020

E- TENDER INVITING NOTICE

M.P. POWER GENERATING CO. LTD. Invites Electronic tenders from manufacturer/reputed supplier/contractor, for the supply/works of following items for SGTPS, MPPGCL Birsinghpur.

Sl No	MPPGCL TENDER ID	PARTICULARS	Estimate (In Rs.)	TENDER COST (In Rs)	E.M.D. (In Rs)	LAST DATE of closing of online submission	DUE DATE of TENDER OPENING
1	2020 MPPGCL 112141.T	Tender for Construction of RCC road from ash silo unit 1 to IV to west gate of NTH and road from Gate No. 2 to MCR 500 MW in CHP area at SGTPS, Birsinghpur.	609/- Lakhs	5,000/-	6,09,000/-	06.01.2021	12.01.2021

These tenders are being invited through e-tendering system. For viewing detailed E-NIT, downloading tender documents and participating in Electronic Tender, for any clarifications and/or due date extensions or corrigendum, please visit the website www.mptenders.gov.in regularly. Any clarifications and/or due date extensions or corrigendum shall be issued on the website www.mptenders.gov.in only.

Superintending Engineer (P&W)
 O/o The Chief Engineer (Gen.)
 SGTPS, Birsinghpur, Umaria

"SAVE ELECTRICITY-SAVE POWER-SAVE MONEY"

EAST CENTRAL RAILWAY
E-TENDER NOTICE
 Batch No: 54/20 dated: 15.12.2020

OPEN TENDER
 E-Tender Notice for supply of materials-"participation in through" web portal of IREPS - www.ireps.gov.in offers are invited for supply of the following materials: The closing time for all tenders is at 14.00 hrs.

S.N.	Tender No.	Brief Description	Quantity	Published on/Time	Closing on/Time	Fund
01	14205030B	25 KV single Pole vacuum interrupter	46 Nos.	10.12.20 / 14:41:32	31.12.2020	Fund is available
02	14205031A	25 KV single Pole vacuum type Circuit Breaker	24 Nos.	10.12.20 / 14:42:51	31.12.2020	Fund is available

Participants are required to submit their offer only on-line through the web portal of IREPS - www.ireps.gov.in before the closing date and time. Other details regarding Consignee and detailed description of stores are available in tender document in tender notice on the above portal.

PR/O1138/HQ/Store/IT/20-21/148 Principal Chief Material Manager/ECR/Hajipur

RAILWAY ELECTRIFICATION, LUCKNOW
 Tender No.: RELKOS28205167/70 Dated: 14.12.2020

OPEN e-TENDER NOTICE

Open e-Tender in single packet system are invited by the Dy. Chief Material Manager, Railway Electrification, Lucknow for & on behalf of the President of India for the supply of following items:-
Tender No. 28205170:- Description: 2500V Insulation Tester as per annexure 'A' attached. Make SONEL MIC 2510 or similar

1. Qty.	25 Nos.
2. Approximate Cost (₹)	₹ 44,54,512.50 (Rs. Forty Four Lakh Fifty Four Thousand Five Hundred Twelve and Paise Fifty Only)
3. Earnest Money (INR) (₹)	₹ 89,090.00 (Rs. Eighty Nine Thousand Ninety Only)
4. Tender Closing date & Time	05.01.2021 at 11.00 Hrs.
5. Validity of Offer	90 Days.

Tender No. 58205167:- Description: Railcore Drilling Machine with Petrol Engine specification: Motor Output-1.5 KW, Torque-340 Nm, Stroke-40mm, Core drill dia 12-50 mm, rail adaptor, quick action clamping system with rail, tank capacity min-5 Litres, weight not more than 25 Kgs. Make Brand: BDS MAB965 or Similar.

1. Qty.	09 Nos.
2. Approximate Cost (₹)	₹ 31,01,040.00 (Rs. Thirty One Lakh One Thousand Forty only)
3. Earnest Money (INR)(₹)	₹ 62,020/- (Rs. Sixty Two Thousand Twenty Only)
4. Tender Closing date & Time	06.01.2021 at 11.00 Hrs.
5. Validity of offer	90 Days

1. The cost of Earnest Money deposit through net Banking, debit Card, Credit Card or payment gateway only as per payment option available in <http://www.ireps.gov.in> website. Payment in any other form shall not be accepted.
 2. For other details and to download the entire Tender Paper, please visit website <http://www.ireps.gov.in>.
 3. Online offer without Earnest money will be summarily rejected.
 4. Manual offers are not allowed against this tender and any such manual offer received shall be ignored.
 5. Railway reserve the right to accept/reject any or all tenders without assigning reasons to any or all tenderers.

Dy. Chief Material Manager,
 Railway Electrification, Lucknow
 For & on behalf of President of India

No. PR/613/2020
 R.D. Adv

2 YEARS OF GOVERNANCE IN CHHATTISGARH

REDEFINING 'NYAY'



- ❖ **9000 cr** short term loan of **18 lakh** farmers waived off
- ❖ **244 cr** irrigation tax pending since long waived off
- ❖ **94%** of state's farmers selling their paddy crop at MSP
- ❖ Under 'Rajiv Gandhi Kisan Nyay Yojana' **5750 cr** into the account of farmers
- ❖ Under 'Godhan Nyay Yojana' average cow dung procurement of **15 cr** per month
- ❖ Agriculture land acquisition compensation **4 times**
- ❖ Amended 'Chhattisgarh Krishi Upaj Mandi Act' passed in legislative assembly
- ❖ Forest Rights Certificate holders covered under **MSP**
- ❖ Procurement of minor forest produce at MSP raised from **7** to **52**
- ❖ Daily jobs to average **25 lakh** labourers under MGNREGA



Shri Bhupesh Baghel
Hon'ble Chief Minister, Chhattisgarh

Cabinet OK's ₹3.92L cr spectrum auction

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Union Cabinet on Wednesday approved the proposal for the auction of 2,251.25 megahertz of spectrum worth ₹3.92 lakh crore at the base price. The Government, however, has decided not to auction frequencies in 3,300-3,600 Mhz bands that were identified for 5G services.

Addressing media, Telecom Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad said the Ministry plans to issue a notice to invite bids in December and hold the spectrum auction by March. In a bid to tighten security of communications network, the Cabinet Committee on Security decided to create the National Security Directive on Telecommunication Sector, which will mandate service providers to purchase equipment from trusted sources.

The move is widely believed to be aimed at banning the use of Chinese equipment in the telecom sector.

"The auction will be for spectrum in 700 MHz, 800 MHz, 900 MHz, 1800 MHz, 2100 MHz, 2300 MHz and 2500 MHz frequency bands. Spectrum will be offered for assignment for a validity period of 20 years. A total of 2,251.25 MHz is being offered with a total valuation of Rs 3,92,332.70 crore (at reserve price)," an official statement said.

The Digital Communications Commission, the apex decision making body

of the Department of Telecom, in May had approved the spectrum auction plan worth Rs 5.22 lakh crore which included radio waves for 5G services as well. However, a part of the 300 Mhz of spectrum identified by the DoT for 5G services is being used by the Navy, and the Department of Space has also made claims on a significant portion of these radio waves.

The telecom operators have also been demanding the Government to lower the base price of 5G spectrum as each operator will need to shell out around Rs 50,000 crore for the required quantum of radio waves for the next generation services. Prasad did not reply to questions on the status of 5G spectrum. He said that the Government has retained rules of 2016 for payments in the upcoming auction as well. Besides the bid price, the telecom operator will also need to pay a 3 per cent revenue share to the Government every year.

"In addition to the bid amount, successful bidders will also have to pay 3 per cent of the adjusted Gross Revenue (AGR) excluding wireline services as spectrum usage charges for the spectrum won through this auction," the statement said.

"Successful bidders may pay entire bid amount in one go (upfront) or may exercise an option to pay a certain amount (25 per cent for spectrum won in 700 MHz, 800 MHz, 900 MHz bands or 50 per cent for spectrum won in 1800 MHz, 2100 MHz, 2300

MHz, 2500 MHz bands) upfront and remaining amount in a maximum up to 16 equated annual installments, after a moratorium of two years," the statement said.

Detailing about National Security Directive, Prasad said the directive has been framed from the perspective of national security. "Considering the need to ensure India's national security, the Cabinet has accorded approval for the National Security Directive on Telecommunication Sector," Prasad said. Under the provisions of this directive, the Government will declare a list of trusted sources and trusted products for installation in the country's telecom network.

"The methodology to designate trusted products will be devised by the designated authority, the National Cyber Security Coordinator. Telecom service providers are required to connect new devices that are designated trusted products," Prasad said.

"The list of the trusted source and product will be decided based on approval of a committee headed by the deputy national security advisor. The committee will consist of members from relevant departments, Ministries and will also have two members from the industry and independent experts. The committee will be called the national security committee on telecom," Prasad said, adding that policy will be formed in 180 days.

₹3,500 cr aid for sugarcane farmers



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Amid ongoing protests by farmers, the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) has approved assistance of about ₹3,500 crore for sugarcane farmers (Ganna Kisan). The fund would be directly credited into the accounts of the farmers. The decision would benefit five crore sugarcane farmers, their dependents, as well as five lakh workers employed in the sugar mills and related ancillary activities. The Centre has also decided to export 60 lakh tons of sugar during the ongoing marketing year 2020-21 as part of its efforts to help them clear outstanding dues to sugarcane farmers.

Briefing media after the meeting, Information and Broadcasting Minister Prakash Javadekar said the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) has approved a subsidy of Rs 3,500 crore on exports of 60 lakh tonnes of

sweetener and the subsidy amount will directly be given to farmers. The minister said both "sugar industry as well as sugarcane farmers are in crisis" because of high domestic production at 310 lakh tonnes as against the annual demand of 260 lakh tonnes. The decision will benefit 5 crore farmers, said Javadekar, who is also Union Environment Minister.

The CCEC observed that sugarcane farmers sell their produce to sugar mills but they do not get their dues from the mill owners as they have surplus sugar stock. The government would also facilitate the evacuation of this surplus sugar stock that will enable payment of dues of the sugarcane farmers.

The subsidy would cover the expenses on marketing costs including handling, upgrading and other processing costs and costs of international and internal transport as well as freight charges on export of up to 60 lakh metric

Farmers' protest at Delhi borders is an exception, limited to one State: Tomar

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The ongoing farmers' protest at Delhi borders is an "exception" and "limited to one State", Union Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar said on Wednesday and hoped for an early solution as the Government is in talks with farmer unions.

"There is an atmosphere of enthusiasm in the country because of the recent reforms in the farm sector," he said while referring to the enactment of three new legislations. "The ongoing protest is an exception and the agitation is limited to one State. We are holding discussions and talks. I believe there will be an early solution," Tomar said at a virtual conference organised by industry body Assocham.

The minister noted that while there is an agitation going on on one side, there are also lakhs of farmers coming in support of these laws. Tomar highlighted the measures taken by the central government in the last six years to boost farmers' income and make agriculture sector profitable.

Thousands of farmers, particularly from Punjab and



Haryana, are protesting for more than two weeks against the three farm laws, saying the new legislation will lead to the dismantling of the MSP (Minimum Support Price) and mandi systems and leave them at the mercy of corporates.

Tomar, who is leading the negotiation with about 40 farmer unions along with Food Minister Piyush Goyal and Minister of State for Commerce Som Parkash, said the government has taken various initiatives during the COVID-19 pandemic for the growth of farm sector, including a ₹1,00,000 crore fund for creating farm-level infrastructure and setting up of 10,000 FPOs. (Farmer Producer Organisations).

expected to be down this year, while Brazil's crushing will only start in April 2021. From now till April, there is good export opportunity for India," officials said.

In the previous marketing year 2019-20 (October-September), the government

provided a lump sum export subsidy of Rs 10,448 per tonne, costing the exchequer Rs 6,268 crore. Mills exported 5.7 million tonnes of sugar against the mandatory quota of 6 million tonnes set for the 2019-20 season (October-September), according to official data.

These budgetary provisions in agriculture and allied sector will strengthen the rural economy and make farming activities profitable, he said.

As the standoff continues between the Government and groups of protesting farmers over the three farm laws, Tomar had on Tuesday said the Acts have been welcomed in various states and that the Centre was willing to continue its talks with "genuine farm unions" to find a solution with an open mind.

The MSP at which the government commits to procure the produce from farmers is an administrative decision and it "will continue as it is", the minister had said.

USE OF BLACK MONEY IN 2019 LS POLL

EC orders MP CEO to lodge FIRs against 3 IPS officers

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

After the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) report's findings of extensive use of unaccounted cash during the Lok Sabha polls 2019 in Madhya Pradesh by a certain political party, the Election Commission has asked the Chief Electoral Officer of Madhya Pradesh to lodge a criminal case against three IPS officers and others whose alleged role in the use of black money during the 2019 general elections as per extant electoral and other relevant laws.

The EC has also asked the Union Home Secretary to initiate "appropriate departmental action" against the IPS officers and also asked the Madhya Pradesh chief secretary to undertake a "similar action" against a state police service officer.

EC sources identified the three Indian Police Service (IPS) officers as Sushovan Banerjee, Sanjay Mane, V Madhu Kumar and the state police service officer as Arun Mishra. The report specifically mentions instances of prima facie involvement and nexus of



public/government servants in unauthorized/unaccounted cash transactions.

The EC said it was recommending action after it "deliberated" upon a report sent to it by the CBDT (Central Board of Direct Taxes) intimating it about the Income-Tax Department's "search operations in Madhya Pradesh and its findings of extensive use of unaccounted cash during the General Elections 2019." While the EC did not name the party, it has been widely reported that the CBDT report referred to the Congress party.

After deliberations, Commission directed to forward copy of the report of CBDT, the Chief Electoral Officer, Madhya

Pradesh to lodge criminal action before designated authority, e.g. Economic Offence Wing, Madhya Pradesh against concerned for violation as per extant electoral and other relevant laws. Commission has also directed Union Home Secretary to initiate appropriate departmental action against All India Service officers and also to Chief Secretary, Madhya Pradesh for similar action against State officer," the EC said.

The EC further stated that it was reported that these entities/individuals engaged in unauthorized and unaccounted cash contributions to individuals on behalf of certain political party, which is reported to be corroborated during search-

es against persons by Income Tax department under Section 132 of the Income Tax Act, 1961. The report specifically mentions instances of prima facie involvement/nexus of public/Govt. servants in unauthorized/unaccounted cash transactions.

The CBDT in April 2019, said in a statement that part of Rs 281 crore of unaccounted cash, "was transferred to the headquarters of a major political party in Delhi". Without naming the political party at that time, CBDT said that around "Rs 20 crore of this cash was moved through hawala (channels) to the party's headquarters from the residence of a senior functionary at Tughlak Road".

The department's statement last year came after raids at 52 locations linked to several individuals and entities, including Nath. His officer on special duty (OSD) Pravin Kakkar, his former advisor Rajendra Miglani, and executives linked to his brother-in-law's firm Moser Baer and his nephew Ratul Puri's company Hindustan Powerprojects Pvt Ltd were all raided.

India's Covid caseload likely to touch 1 cr

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India's Covid-19 caseload is all set to touch one crore anytime soon as infection tally mounted to 99,32,547 on Wednesday when 26,382 people fell ill to virus in a day, while the deaths rose to 1,44,096 with 387 new fatalities.

The Union Health Ministry data showed that the active Covid-19 caseload of the country stands at 3,32,002, which is 3.34 per cent of the total coronavirus cases in India. "The ongoing trend of contraction of India's total active cases continues. The active caseload of the country stands at 3,32,002. The share of active cases in the total positive cases has further shrunk to 3.34 per cent," the Ministry said in a statement here.

"India has recorded less than 40,000 daily new cases since the last 17 days. In the last 24 hours, only 26,382 persons were found to be infected with Covid in India. A total of 75.84 per cent of the new cases are from 10 States and UTs.

Farm laws agitate a section of farmers, especially from Punjab

Punjab had enacted the similar farm laws in 2013

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The three controversial farm laws announced by the Modi Government have agitated a section of farmers, especially from Punjab who are opposing the 'contract farm legislations' even though the rich agricultural State had enacted the same in 2013.

As per a report submitted to the Ministry of Agriculture to convince the protesting farmers to call off their strike, the Punjab Government's contract farming has given employment to thousands and benefited them after a world popular cola drink maker, PepsiCo was one of the first companies to make the soft drinks after reaping under contract farming and is still engaged in contract farming in the state.

The cola manufacturer is

not the only company engaged in contract farming, but there are many companies such as LT Food, EBRO Food, and Sun Star Overseas that have been doing contract farming in Punjab.

The government has repeatedly claimed that the contract farming law is going to change the fortunes of the farmers, but opposition parties and farmer organizations claim that this farm law will make the corporates dominate the farming and farmers will end up becoming just laborers.

"If the contract farming was so bad, why would telecom giant Bharti Airtel's 'Fieldfresh' and other companies like ITC, Patanjali, Dabur, Godrej Agrovet including have grown in the agriculture sector. Contrary to farmers' fears and beliefs, in reality, not a single company of Mukesh Ambani's Reliance Group is directly or indirectly has got in contract farming," explained a senior Agriculture Ministry official about the report.

Contract farming has been in India for the past 30 years and is being cultivated in millions of hectares including in Gujarat, Maharashtra, and many southern Indian states. And factually, not a single farmer in the country has lost his land to any corporate or private company, instead, the income of farmers who went for contract farming has augmented.

One of the greatest benefits of contract farming is the corporates or private companies cover the losses over risks like poor rain or any other issues which are likely to benefit small farmers more.

"The government has agreed to include suggestions of farmers in the new farm laws and if possible, will also amend the laws if at all needed to benefit the country's farmers. Now, the government is working on a mechanism to connect small farmers to contract farming so that their risks are absorbed by corporates under contract farming," said the report.

PUBLIC NOTICE

Loss of ID card This is to bring to the notice of the general public that one ID Card of Suraj Prakash issued by ICICI Bank Ltd. Having ID card no. 10200 has been found missing/lost on 25/11/20. Anyone who finds the said ID card, is requested to return the said ID card to the Manager Debt Services & Management Group, ICICI Bank Ltd., S.D. Tower, Rohini, Sec-8, Delhi-110085.

Therefore, all the customers of ICICI Bank Ltd are hereby notified not to make any payment to any unauthorized person holding the said ID card no. 10200. Please take further notice that anybody making payment to any person holding the said ID card shall do so at his/her own costs, risk and peril and ICICI Bank shall not be bound and/or responsible for any payment.

LOST & FOUND

Inform that All original allotment letter dtd. 17/12/87, possession letter by Noida in fr of M/s. Anisto, lease deed dtd 11/8/88, GPA dtd 24/7/93, ATS executed by Anisto in fr of Ashok Kr, will executed by Anisto in fr of Ashok Kr. regd property C-81, Sec. 23 Noida U.P. area 389 MTR have been lost. FIR LR NO. 902561/2015 dtd. 01/09/2015 by Rishi Kapoor s/o K.M. Kapoor. Finder may contact Kotak Bank Ltd. Sector - 125 Noida U.P. Phone:0120-6173761

BEFORE DEBTS RECOVERY TRIBUNAL-II, DELHI

4th FLOOR, JEEVAN TARA BUILDING, PARLIAMENT STREET, NEW DELHI-110001

O.A. No.775/19 Date: 07.10.2020

CENTRAL BANK OF INDIA Applicant

Versus

MOTIRANJAN PATRA & ORS. Respondent

To

DEFENDANT

1. MR. MOTIRANJAN PATRA

2. MRS. SELITA JENA

Both at: R/o. 190 Village Katwaria Sarai, Delhi-110016.

3. M/S. SHUBHKAMNA BUILDTech PVT. LTD.

197-E, Pocket-IV, Mayur Vihar, Phase-I, Delhi-110091.

Whereas the above named applicant(s) has/have instituted a case for recovery of Rs.60,08,140/- (Rupees Sixty Lakh Eight Thousand One Hundred and Forty Only) against you and whereas it has been shown to the satisfaction of the Tribunal that it is not possible to serve you in the ordinary way therefore, this notice is given by advertisement directing you to make appearance in the Tribunal on 10.02.2021 at 10:30 A.M. Take notice that in default of your appearance on the day before the mentioned, the case will be heard and determined in your absence.

BY ORDER OF THE TRIBUNAL

For Registrar, DRT-II, DELHI

Seal of Court

PUBLIC NOTICE

We, M/s Sadan Realtech Pvt. Ltd., having its registered office at 4th Floor, M2K Corporate Park, N Block, Mayfield Gardens, Sector-51, Gurugram-122003, have proposed to migrate part area of licence no. 98 of 2012 dated 07.09.2012 granted for setting up of Group Housing Colony situated at Sector 104, Gurugram, for the purpose of taking licence of Affordable Plotted Colony (DDJAY-2016) under the migration policy of Town and Country Planning Department dated 18.02.2016 and we declare that have not created any third party rights on the applied land under migration policy on an area measuring 14.1375 acres.

If allottee (if any) of the licenced colony (under licence No. 98 of 2012) has any objection to the above stated migration, the same may be submitted in the office of District Town Planner, Gurugram within 30 days from the date of issue of this Public Notice.

For Sadan Realtech Pvt. Ltd.

Place: Gurugram Gautam Kumar Bhartia

Date: 17.12.2020 Authorised Signatory

Sunflower sea starfish listed as critically endangered species

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

As a scuba diver's delight, the sunflower sea starfish, a key species of ocean has been listed as Critically Endangered by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), which maintains a "Red List of Threatened Species".

Citing a 90 per cent decline in the species' global population, the IUCN on December 10 officially placed the sunflower sea star (Pycnopodia helianthoides) on the group's Red List of Threatened Species, meaning that it is critically endangered. The next step is extinction.

A partnership of more than 60 institutions had made the official request to the IUCN to put it under the Critically Endangered list.

"The sunflower star was the most susceptible of the 20 sea star species affected by a multi-host pathogen and has rapidly gone from being the most common subtropical sea star on the U.S. West Coast to critically endangered," said Drew Harvell, professor of ecology and evolutionary biology in the College of



Agriculture and Life Sciences, who helped to place the animal on the Red List. "This highlights the impacts disease can have on the stability of our nearshore ecosystems."

Among the largest of the sea stars, the sunflower sea star is close in size to a city street sewer cover, with a voracious appetite to match. It scoots along the ocean floor like a robotic vacuum cleaner, gorging on everything in its path.

Populations of many sea star species dropped precipitously starting in 2013, with the sunflower star the hardest hit, due to warming oceans and sea star wasting syndrome, Harvell

said, according to reports.

Scientists from The Nature Conservancy and Oregon State University, who led the listing effort, estimate that 90.6 per cent of the sunflower sea star population is now lost from the outbreak, with as many as 5.75 billion dead from the disease.

The Nature Conservancy and University of Washington are partnering to establish a captive breeding program with the option for re-introducing individuals to the wild, said the reports.

This many-legged star of the sea could be seen in coastal waters in Northern America. But during El Niño and the Warm Blob, a microorganism that triggers sea star wasting disease took root, and several types of sea stars died as ocean temperatures rose along the western coast from 2014-2016.

The sunflower star was badly damaged - this aquatic behemoth is now scarce, although some organisms have since recovered. Scientists predict that a whopping more than 5 billion sunflower stars declined from this epidemic, representing over 90 per cent of their total population worldwide.

25% world's population may not have access to a Covid-19 vaccine till 2022, says study

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Operational challenges of the global Covid-19 vaccination programme will be as difficult as the scientific challenges associated with their development, researchers said in the journal BMJ and asserted that nearly a quarter of the world's population may not have access to a Covid-19 vaccine until at least 2022.

This is a first-of-its kind study by the researchers from the Johns Hopkins University in the US who analysed pre-orders for Covid-19 vaccines ahead of their regulatory approval that had been publicly announced by countries around the world.

By 15 November 2020, several countries had reserved a total of 7.48 billion doses, or 3.76 billion courses from 13 manufacturers, out of 48 Covid-19 vaccine candidates in clinical trials.

"Just over half (51 per cent) of these doses will go to high-income countries, which represent 14 per cent of the world's population," while low and middle income countries will

potentially have the remainder, despite these countries comprising more than 85 per cent of the world's population.

Up to 40 per cent of the vaccine courses from these vaccine manufacturers might potentially remain for low- and middle-income countries. However, this will depend, in part, on how high-income countries share what they procure and whether the US and Russia participate in globally coordinated efforts.

But the authors point out that even if all of these vaccine manufacturers were to succeed in reaching their maximum production capacity, at least a fifth of the world's population would not have access to vaccines until 2022.

"This study provides an overview of how high-income countries have secured future supplies of covid-19 vaccines, but that access for the rest of the world is uncertain," they wrote.

"Governments and manufacturers might provide much needed assurances for equitable allocation of covid-19 vaccines through greater transparency and accountability over these arrangements."

Suvendu Adhikari quits as TMC MLA, likely to join BJP

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

The fear of multiple defections ran high in the ruling Trinamool Congress with rebel party leader Suvendu Adhikari on Wednesday submitting his resignation from the Legislative Assembly before joining other rebel leaders in a closed-door meeting at the house of TMC MP Sunil Mandal some 80 miles from Kolkata.

Adhikari was likely to resign from the primary membership of his party on Friday, before joining the BJP in Delhi, sources close to him said adding there were chances that he could also join the saffron

party in the presence of BJP president Amit Shah who is scheduled to visit Bengal from Saturday.

The Wednesday's quick turn of events saw Adhikari depositing his resignation letter --- which curiously bore no date --- at the Assembly secretary before driving straight to Mandal's house of Burdwan.

There other rebel TMC satraps like Ansol MLA and Mayor Jitendra Tiwari, and Kalna party MLA and South Bengal Surface Transport Corporation Chairman Colonel Diptangshu Mukherjee joined him in a closed door meeting.

Tiwari met Adhikari hours after receiving a phone call from Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee from Coochbehar who assured him of an audience on December 18 after her return from North Bengal.

"Though anyone can meet anyone in a democracy but it is strange that Jitendra joined the Wednesday's meeting despite being assured by the Chief Minister that his grievances would be heard and redressed," Bengal Minister Firhad Hakim said.

Referring to the technical aspects of Adhikari's resignation, Bengal Assembly Speaker Biman Banerjee said that the

papers were not presented to him personally adding, "I will look into it when I go to the Assembly. Things will be done according to the rule book." Constitutional experts like Udayan Banerjee however quoted Article 206 saying such resignations required to be presented to the Speaker personally with dates of resignation being mentioned in it.

Reacting to the Wednesday's developments senior TMC leader Saugato Roysaid "this is all the fallout of Suvendu's earlier dealings with the BJP... I think he has struck a deal with the BJP for better posts other than what he

was enjoying here as the Transport Minister with two additional portfolios."

Calling Adhikari and likes of him as "traitors," party MP and senior advocate Kalyan Banerjee said, "let him go to BJP... he has higher ambitions of being a Chief Minister or Deputy Chief Minister... let us see what he gets there."

In what could bring more anxiety to the TMC leadership the Diamond Harbour MLA Dipak Halder on Wednesday too started playing the rebellious tune even as his posters jointly with those of Adhikari appeared all around his constituency.

When asked to comment on the developments he said he had personally not given those posters but said "those who might have given them might be my good friends as I am an admirer of Suvendu Adhikari."

Elsewhere Congress Lok Sabha Leader Adhir Chowdhury said that "Mamata Banerjee is getting the taste of the same medicine that she prescribed for the other opposition parties," while CPI(M)'s Rabin Deb said "it was inevitable that the leaders would quit one by one... now the question remains to be seen as to whether the BJP will retain its original colour or whether it

will be submerging by the TMC defectors." Senior BJP leaders Kaliah Vijaybargiya and Dilip Ghosh however said that they would welcome the "clean and able leaders" like Adhikari and would ensure that they got adequate respect in the party.

Meanwhile, Adhikari reportedly wrote to Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar about "threats" on his person and to his followers in the wake of present circumstances.

Adhikari alleged that the State Government was preparing false charges against him and his followers and sought the Governor's intervention. Incidentally Dhankar who

visited Diamond Harbour too alleged how the Government was using the officials to falsely frame the defecting politicians asking the bureaucrats to watch out their steps as "note" was being taken of their activities and would be referred to in future.

Sources in the BJP said that Centre was proposing to provide special security cover for at least 25 TMC leaders and MLAs who might switch side in the coming days. Among them 10 would be provided Y-Plus security while 10 would be given Y category security. The remaining five are likely to get X category security.

Didi relies on self charisma, asks voters to back her, not netas

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

In a circuitous admission that there was huge deficiency of trust quotient within the Trinamool Congress --- which saw stronger leaders rebelling frequently --- Bengal Chief Minister on Wednesday accused the BJP of luring and coercing the TMC leaders to join their ranks.

She sought to rely on her personal charisma than on anything else to win the next year's Assembly elections.

Banerjee who was speaking

at a rally in Coochbehar in North Bengal said how "my party leaders are being called up by the BJP and being told to join them. Our trusted leaders like Subrata Bakshi and Anubrata Mandal received calls from Delhi and were told to join the BJP... think how dangerous they are."

While Bakshi a former MP and is one of Banerjee's most trusted lieutenants, Mandal a party strongman is the TMC's Birbhum district president known for his foul mouth.

In an apparent indication

that instead of banking on the loyalty factor she would once again rely on her own charisma Banerjee said that only the corrupt TMC leaders fearing arrest and the ones who would not get ticket were joining the BJP.

"I will never join their ranks come what may... they may send me to jail but I will continue to work for the people of Bengal as I have been doing... Those who are scared of not getting a ticket are leaving, those who have taken money (and are apprehending arrest) are leaving," she said challenging the BJP

to send her to jail.

Sending across the message of "solidarity" directly to the people and the grassroots Banerjee said, "I want loyalty from the grassroots level workers of our party, do not bother about what your leaders are doing... act to your conscience because remember that you can change your dresses by the day but you cannot change your ideology... A time has come when you have to stand by the party and turn the things around so that you can help Bengal and its culture survive."

AIMIM rejects Didi B-Team charge

Kolkata: The All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen's (AIMIM) on Wednesday hit back at Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee refuting her charge that it was the "B team" of the BJP saying that all parties had the right to work according to their goal.

Referring to Banerjee's attack on AIMIM and its leader Asaduddin Owaisi, Bengal AIMIM spokesperson Imran Solanki said that his party had been working in the region for the past several years and had gained considerable ground which was why it had decided to contest elections to further its political goals. "There is nothing that others should be

jealous of," he said.

Banerjee had earlier said that "there are some parties funded by the BJP which are coming from Hyderabad to cut votes in this State so as to enable them to win the elections... it is time you understand their nefarious designs and reject them."

Banerjee said "the BJP is trying to isolate the Hindu votes and the AIMIM is playing the Muslim card to win Muslim votes... then what will I do will I eat," saying how the AIMIM played the catalyst in the loss of secular parties like the RJD in Bihar. Reacting to her statements the AIMIM leader wondered why BJP could win so many seats parliamentary in 2019

when the Hyderabad-based party was not in the fray. "The BJP won 18 seats when we were not there in 2019. How could they win those seats... now she is blaming us... we have come to contest elections and if we are asked we will use our organization to fight elections."

The Muslims who have a good 30 percent vote in Bengal can impact election results in more than 125 seats in the State. The TMC leadership however said that as AIMIM only had impact on the Urdu-speaking Muslims and they were culturally different from the Bengali-speaking Muslims it was the TMC that will get their votes. **PNS**

57.22 % turnout in 7th phase of J&K DDC polls

Jammu: The seventh round of polling in the District Development Council polls in Jammu and Kashmir Wednesday recorded marginally higher voter turnout of 57.22 percent across 31 constituencies.

Addressing a press conference in Jammu, the State Election Commissioner KK Sharma said, "polling was by and large peaceful across 31 constituencies". He said the Jammu division recorded an average voter turnout of 71.93% while the Kashmir Division recorded 39.52% average voter turnout.

He further said that 393200 (210479 male and 182721 female voters) people exercised their right to franchise for the seventh phase across the Jammu and Kashmir Union Territory.

As per reports pouring in from different areas, long queues of voters were seen at polling booths where women, elderly and first time voters



were seen waiting for their turn. Enthusiastic voters of all age groups flocked the polling booths to cast their votes.

SEC further informed that Jammu division recorded an average voter turnout of 71.93% with Poonch district recording the highest percentage of 80.12% followed by Reasi district with 76.75% and 75.63% voting recorded in Udhampur district. The lowest turnout in Jammu division was in Doda district which recorded 58.82%.

The Kashmir Division recorded 39.52% average voter turnout with Bandipora district

recording the highest polling at 70.47% followed by Baramulla with 59.53% and Kupwara district recorded 59.23% polling, he added.

Giving district wise details, the SEC informed that in Kashmir Division the polling percentage recorded in Budgam was 45.11%, Ganderbal 53.69%, Anantnag 22.46, Kulgam 17.98%, Pulwama 11.06% and 6.55% polling was registered in Shopian.

Similarly, in Jammu division poll percentage of 74.38% was recorded in Samba, 72.85 in Kathua, 67.75% in Ramban, 73.10 in Rajouri, 69.89 per cent in Kishtwar and 68.66% in Jammu district. The SEC informed that polling was held in 1852 polling stations including 1068 from Kashmir division and 784 from Jammu division. **PNS**

Two Pak soldiers killed by Indian Army

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

In a pin pointed retaliatory strike, at least two Pakistani soldiers were killed by the Indian Army opposite Sunderbani sector of Rajouri district late Tuesday night.

Ground reports indicated, soon after the Pakistani army attempted to target the Indian troops deployed at one of the forward posts in the Sunderbani sector late Tuesday evening Indian army hit back effectively.

Official sources on ground confirmed, "in a pinpointed response the Pak army suffered fatal injuries. There was no further exchange of firing in the forward area. The firing stopped immediately". Ground reports suggested, at least two soldiers of the Pakistan army were killed in the retaliatory firing.

Official sources also revealed the area South of Pir Panjal is witnessing hectic activity along the line of control following fresh spells of

snowfall in the higher reaches.

Pakistan based handlers of terrorist groups are attempting to push small batches of terrorists to infiltrate inside the Indian territory taking advantage of thick foliage and inclement weather conditions. On the other hand, Indian troops are standing tall, braving intense cold weather conditions to foil the nefarious designs of the Pakistan army. Intelligence reports indicated, desperate Pakistan army may target the Indian troops and launch BAT strikes in the region.

Meanwhile, fresh ceasefire violation was reported along the line of control in Nowshera sector of Rajouri on Wednesday.

Defence PRO in Jammu, Lt-Col Devender Anand said, "at about 6.00 p.m Pakistan initiated 'unprovoked' ceasefire violation by firing with small arms and shelling mortars along the LoC in Nowshera sector". He said the Indian army retaliated befittingly.

Protest against farm laws: Farmers to take out morcha to Ambani group's office on December 22 in Mumbai

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI:

Amid the ongoing farmers' agitation demanding the scrapping of the three controversial farm laws, Swabhimani Shetkari Sanghatana (SSS) leader Raju Shetti on Wednesday announced that he would take out a farmers' morcha to the Ambani group's office at Bandra-Kurla Complex in north-central Mumbai December 22 to register their protest against the Centre's efforts to impose pro-Ambani-Adani agricultural policies on farmers.

Talking to media persons in Pune, Shetti said that the farmers owing affiliation to four organisations - SSS, Peasants and Workers' Party (PWP), Prahar and Lok Sangarsh Samiti (LSS) - would march from the Mumbai Suburban collector's office to the Ambani group's office at BKC on Tuesday next.

"If the Modi government goes ahead and crushes the farmers' agitation in a manner it is doing, then it will have to

pay a heavy price for it. The BJP-led Government has hatched a conspiracy to hand over its food grain godowns to Ambanis and Adanis. The Government should realise that it is not just Ambani and Adani, the farmers also live in this country," Shetti said.

Shetti charged that the Modi government was thrusting the three farm bills down the farmers' throats to subvert the interests of the Ambanis and Adanis.

"No wonder that the Modi government is not taking serious cognisance of the ongoing farmers' agitation. We are taking out a morcha from the Mumbai Suburban Collector's office to Ambani Estate at BKC on December 22 to register our protests against the manner in which the Modi government has bulldozed the farm bill to favour Ambanis and Adanis," Shetti said.

Giving details of the farmers' protests in the run-up to the morcha to the Ambani group's office in Mumbai, Shetti said: "The farmers' ongoing

agitation has evoked tremendous response across the country. As many as 30 farmers have died as part of the ongoing agitation. It is in this backdrop that on the evening of December 20, farmers will light candles in each village of the state to pay homage to the farmers who have so far died during the agitation. On that evening, the farmers will take an oath to make the ongoing farmers' agitation a success".

Welcoming Dalit leader and Vanchit Bahujan Aghadi president Prakash Ambedkar's decision to join the morcha being organised by in Mumbai on December 22, Shetti said: "We (Ambedkar and I) may have ideological differences, but it is nice of him (Prakash Ambedkar) to have joined us for the farmers' cause. I welcome his decision".

The morcha planned by Shetti is the second farmers' protest against the farm bills in Maharashtra. On December 8, farmers across the state had joined the "Bharat Bandh" organised by the Maha Vikas

JEE-Mains to be held 4 times a year starting 2021, first round in Feb

New Delhi: Union Education Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal Nishank on Wednesday announced that the JEE-Mains exam for admission to engineering colleges will be held four times a year starting 2021 to offer flexibility to students and a chance to improve their scores.

The first edition of the exam will be held from February 23 to 26, followed by rounds in March, April and May. "We have examined the suggestions received from students and various quarters and it has been decided that JEE-Mains will be held in four sessions in February, March, April and May," Nishank said.

"The first session will be held from February 23-26 and the results will be declared within five days from the last date of exams. The move will ensure that students don't miss out on opportunities due to clash of exams or due to the COVID-19 situation at present," the MOE said in a statement. Nishank also said students will be given a choice to answer 75 questions (25 each in Physics, Chemistry and Mathematics) out of 90 (30 each in Physics, Chemistry and Mathematics). **PNS**

MMRC achieves 35th breakthrough, completes 91% tunneling work

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI:

As it achieved its 35th breakthrough near Dadar Metro Railway station, the Mumbai Metro Rail Corporation (MMRC) Ltd announced on Wednesday that it had completed 91 per cent of the tunnelling work in the 33.50 km-long fully underground Colaba-SEEPZ Mumbai Metro Line 3.

With its latest breakthrough, the MMRC has so far completed tunnelling work in four out seven packages of the underground Colaba-SEEPZ Mumbai Metro Line 3. "We have completed 91 per cent of tunnelling work and 61 per cent of civil work," a MMRC spokesperson said.

With the 1.12 km-long tunnel from Siddhivinayak to Dadar, the MMRC has completed package number four -- involving tunnelling of 10.96 km length. In all, the MMRC deployed three Tunnel Boring Machines (TBMs) during the work on package number 4.

"We are happy to announce 100% completion of tunneling work in 4 out of 7 packages. Tunneling in package-4 was particularly a challenging task as all the stations are located in close proximity to developments, active road traffic and popular religious places. Dadar, considered the heart of the city, will provide connectivity that will ease commuting woes of Mumbaiers," MMRC Managing Director Ranjit Singh Deol said.

"The Herrenknecht made TBM Krishna-1, equipped with Earth Pressure Balance technology, had started its main drive on July 7, 2020 and has completed the downline stretch using 805 rings. The overall progress of Dadar Metro Station is around 42 per cent," MMRC's Director (Projects) S K Gupta said.

The Package-4, which comprises Siddhivinayak, Dadar and Shitladevi stations, witnessed 8 breakthroughs (Nayanagar to Dharavi (Upline - 589m and downline - 589m), (Nayanagar to Dadar (Upline - 2491m and downline -

2472m), (Siddhivinayak to Dadar (Upline - 1106m and downline - 1126m), (Siddhivinayak to Worli (Upline - 1305m and downline - 1284m).

It may be recalled that on November 6, the MMRC had achieved 34th breakthrough of the 648-m long tunnel from Churchgate to Hutatma Chowk station. Robbins-made Dual mode hard rock Tunnel Boring Machine (TBM) Surya-1 completed the upline stretch in 292 days using 506 rings.

Hutatma Chowk is one of the most significant stations on the Colaba-Bandra-SEEPZ Metro-3 corridor as it provides proximity to Churchgate station, Bombay High Court, head offices of various banks and financial institutions, Consulates of a few countries, Bombay Stock Exchange, Ballard Estate, many hospitals, Colleges, Wankhede and Brabourne Stadiums, Jehangir Art Gallery, National Gallery of Modern Art (NGMA), Asiatic Library, Gateway of India and a number of delicious cuisines etc.

Modi to virtually attend AMU centenary programme on Dec 22

Aligarh (Uttar Pradesh): Prime Minister Narendra Modi will be the chief guest at the centenary celebrations of Aligarh Muslim University (AMU) via video conferencing on December 22 this year. He will attend the virtual function along with Union Education Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal Nishank.

Thanking the PM for accepting the invitation to participate in the celebrations marking 100 years of the university, Vice-Chancellor Professor Mansoor said, "The outreach of the university during this historical year would immensely help in the growth and development of the university and placement of our students in the private and public sectors."

Mansoor appealed to the university community to put in all efforts for the success of the forthcoming programmes and asked the staff members, students, alumni and AMU's well-wishers for their active participation. He requested the people to keep the centenary programmes above politics

just like Republic Day, Independence Day, Milad-un-Nabi and Gandhi Jayanti celebrations are kept above political differences.

He informed that President Ram Nath Kovind is expected to join other online centenary functions of the university. "Centenary is a great landmark achievement in the history of any university. AMU and its various units as well as Alumni Associations have been organising various programmes attended by illustrious people from diverse fields through the virtual mode following the Government of India's guidelines to curb the spread of Covid-19 pandemic," said the V-C.

Landmark AMU buildings and structures from the Administrative Block to the Centenary Gate, the Engineering College Road to the Polytechnic, Morrison Court Road, Victoria Gate, the University Mosque, Strachey Hall and the Sir Syed House would be illuminated on December 17 and 18 evening. **IANS**

4,304 more test positive in Maha

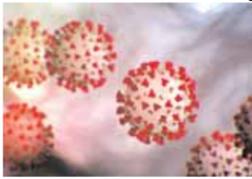
TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI:

As the total number of positive Covid-19 cases came down by 10,218 because of reconciliation of figures, Maharashtra on Wednesday recorded 95 Coronavirus deaths and 4,304 infections.

A day after as 3442 people tested positive for Covid-19 and 70 more people died of the pandemic in various parts of the state, there was an increase in both the infections and deaths.

With 95 fresh deaths, the Covid-19 toll in Maharashtra climbed from 48,339 to 48,434.

Taking into account 4304 fresh infections and reconciled infection figures, the total infections in the state went up to



18,80,893.

"Today owing to the reconciliation process of positive cases till November 12 - arising out of de-duplication of cases and shifting of out of state positive cases to concerned States, total positive cases of the state reduced by 10218. Similarly because of reconciliation, there is a reduction of 791 in total recovered cases of the state," a statement put out by the state public health department

said. As 4678 patients were discharged from the hospitals across the state after full recovery, the total number of people discharged from the hospitals since the second week of March this year rose to 17,69,897. The recovery rate in the state rose marginally from 93.60 per cent to 94.1 per cent.

With 12 new deaths, the Covid-19 toll in Mumbai went up from 10991 to 11003, while the infected cases went up by 521 to take the total infections to 2,84,404.

Meanwhile, the number of "active cases" total cases in the state dropped from 71,356 to 61,454. The fatality rate in the state rose from 2.56 per cent to 2.58 per cent.

Pune district, which continued to be the worst-affected district in Maharashtra, saw the total number of cases increase to 3,64,376, while the total number of deaths in Pune increased from 7642 to 7649.

Thane district remained in the third spot --after Pune and Mumbai -- after the total number of infections rose to 2,48,371, while the total deaths climbed from 5408 to 5414.

Of the 1,18,71,449 samples sent to laboratories, 18,80,893 have tested positive (15.84 per cent) for COVID-19 until Wednesday.

Currently, 5,09,478 people are in home quarantine while 3993 people are in institutional quarantine.

Army officer accused of raping friend's wife arrested

Kanpur (Uttar Pradesh): An Army colonel accused of raping his friend's Russian wife after sedating her husband at the Officers' Mess in Cantonment area, has been arrested.

He was arrested late on Tuesday, police said.

Superintendent of Police (East) Raj Kumar Agarwal, said, "Col Neeraj Gahlot was arrested while trying to flee to an unknown place to evade his arrest."

The police had launched a manhunt for Col. Neeraj Gahlot whose mobile location was traced in the vicinity of officers' mess on Monday evening but he managed to evade arrest.

Cantonment Circle, Additional Superintendent of Police (ASP), Nikhil Pathak, said that a team headed by Chakeri police SHO Ravi Srivastava was

dispatched to nab the absconding officer, but his room was found locked from outside.

The colonel posted in Kanpur was booked on Sunday for allegedly raping his friend's wife at the Officers' Mess, police said.

The victim's husband, a civilian, lodged an FIR against the Army officer at the Cantonment police station.

According to the complainant, his wife is of Russian origin and has been living in India for 10 years. The accused allegedly had invited his civilian friend to the Officer's Mess and gave him an intoxicating drink which made him unconscious. The Army officer subsequently raped his friend's wife. The accused also allegedly assaulted the woman when she put up a resistance. **IANS**

16-year-old girl raped in UP's Shamli

PTI ■ MUZAFFARNAGAR

A 16-year-old girl was allegedly raped by a middle-aged man in a village in Shamli district of Uttar Pradesh, police said on Wednesday.

The incident took place in the Jhinhana police station area on Tuesday, they said.

The accused lured the victim, who is mentally challenged, to his house and raped her, the minor's mother said in her complaint to the police.

The globule therapy

SC allows homoeopaths for COVID-19 mitigation protocols, recognises their right to administer doses



This is a forever debate, about the efficacy of allopathy and homoeopathy in curing diseases. While the former addresses the immediate criticality, the latter is good for long-term management and prevention. Alternative medicine is now being used as an add-on and as part of an integrated approach to medicine and convalescent therapies. When it comes to the flu virus, particularly COVID-19, a cure is still remote in allopathy where research is still focussed on studying the virus. Homoeopathy is still prophylactic, based as it is on symptom management, and eases conditions of mild to moderate cases at least. With no drug present to specifically

treat COVID-19, even allopathy is currently relying on HCQ and Remdesivir to target symptoms. Perhaps it is because the treatment is symptomatic in both disciplines at the moment that the Supreme Court has ruled that homoeopaths can prescribe medicines for prophylaxis, amelioration and mitigation of COVID-19 patients, provided the prescription is given only by institutionally qualified practitioners. It, however, clarified that no practitioner may flag it as a cure and strictly operate within the guidelines issued by the Ministry of AYUSH (Ayurveda, Yoga and Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha and Homeopathy). The court has enabled a bit of a stopgap, considering a cure is not in sight and vaccination will take time to cover the population our size. While homoeopathy has long been considered a palliative, its efficacy in cure, as claimed by patients, has not been demonstrated consistently in medical trials. So far, the evidence of their potential has largely been anecdotal than empirical. In fact, combinations like Bryonia Alba and Arsenic Album 30 have been in circulation as a preventive and recuperative aid, often used alongside allopathy. India, besides Cuba, is the only country to officially explore homoeopathy as part of its COVID-19 prevention, treatment and research protocol. The Central Council for Research in Homoeopathy (CCRH) has been conducting trials to prove that the discipline works in containing the disease but in the absence of concrete proof, it is at the moment nothing better than a placebo. Yet, homoeopathy enjoys mass acceptability in India, with users believing in its long-term effects. In fact, it is the second most popular system of medicine in the country which, given our oversized disease burden and a stressed healthcare infrastructure, could work in taking care of basic health problems. But there has to be a rationality of approach and not blind faith. Once the disease sets in, there is no alternative to the clinically proven and medically tested protocols. Traditional systems of medicine, like ayurveda and homoeopathy, are, therefore, good for overall well-being and building body resistance. This distinction is very important in a country growing up in a culture of naturopathy and home remedies and, therefore, is prone to trusting conventional wisdom. But this is a novel virus we are dealing with. There is no doubt that traditional systems of medicine in India have not only survived but flourished over the centuries and there are virtues embedded in our huge herbal heritage that are good for enhancing immunity and overall health management. But overplaying our herbs as part of a COVID-19 medicare protocol, when they are yet to cross the threshold of medical reason, comes with the attendant ills of misconception that they are just as effective as allopathic drugs. Like homoeopathic institutes, a few ayurveda pharmaceutical companies, too, have been working on simulation studies where few plant molecules have shown the ability to halt the alarming multiplication of the SARS CoV-2 virus in an Artificial Intelligence (AI) modelling. Researchers at AI Delhi, in collaboration with Japanese scientists, have found that properties of Ashwagandha have "therapeutic and preventive value" against COVID-19 infection. But they are working on more conclusive proof that could allow for pharmacological interventions. Besides, our drug control laws need more teeth and the Health Ministry has even released the draft of Drugs and Magic Remedies (Objectionable Advertisements) (Amendment) Bill, 2020, with stiffer penalties. But more deterrence needs to be built in. Rather than upgrading AYUSH protocols, we need to lay out a tiered structure on evidence-based protocols and mapping the progression of the disease. That would make us truly holistic in approach.

Boris is willing

The UK Prime Minister would grace the R-Day parade but his post-Brexit tilt towards India may give China some heartburn



UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson is set to visit New Delhi as the chief guest at the Republic Day parade in January. His tour will help further strengthen Indo-UK relations and is being seen in diplomatic circles as the UK's post-Brexit tilt towards the Indo-Pacific region, in which India is an important player. The significance that Britain is attaching to the ties with India can be gauged from the fact that Johnson's trip will be his first major bilateral outing since becoming the Prime Minister and the first since the UK's departure from the European Union. Both nations have shared interests because of their past history and the fact that the UK has a 1.5 million-strong Indian diaspora, which has made valuable contributions

in academia, literature, arts, medicines, science, business and politics. Closer ties with the UK will help Indians who want to work and set up businesses in the island nation in terms of easier visa access. Apart from the two nations planning to boost employment and jointly confront threats to global peace and security in the Indo-Pacific region, the idea is to transform the G7 group comprising the UK, the US, France, Japan, Germany, Italy and Canada into a broader grouping of 10 leading democracies that will be capable of thwarting China's expansionist plans. It is with this goal in mind that Johnson has invited India, Australia and South Korea to attend the UK-hosted G7 summit in the summer of 2021, and Prime Minister Narendra Modi has accepted. For its part, a stronger bond with the UK will stand India in good stead as it strives for a permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). China has been blocking it for decades despite the fact that the other four permanent members — Russia, the UK, the US and France — are backing New Delhi's claims. Unfortunately, the UN charter is such that it gives permanent members the power to veto any resolution, including the expansion of membership, and Beijing has been exploiting this factor to the hilt. It has thwarted India's ambitions to sit at the UNSC high table by laying down conditions that are impossible for New Delhi to meet. Moreover, with China wanting to push Pakistan's agenda time and again at the UNSC, India needs as many allies as it can in its corner.

Johnson's visit is coming at a time when New Delhi is seeking more investment to shore up a tottering economy. The trade Ministers of both the nations are in talks and India would work with the UK on a range of issues. The two are trying to deepen their economic partnership in the hope that it will ultimately culminate in a free-trade agreement as the economies of both the nations have taken a body blow due to the pandemic. The total trade between the countries is worth almost 24 billion Euros and it grew by 11 per cent in the last financial year, but there is potential to ramp it up in a post-COVID world. On December 15, UK Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab, who is on a visit to India as a prelude to Johnson's trip, announced a closer collaboration on an enhanced trade partnership, and met Modi to discuss a 10-year roadmap for a new era in bilateral ties. Apart from trade, the two democracies are seeking closer collaboration on tackling the Coronavirus pandemic, climate change and enhancing defence cooperation so that they can better address key issues like terrorism and maritime security. One can safely assume that China will be watching this bonhomie and Johnson's overtures to India with some concern, if not outright alarm.

Institutional spine

Major institutions refused to buckle under pressure from President Trump when he tried systemic changes to shore up his chances for a second term



BHOPINDER SINGH

The undermining of all major institutions of democracy in the United States was afoot in all earnest by President Donald Trump in his four-year tenure — from the Judiciary and Military to even his own Justice Department, all were par for course as long as the weakening of the institutions solidified Trump's own chances for a second term. His patent hiring-and-firing spree, refusing to cooperate with the Congress on critical investigations, attacking independent Press to filling up key appointments with supposed loyalists raised serious questions about the free and fair functioning of democracy. Not surprisingly, the US had by 2017 slipped from the status of "full democracy" to "flawed democracy" as per the Democracy Index, as published by the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU). The report had noted: "Trust in political institutions is an essential component of well-functioning democracies. Yet surveys by Pew, Gallup and other polling agencies have confirmed that public confidence in the Government has slumped to historic lows in the US. This has had a corrosive effect on the quality of democracy."

While the systemic changes, interferences and appointments were being made towards Trump's electoral advantage, somewhere the popularity polls were still giving him nightmares — he knew that when push comes to shove, he would need these institutions to be spineless, acquiesce and fall in line with Trump, irrespective of the election results. The telltale signs of Trump's nervousness were written all over when for months he refused to commit honouring the poll results and ensuring a peaceful transition of power — the seeds of "rigged", "stolen" and "fraudulent" elections were planted well in advance.

Two specific institutions were getting primed for an eventual i.e. Judiciary and the Armed Forces. Trump's initial comfort with a 5-4 conservative majority in the Supreme Court had given him reasons to believe that he could persist with controversial steps like the travel ban from several Muslim-majority nations, as was upheld by the courts then. But soon and awkwardly so for Trump, the Supreme Court started asserting its independent views that militated against Trump's preferences — even Trump's personal appointees like Justice Brett



Kavanaugh and Neil Gorsuch voted against his interests in certain cases. White House Press Secretary Kayleigh McEnany shockingly admitted that the key takeaway from the unfavourable rulings was that 'we need more conservative justices on the courts'. Trump did exactly that, with the hurried appointment of Justice Amy Barrett eight days before elections, creating a powerful 6-3 conservative tilt. Tellingly, Trump had desired that the newly appointed Justice Amy Barrett participate in the forthcoming election-related cases that went to the courts.

Even in the Military realm, when the appointment to the top post of Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff to succeed the previous Obama-appointee Gen Joseph F Dunford Jr was getting considered, President Trump had called the shots. As per protocol and professional decorum, the Defense Secretary has a say in suggesting a name. Given that the Defense Secretary at that time was the distinguished former combatant James Mattis, his professional assessment carried weight — Mattis had preferred Air Force Chief of Staff Gen David Goldfein; however it was Trump who overruled the choice and appointed General Mark Milley instead. Later, General Milley had to so often navigate through the minefield of Trump's fickle, whimsical and overtly political theatrics that

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 THE TELLTALE SIGNS OF DONALD TRUMP'S NERVOUSNESS WERE WRITTEN ALL OVER WHEN FOR MONTHS HE REFUSED TO COMMIT HONOURING THE ELECTION RESULTS AND ENSURING A PEACEFUL TRANSITION OF POWER
 ”

the top military advisor many a time saw himself at odds with the President's instincts. It was left to him and the subsequent Defense Secretary, Mark Esper, to control wild ideas like using military personnel to control civil unrest on the streets of the US. Expectedly, Mark Esper too was fired and yet another 'loyalist' ushered in. But to the credit of both the

institutions, much before the electoral process had started — neither gave any statement or did any act to suggest that they indeed had succumbed or forsaken their institutional independence, at the altar of Donald Trump. At one stage, General Milley had publicly expressed regret at having mistakenly got caught in an overtly political moment, whilst in uniform — he rightfully acknowledged that the optics had diminished the apolitical stance of the Armed Forces. At yet another event later, when the chaos of the electoral results was dangerously poised, he tellingly clarified: "We do not take an oath to a king or a queen, a tyrant or a dictator. We do not take an oath to an individual... We take an oath to the Constitution" — unequivocally indicating that the US Military was not beholden to anyone.

Similarly, the Supreme Court with an ostensibly favourable 6-3 Trump/conservative tilt, rejected a bid by the Texas's Attorney General, which was supported by the President, in the strongest ever indication that Trump cannot count on the top courts to overturn election results under flimsy or make-believe grounds. Not only did the courts reject Texas's plea challenging the results towards the four battleground States but it effectively did so on grounds that willy-nilly checkmate similar misadventures in other States too. The conspiracy the-

ories are simply unlikely to be entertained by the courts, irrespective of the ideological composition of the majority therein. The sore loser in Trump was left fuming: "The Supreme Court really let us down. No wisdom, no courage!" On the contrary, it was the actual demonstration of wisdom and courage by the hallowed institutions of the US Government that would save it from the sure ruin of its revered democracy, as was envisaged and enshrined by its founding fathers.

From falsely (and prematurely) claiming electoral victory, calling to halt vote counting to refusing to accept the results — Trump has done everything possible to degenerate and abuse power and respect in the democratic processes. Thankfully, the institutions have shown integrity, steel and resilience despite the umpteen times these were subjected to tinkering, though Trump has almost guaranteed a polarised, fractured and deeply divided society with his continuing vanity and petulance, which will far outlive his stay at the White House. The ongoing Trump saga is a timely reminder for the leaderships and institutions in other democracies where tendencies to take liberties with institutions are apparent.

(The writer, a military veteran, is a former Lt Governor of Andaman & Nicobar Islands and Puducherry. The views expressed are personal.)

SOUNDBITE

I hope that an early and reasonable solution will be found on the issues raised by farmers. There is the possibility of a certain meeting ground.

Vice-President
—M Venkaiah Naidu



Stay home and watch history unfold on your television or digital screens on Inauguration Day. The ceremony's footprint will be extremely limited.

US President-elect
—Joe Biden



I did not even watch my season after I came out of the house. I don't watch Big Boss. I find it very disturbing. Especially now, people are so aggressive in the house.

Actor
—Shamita Shetty



I don't think you can concretely plan anything in Test cricket. Test cricket is always about encountering situations and reacting to the situations to the best of your abilities.

India cricket captain
—Virat Kohli



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Poll boost for LDF

Sir — The local body election results in Kerala are a good gauge of the public mood in favour of the ruling Left Democratic Front (LDF) just a few months before the Assembly election.

Keralites are known for their political consciousness; they are fully aware that whom they vote to power matters and they exercise great discernment in electing their representatives. The biggest takeaway from the results is that the narrow strip of scenic beauty called God's Own Country continues to be a Left bastion immune to a Right-ward shift in politics.

The landslide victory is a clear endorsement of the Pinarayi Vijayan Government's laudable social welfare programmes and best possible handling of the COVID-19 pandemic as well as an unequivocal rejection of the attempts by the Congress and the BJP to implicate the office of the Chief Minister in the much hyped gold smuggling case.

The CPI(M)-led LDF Government can now feel a huge sense of relief that the orchestrated campaign against it has met with failure.

G David Milton
Maruthancode

Govt least bothered about soaring prices

The retail inflation figure of 6.93 per cent, as released earlier by the Centre, is doubtful and shocking as the Government has completely failed to control the rising prices of all essential items. The trend of market prices of almost all items is totally different as compared to the inflation figures supplied by the Government. If the inflation is at 6.93 per cent, would it not be reasonable to expect a fall or stability in the prices of at least some of the essential commodities?

The unpleasant truth is that the prices of all commodities are steadily shooting up — some of the essential articles cost double or triple the earlier price — especially during the ongoing COVID crisis, vegetable prices are soaring at an alarming rate. Since the prices haven't come down as promised by the Narendra Modi Government, it has shaken the faith and trust of the people in the ruling dispensation.

Also, the Government isn't seen making any serious move to tackle the worsening price situation. It seems more interested in wasting time and money in making hollow promises rather than taking concrete action. Apart from its favourite pastime of blaming the previous



Congress Governments, it appears that the Centre is occupied with more important plans like toppling the Governments in the Congress-ruled States and passing Bills in haste rather than giving any serious thought to the price issue which affects every common citizen.

It can be expected, however, that the jugglers who are entrusted by the Government to produce imaginary inflation figures will be busy as ever by cooking up numbers to mislead the people.

Bhagwan Thadani
Mumbai

Houses should have met

Sir — When the 9/11 terror attack occurred, a Parliament session was called at one day's notice in national interest. The same principle should have been applied in India where a farmer agitation is continuing for 20 days and both sides are sticking to their guns. With no solution in sight, the

Winter Session was a good hope for discussion and making some progress. But now this hope has vanished. The session was cancelled apparently due to the COVID scare but today's farmers' rally in Narela was organised by the ruling party itself, which contradicts the Government's statement.

Yash Pal Ralhan
Jalandhar

Don't quibble over book

Sir — This has reference to the report 'Pranab's son and daughter lock horns over his memoir' (December 16). They have each issued statements either in favour of suppressing certain portions of, or fully publishing Pranab Mukherjee's book, *The Presidential Years*.

They may be entitled to their views but one should think that what is most relevant to the citizens of this country is not what 'they' think but whether the former President left a will in which he mentioned about this book and how its publication should be handled by the executor of that will. It is very reasonable to assume that he did. This alone should be the criterion for settling the issue.

NS Rajan
Bangalore

Biden's task is cut out

Sir — US President-elect Joseph Biden will have to heal the wounds of a nation that seems to be at war with itself. Biden and Vice President-elect Kamala Harris will take their oaths of office outside the US Capitol building as inauguration planners make the arrangements.

The hidden mechanics of electing a US President have drawn new scrutiny this year as President Donald Trump continues to deny that he has been beaten fair and square even though Biden has officially secured enough electors to become the next US President.

CK Subramaniam
Navi Mumbai

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

FIRST COLUMN

The thread that binds us

India is a nation united by the sensibilities of a unique Sanskrit-Urdu culture and no one can take that away from us



MARKANDEY KATJU

When the British ruled India, they questioned whether it was a nation at all. They held that it was only an administrative unit created and united by them. Their view was articulated by John Strachy, a high official in India who said in 1880, in his lectures given at Cambridge University (collectively published as a book titled 'India'), that India was only a label of convenience, a name given to a large geographical territory having several countries. He said, "This is the first and foremost thing to learn about India, that there is not and never was an India, nor any country of India, possessing, according to European ideas, any sort of unity — physical, political, social or religious. No Indian nation, no people of India, of which we hear so much." The same view was reiterated by Mohammed Ali Jinnah, the creator of Pakistan, who insisted that, "India is not a nation, nor a country. It is a subcontinent of nationalities." So, what is the truth?

To my mind, the views of Strachy and Jinnah are wrong and India is indeed a nation. What really makes a nation are features which distinguish it from other countries. Is there any such feature which makes India a nation? Yes, there is, and it is our composite Sanskrit-Urdu culture, which unites us and makes us one nation. Now, when I say this, immediately objections will be raised. Many South Indians, people of the northeastern States and so on, will ask what have they to do with Sanskrit or Urdu? Some people in the country are averse to Sanskrit. For instance, many Tamilians, who regard themselves as Dravidians, call it the language of Aryan invaders and oppressors. Where Urdu is concerned, many Hindus regard it as the language of Muslims.

Sadly, these objections are based on a lack of understanding. When I use the expression "Sanskrit-Urdu culture", I am referring to the spirit of Sanskrit and the soul of Urdu. There is a misconception that Sanskrit is a language that is predominantly used for chanting mantras during worship in Hindu temples and sacred texts. Only about five per cent of Sanskrit literature is devoted to religion, while the rest deals with diverse topics such as philosophy, science, mathematics, art, law, linguistics and so on. The emphasis of Sanskrit is on reason because it was the language of free thinkers who questioned everything. The great Hindi writer Rahul Sankrityayan, who was in his early years an orthodox Brahmin, said that before he learnt Sanskrit he believed in God but, after he learnt the language he became an atheist. And indeed, much of Sanskrit literature is atheistic.

On the other hand, the emphasis in Urdu, which is wrongly regarded as the language of Muslims (before 1947 it was a common language of all educated people, whether Hindu, Muslim, Christian, Sikh or so on, in large parts of India), is on emotion. Urdu poetry expresses the voice of the human heart and the afflictions of the common people with an elegance that perhaps no other poetry can ever achieve. The two main attributes of humans are reason and emotion, and both are necessary for progress. In Europe, the great French thinker Voltaire emphasised reason and combated religious bigotry and superstitions in his writings. On the other hand, the equally great French thinker Rousseau stressed upon emotion and passion. He said that mere reason makes one a cold, calculating and selfish being who never has the desire to help his fellow human beings and never thinks of the suffering of others.

The fact remains that India is broadly a country of immigrants, like North America. About 92-93 per cent of the people living in the nation today are the descendants of immigrants, most of whom came from the north-west. Its original inhabitants are the pre-Dravidian tribals like the Bhils, Gonds, Santhals, Todas and so on, who make up only about seven to eight per cent of the country's population. These immigrants brought with them their own language, religion, practices, culture and so on. Through the intermingling of these immigrants for over thousands of years, a common culture emerged, which can be broadly called the Sanskrit-Urdu culture. This is the culture of India. Sanskrit and Urdu complement each other. In fact Sanskrit is one of the grandmothers of Urdu (the other grandmother being Persian), as many Urdu words are derived from it.

Though Sanskrit is a great language, by its overemphasis on reason (like Voltaire) it lacked compassion for fellow human beings who were suppressed. However, this compassion was supplied by Urdu (much like Rousseau, who empathised with the poor). Thus, what unites India and makes it a nation is the Sanskrit-Urdu culture. To those who say they have nothing to do with Sanskrit or Urdu (in fact most young Indians do not know these languages anymore) my reply is that when I use the expression "Sanskrit-Urdu culture" I am not referring to Sanskrit or Urdu literally, but to the spirit of Sanskrit and the soul of Urdu. Even Tamilians, Nagas and so on, have reason and emotion and in that sense they belong to the Sanskrit-Urdu culture. India is a nation united by the sensibilities of this unique Sanskrit-Urdu culture and no one can take that away from us.

(The writer is a former judge of the Supreme Court of India. The views expressed are personal.)

WHY WILL IT BE FOR THE PARTY, BY THE PARTY AND OF THE PARTY HERE? IN A FEW DAYS, YOU WILL KNOW WHEN PEOPLE GO TO VOTE.

—EX-TMC MINISTER
SUVENDU ADHIKARI

POINT COUNTERPOINT



AFTER PROFITING FROM BEING PART OF THE GOVERNMENT, YOU ARE HOBNOBBING WITH THIS AND THAT PARTY. I WON'T TOLERATE THIS.

—CHIEF MINISTER
MAMATA BANERJEE

Build an indigenous arsenal

Research and development in India requires greater attention of the Government in the critical areas of climate change mitigation and adaptation



AMIT KUMAR

On November 27, through a gazette notification, the Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) announced the constitution of an Apex Committee for Implementation of the Paris Agreement (AIPA). This panel has been constituted for the purpose of ensuring a coordinated response on climate change matters that protects the country's interests and ensures that India is on track towards meeting its climate change obligations under the Paris Agreement, including its submitted Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs). One of the functions of this committee is to "commission and recommend independent research and analytical studies and plan capacity-building and training activities" on the above issues.

Indigenous research and development (R&D) in India requires greater attention of the Government in the critical areas of climate change mitigation and adaptation. It calls for coordinated actions in mission mode with concomitant allocation of public resources — an area that leaves a lot to be desired at present. Even if we were to keep real innovations aside, in a scenario where a substantial share of our climate action is based on imported technologies and products, adaptive R&D is critical to ensure their optimal performance levels under local conditions, throughout their lifespan. Moreover, business-research, too, is an important part of taking a product to its ultimate consumer in a timely fashion.

Although as per the *Global Innovation Index 2020*, featuring 131 economies, India has moved up to 48th place, it may be noted that globally about 72 per cent of spending is in sectors like Information and Communications Technology (ICT) hardware and electronic equipment, pharmaceuticals and biotechnology, automobiles, software and ICT services, with a minimal share of sectors dealing with climate actions. It is imperative, therefore, for the AIPA to earnestly take up research and innovation in areas around climate action. It must draw a plan for outcome-oriented collaborative research in priority areas that are either potentially impacted by climate change or contribute to it. Climate action can be broadly categorised into climate change mitigation and adaptation.

On the mitigation front are those technologies that help in the reduction of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, such as renewable energy and technologies for decarbonising in hard-to-abate sectors like steel, cement and heavy transport. At the other end of the spectrum are technologies and practices to empower society to adapt to the adverse impacts of climate change. Several scientific studies had already cautioned that India should be ready for more extreme weather events — like cyclones, flooding and droughts — on account of the accelerated pace of climate change.

In such a scenario, research focus areas would include climate-resilient crops, early warning systems, disaster risk management, resilient coastal infrastructure, water management technologies and public health. For instance, as per the recently released *Lancet Countdown* report on health and climate change, India recorded the highest loss in productivity because of extreme heat in 2019. To address such challenges, the country needs solutions that suit its specific demands while taking into account its climatic conditions, energy consequences, as well as affordability.

The United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 9 aims to "build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialisation and foster innovation." Target 9.5 of SDG 9 reads "enhance scientific research, upgrade the technological capabilities of industrial sectors in all countries, in particular developing ones, including, by 2030,

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APPROPRIATE INCENTIVE FRAMEWORKS COULD NUDGE THE PRIVATE SECTOR TO SCALE UP ITS RESEARCH FUNDING IN CLIMATE TECHNOLOGIES, AMONG OTHER AREAS OF NATIONAL IMPORTANCE ON ONE HAND AND HELP STEER HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS TOWARDS RESEARCH ON THE OTHER
”



encouraging innovation and substantially increasing the number of research and development workers per one million people and public and private research and development spending."

So the big question is, where are we in this respect? The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation Institute for Statistics tracks these indicators. In 2018, the top countries in terms of gross expenditure on R&D (public as well as private spend) as a share of their Gross Domestic Product (GDP), were Israel (4.95 per cent), the Republic of Korea (4.8 per cent), Sweden (3.33 per cent), Japan (3.26 per cent) and Austria (3.17 per cent). While China stands at 12th position with 2.18 per cent of the GDP being its R&D spending, India was at 38th place with research spending of 0.65 per cent of the GDP. It ranks as one of the lowest spenders among the BRICS countries. Not only this, our ranking in another indicator, namely, the number of researchers per million inhabitants (in full time employment) is off the mark, too. With 252 researchers per million inhabitants, we are near the bottom rung as compared to China (1,307), Denmark (8,065) and Korea (7,980). This is not a demographic dividend one would have envisaged.

Indeed, a report on 'India's R&D Expenditure Ecosystem' compiled by the Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister (EAC-PM) in mid-2019 laments that while in absolute terms our R&D expenditure has increased, as a fraction of the GDP, public expenditure on R&D has been stagnant. It has remained between 0.6-0.7 per cent of the GDP over the last two decades. Now, India has set a goal to up its R&D spending to two per cent of the GDP by 2022. However, this was in the pre-Coronavirus era. Now, the implications of large-scale reallocation of public resources for battling the virus have to be seen on such "non-priority" goals. There is enough evidence from across the globe that governments often tend to reduce public research funding when faced with

resource stress, prioritising short-term impactful areas over the long-term ones that R&D initiatives tend to be.

Incidentally, the erstwhile Planning Commission, too, had set a goal of two per cent of the GDP in the 12th Five-Year Plan, i.e., by 2017. However, the worrisome part is that investment in R&D by two critical sectors — private and higher education, is even lower. Generally speaking, it is public funding that supports R&D of new technologies, given the higher risks involved and negligible assurance of their commercial success. Private sector funding may come at a later stage, leveraging promising outcomes of publicly-funded early-stage efforts. When Prime Minister Narendra Modi declared in the just-concluded Climate Ambition Summit that, "India is not only on track to achieve its Paris Agreement targets but to exceed them beyond expectations" or the UN Secretary-General exhorts countries to declare a climate emergency until the world has reached net zero CO2 emissions; obviously this cannot happen on the back of imported technologies alone.

As the numerous problems to be addressed are local in a country of the size of India the solutions, too, will have to be developed indigenously, tailored to our unique but varied requirements, more so from the perspective of equity and inclusiveness. The fact that the AIPA is slated to provide inputs to the Prime Minister's Council on Climate Change, must accord it the required heft to overcome usual bureaucratic indifference.

Viewed from a broader national interest perspective, the need for significant and continued public spending on climate-related research cannot be overemphasised. And this should certainly not be limited to supporting public-funded institutions only. Given that in today's world technology is a core part of diplomacy as argued by our External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, the central role of climate technologies in geopolitics must be recognised fully.

This, in turn, leads to the relative negotiating powers of different countries, ones that are knowledge generators *vis-à-vis* those who receive them. Investments in R&D then go beyond self-reliance and get linked to larger national interests. After all, *Aatmanirbhar Bharat* can only be built on the solid foundation of R&D-led innovations across value chains. As elaborated by Jaishankar, a self-reliant India is essentially all about building its domestic strengths and enhancing its capabilities. For that to happen, India will have to enhance its investment in research and technology development in frontier areas, including those that are of relevance to intensive climate action.

However, indigenous research should not be confused with isolated research to be carried out by Indian entities alone. Rather it is all about research and innovations led by India through leveraging collaborative competencies of a range of global players. And it depends on inculcating research temperament among the Indian youth and creating state-of-the-art innovation ecosystems across the country. Above all, we must aspire to be among the top nations as per globally recognised R&D and innovation criteria.

If we can reach seemingly audacious renewable energy goals in less than a decade, there is no reason as to why we cannot set our ambitions high in terms of excellence in research and innovations, too. Considering that public spending on research is only one part of the pie, businesses and higher educational sectors, too, will have to play their part. Appropriate incentive frameworks could nudge the private sector to scale up its research funding in climate technologies, among other areas of national importance on one hand and help steer higher education institutions towards research on the other. The war against climate change requires in-country arsenal, urgently.

(The writer is Senior Director, Social Transformation, TERI. The views expressed are personal.)

J&K district elections to usher in a new dawn

The polls are unique in the sense that deprived sections, like West Pakistan Refugees, Valmikis and Gorkhas are voting for the first time



ANIL GUPTA

in bone-chilling cold while responding to news reporters does not mince words. It is clear that they are voting for development and employment. It is their sole agenda since they have been deprived of it for long. Connectivity, education, health and basic amenities still elude the people despite huge amounts of funds received from successive Central governments.

Where did all these funds vanish? Reports are surfacing of projects shown as completed in files but not actually existing on the ground. Voters are openly accusing their leaders of having cheated them time and again and becoming unreachable and inapproachable after the elections are over, leaving them to their plight which has not changed during the last 70 years. People have also realised that they were emotionally exploited with slogans like self-rule, greater autonomy and so on. Had these leaders been serious and committed to the welfare of the people, they could have easily provided

them the basic facilities of road, water and electricity but instead they chose to mislead them with false slogans and dreams of greener pastures while lining their own pockets with the generous assistance received from successive Central governments.

Kashmir's identity the world over was recognised as a multilingual, multi-faith, multi-cultural plural society famous for peaceful co-existence. But the political leaders are responsible for the murder of the famous Kashmiri identity. They promoted secessionism, separatism and radicalisation, leading to the onslaught on the Kashmiri Pandit community, the indigenous community of the Valley, forcing them to flee in the face of large-scale ethnic cleansing.

Corrupt leaders delayed the devolution of powers to the grassroots by not holding elections to the Panachayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) and Urban Local Bodies (ULBs). They were loathe to allow the centre of



power to shift to the towns and villages. However, now the process to undo the ills and woes of 70 years of misrule has been set in motion with all sincerity. This includes elections to the second and third tiers of PRI by holding elections for Block Development Councils (BDCs) and District Development Councils (DDCs). ULBs' elections were held, too.

The ongoing DDC elections are

unique in the sense that certain deprived sections (West Pakistan Refugees, Valmikis and Gorkhas) are voting for the first time. (Earlier they could vote only for parliamentary elections). There are reserved seats for the women and Scheduled Tribes (STs) for the first time. A new crop of grassroots leadership is emerging which augers well for the future.

The Union Territory (UT) of J&K now has 100 per cent reservation for locals in all jobs, including gazetted and non-gazetted ones. No other State/UT in the country enjoys this unique privilege. The amended land laws were also used by the status quoists to create fear among the people claiming that their lands would be snatched and forcibly purchased by outsiders. People are being confused by quoting the protection enjoyed by a few States under Article 371. Often people are misled by drawing comparison with neighbouring Himachal Pradesh stating that the State has a special provision pro-

tecting their land rights.

The fact is to the contrary. Section 118 in Himachal is restrictive and does not put an absolute ban on the sale and purchase of land and property in Himachal. It has provisions through which, with the approval of the Government, anyone can buy land and property in the State. However, the new land law of J&K totally bans the sale of agricultural land to other than the existing agriculturists.

However, at long last, the common man has understood how unscrupulous leaders misled them and deprive them of basic amenities while filling their own coffers. They are happy with the much-awaited change they were yearning for and are hopeful that the representatives they choose for the DDC will meet their much-wanted basic needs.

(The author is a Jammu-based veteran political commentator, columnist, security and strategic analyst. The views expressed are personal.)



FOREIGN EYE



MISSION IMPOSSIBLE

Thirteen of the world's 14 peaks taller than 8,000 metres have been climbed in winter. But K2, the world's second tallest mountain at 8,611 metres, remains elusive. Now, a 55-member global group of climbing veterans are daring to take on a feat that has long been considered mission impossible — the first winter ascent of K2.

(TKP editorial)

US passes bill that calls out Chinese aggression against India

Washington: The US Congress has officially passed the USD 740 billion defence policy bill, which among other things include calling out Chinese aggression against India along the Line of Actual Control (LAC).

The US House of Representatives and the Senate on Tuesday passed the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), which included key components of Indian-American Congressman Raja Krishnamoorthi's resolution

language urging the Chinese government to end its military aggression against India along the LAC.

China and India have been locked in a military standoff along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in eastern Ladakh since May this year. Several rounds of talks between the two countries to resolve the standoff have not yielded any concrete outcome.

The House and Senate versions of the bill were reconciled by a bipartisan Congressional conference committee earlier

this month.

The inclusion of this provision, which Krishnamoorthi led as an amendment when the bill passed the House, reflects the US government's strong support for its allies and partners like India in the Indo-Pacific region and beyond.

Krishnamoorthi's measure, which passed each chamber with overwhelming bipartisan support, will become law if President Donald Trump signs it.

Trump has threatened to

repeal the bill as it lacks a repeal of legal protections for social media companies. However, the NDAA has been passed by Congress for the last 59 years.

"Violent aggression is seldom the answer, and this is especially true for the Line of Actual Control, which is the disputed border region that separates the People's Republic of China from India," Krishnamoorthi said.

"By including my resolution language in the NDAA and signing that legislation into law,

the United States government will send a clear message that China's military provocations of India will not be tolerated," he said.

"The United States is committed to standing with our allies and partners like India in resolving the border standoff using diplomatic means," Krishnamoorthi said.

As approved by the conference report, the powerful NDAA says that it is the sense of the Congress on the aggression of China along the border

with India and its growing territorial claims.

The Senate agreed to include the provisions of the bill that was passed by the House in its version of the bill.

The House bill contained provisions that would express the sense of Congress on cross-border violence between China and India and the growing territorial claims of Beijing.

Expressing "significant concern" over the continued military aggression by China along the border with India, the

NDAA says that China "should work with" India toward de-escalating the situation along the Line of Actual Control through existing diplomatic mechanisms and refrain from attempting to settle disputes through coercion or force.

Attempts by China to advance baseless territorial claims, including those in the South China Sea, the East China Sea, and with respect to Bhutan, are destabilising and inconsistent with international law, says the bill.

China is also engaged in hotly contested territorial disputes in both the South China Sea and the East China Sea. China claims sovereignty over all of the South China Sea, Vietnam, Malaysia, the Philippines, Brunei and Taiwan have counter claims.

Beijing has built up and militarised many of the islands and reefs it controls in the region. Both areas are stated to be rich in minerals, oil and other natural resources and are also vital to global trade. **PTI**

Biden's challenge: Creating a Covid-19 free White House

Washington: Three blocks from the White House, office space for more than 500 Biden transition staffers sits mostly idle. The government is shipping out laptops so staffers can work from home. President-elect Joe Biden, surrounded by just a handful of aides in Delaware, is using Zoom to oversee his plans to assume power.

But Biden soon will be entering a no-Zoom zone at the White House — just one sign of the challenges his new administration will face when it moves to Washington in the midst of a pandemic.

After months of making a virtue of the cautious approach his campaign and transition team have taken toward COVID-19, Biden's prudence will be tested by technology and tradition when he arrives on January 20.

White House computers don't allow the popular video conference software Zoom or rival systems like Google Meet and Slack. Government-issue

cellphones only gained texting capabilities a few years ago. And many employees will need to be present at the White House to access classified information.

Biden's team has limited experience with staffing a physical office during the pandemic. His campaign went all-virtual in mid-March, clearing out its Philadelphia headquarters and sending staff back to their families in Washington, New York and beyond. His transition team plotted out his path to power entirely online.

The closest Biden's team has come to experimenting with in-person work was election night, when a small selection of masked and socially distanced aides in Wilmington, Delaware, monitored returns in hotel conference rooms, a far cry from running a White House 24/7.

Even now, the most prominent use of the 100,000-plus square feet (9,290 square meters) of office space reserved

for the transition is for Vice President-elect Kamala Harris to receive the highly classified President's Daily Brief.

Telework is possible for some White House staff, and improvements in both secure and unclassified videoconferencing have been made over the last two decades. But the lack of in-person coordination could pose an additional challenge to the new government facing a multitude of crises.

Further complicating matters, the Biden team must devise health and safety protocols from scratch. The Trump administration was, at best, a cautionary tale in how not to run a workplace during a pandemic.

Despite relying on an aggressive testing regimen that is not available in other workplaces, the West Wing under President Donald Trump has been the locus of at least two significant outbreaks of COVID-19 since Trump himself came down with the virus five weeks before Election Day. **AP**

EU chief von der Leyen sees progress on Brexit talks

AP ■ BRUSSELS

EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said on Wednesday she saw clear progress in the trade talks with the U.K., turning a post-Brexit deal from a fleeting possibility into an ever more realistic possibility.

Von der Leyen confirmed that the major problems had been reduced to just two — fair competition in the EU market and fishing rights for EU vessels in U.K. Waters. Even though she still spoke only of a "very narrow" path to a deal, she added that nonetheless "I can tell you that there is a path to an agreement."

It was still far more optimistic than previous comments coming from British Prime Minister Boris Johnson, and even any assessment of success over the past months.

"This is now a case of being so close and yet being so far," von der Leyen told the EU parliament, which will have to approve any deal brokered with the U.K.

Britain left the 27-nation bloc in January but for the rest of this year is still in a transition period that kept all trade ties the same with the EU.

These talks deal with trading relations between the two sides starting on Jan. 1, which makes a tough timeline for the negotiations.

"The clock puts us in a very difficult position," said von der Leyen.

Trump voters accept Biden victory 'with reservations'

Washington: Robert Reed says he will always believe the 2020 election was stolen from President Donald Trump. The retired police officer-turned-construction worker believes fraud marred the vote, no matter how many courts rejected that claim.

Still, a day after the Electoral College made Joe Biden's win official, the ardent Trump supporter from the suburbs of Lancaster, Pennsylvania, was ready to move on.

"I think it's pretty much over," Reed said of Trump's ongoing quest to overturn the results of the election. "I trust the Electoral College." For weeks, Trump has been on a mission to convince his loyal base that his victory was stolen and the contest rigged.

With help from conservative media, polls show he's had considerable success. But now that the Electoral College has formalized Biden's win and Republican officials, including Senate Leader Mitch McConnell, are finally

acknowledging him as president-elect, many Trump voters across the country seem to be doing the same.

Interviews with voters, along with fresh surveys of Republicans, suggest their unfounded doubts about the integrity of the vote remain. But there is far less consensus on what should be done about it and whether to carry that resentment forward.

For some, like Reed, the Electoral College vote was the clear end of a process. Others have vowed to continue to protest with demonstrations like the one that turned violent in Washington, D.C., over the weekend. And some said they hoped GOP leaders would press for more investigations to put the doubts Trump sowed to rest.

They are people like Scott Adams, a retiree and Trump voter living in Rehoboth Beach, Delaware, who said he accepts Biden's victory — but "with reservations." Adams said he's heard too much discussion about irreg-

ularities in the vote count on Fox News and conservative talk radio to trust the election's outcome and doesn't feel he'll ever know the true margin of victory.

(Biden won the Electoral College by a vote of 306 to 232.) But Adams doesn't think the election was rigged enough to change the outcome, even if he believes it was "rigged enough that it should be questioned more." He'd like to see more investigations.

Republicans across the country — from local officials to governors to Attorney General William Barr — have said repeatedly there is no evidence mass voter fraud affected the outcome. Trump and his allies brought a flurry of lawsuits, but nearly all have been dismissed by judges.

The Supreme Court, which includes three Trump-nominated justices, denied requests to hear a pair of cases aimed at invalidating the outcome of the election in key battleground states. **AP**

Trump still involved in ongoing litigation related to presidential polls, says White House official

Washington: US President Donald Trump is still involved in ongoing litigation related to the November 3 presidential election, according to a top White House official.

The statement from White House Press Secretary Kayleigh McEnany came a day after members of the Electoral College met in various states and formally elected Joe Biden, a Democrat, as the 46th President of the United States. Biden is scheduled to be sworn-in on January 20.

"The president is still involved in ongoing litigation related to the election. Yesterday's vote was one step in the constitutional process. So, I will leave that to him," McEnany told reporters on Tuesday at a news conference.

McEnany was responding to a question if Trump, a Republican, has any plans to invite Biden to the White House now that the Electoral College has voted. "Does the president acknowledge that Joe Biden is the president-elect," she was asked.

"The president is pursuing ongoing

litigation," McEnany said. "Yesterday was one step in the constitutional process leading up to the January 20th date in the Constitution," she said.

McEnany defended Trump's litigation against elections. President Trump still refuses to concede, making unsubstantiated claims of widespread fraud during the presidential election won by Biden.

"I think pursuing legitimate litigation through the judicial system is in no way assailing democracy. In fact, it's using democrat institutions in the manner they are to be used: to pursue legitimate claims with sworn affidavits and additional evidence," she said.

Trump, she said, believes he certainly was under assault when it comes to the investigations into his administration. "The Mueller probe, the unfortunate way that our FBI was mishandled by folks like Andy McCabe, by folks like Jim Comey, and weaponised in a political way against his candidacy and then against his presidency," she added. **PTI**

Indian-American Raja Chari among 3 astronauts selected by NASA for SpaceX Crew-3 mission

Washington: Indian-American US Air Force Colonel Raja Chari has been selected as the Commander of the SpaceX Crew-3 mission to the International Space Station (ISS) by NASA and the European Space Agency.

Chari, 43, will serve as the commander while NASA's Tom Marshburn will be pilot and ESA's Matthias Maurer will serve as a mission specialist for the SpaceX Crew-3 mission to the ISS, which is expected to be launched next year.

A fourth crew member will be added at a later date, following a review by NASA and its international partners, NASA said in a statement on Monday.

"Excited and honored to be training @astro_matthias and @AstroMarshburn in prep for a trip to the @Space_Station," Chari said in a tweet on Monday.

"Proud to be working and training with Matthias Maurer and Thomas Henry Marshburn in preparation for a mission to the International Space Station aboard the SpaceX Crew

Dragon," he posted on his Facebook page. This will be the first spaceflight for Chari, who became a NASA astronaut in 2017. He was born in Milwaukee, but considers Cedar Falls, Iowa, his hometown, NASA said.

He is a colonel in the US Air Force and joins the mission with extensive experience as a test pilot. He has accumulated more than 2,500 hours of flight time in his career. Chari was selected earlier this month as a member of the Artemis Team and is now eligible for assignment to a future lunar mission, it said in a statement.

Chari's father Srinivas Chari came to the US at a young age from Hyderabad for an engineering degree.

"It's official... Next stop: International @Space_Station! In late 2021, I'll fly to humankind's orbital outpost for the first time, continuing our quest to discover more in space for #Earth. Get ready for #cosmickiss - a declaration of love for space," Maurer tweeted. **PTI**

Germany enters harder lockdown as virus deaths hit new high

Berlin: Germany hit a new record level of coronavirus deaths as it entered a harder lockdown on Wednesday, closing shops and schools to try to bring down stubbornly high new cases.

The country recorded 179.8 deaths of new infections per 100,000 residents over the last seven days, a new high and significantly more than the 149 per 100,000 reported a week ago by the Robert Koch Institute, the country's disease control center.

It also blew past its previous daily total, with Germany's 16 states reporting 952 people had died of the virus, the agency said. That was far greater than the previous daily record set Friday of 598 deaths, although included two days of figures from the hard-hit eastern state of Saxony, which did not report Tuesday. **AP**

Afghan-Taliban delegation arrives in Pakistan to push forward peace process

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

A high-level Afghan-Taliban delegation arrived here on Wednesday to hold talks with the top Pakistani leadership as part of efforts to push forward the reconciliation process, amid growing incidents of violence in Afghanistan.

The Taliban Political Commission (TPC), headed by Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar, is on a December 16-18 visit to Pakistan, according to the Foreign Office (FO).

"During the visit, the delegation will meet with the Foreign Minister and call on the Prime Minister," the FO said.

The visit comes after a delegation led by US special representative for Afghanistan reconciliation, Zalmay Khalilzad, on Monday met Pakistan's Army chief General Qamar Javed Bajwa and discussed with him the ongoing Afghan peace process.

AP reported that Baradar and his delegation were sum-

moned to Islamabad from Qatar, where they have been negotiating since September with Afghan government representatives, officials close to the talks said.

According to a report in The Express Tribune, the delegation will discuss issues of mutual interest, in particular, problems of refugees, relaxation and facilitation of Afghan's movement to Pakistan, as well as issues faced by Afghan traders.

The visit of the TPC delegation is part of Pakistan's policy to reach out to key Afghan parties in the peace process with a view to facilitating the Intra-Afghan Negotiations that commenced in Doha on September 12, 2020.

"Pakistan will continue to support an inclusive, broad-based and comprehensive political settlement for durable peace, stability and prosperity in Afghanistan and the region," said the FO.

It is the second visit of the TPC delegation this year after it visited Pakistan in August.

OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER, TRANSMISSION LINE MAINT. DIVISION-VIII, JKPTCL, AMBEDKAR CHOWK, RAILWAY ROAD, JAMMU
Email: xentcd01@gmail.com Ph/Fax No: 0191-2451732

(NOTICE INVITING TENDER)
e-NIT NO: 22 of 2020-21 Dt: 09/12/2020

For and on behalf of Managing Director JKPTCL J&K, fresh tenders are invited by the Executive Engineer TLMD-VIII, Jammu through e-tenders mode from approved and eligible Contractors registered with Central or State/UT Government Departments/PSU, CPWD, Railways and MES for the below mentioned work:-

Name Of The Work :- Execution of Civil Works at 132/33KV Grid Station Kaleeth, Jourian.

Estimated Cost :- 10.00 (lacs), **Earnest Money**:- Rs 20000.00 **Cost Of Tender Documents**:- Rs. 1000/- (Rupees One Thousand only) in the shape of non-refundable bank draft drawn in favour of Executive Engineer, TLMD-VIII JKPTCL, Jammu, **Last Date Of e-bids Submission online** :- "A"

a. Date & Time of downloading of Standard Bidding Document :- The Standard Bidding Document can be downloaded from <http://jktenders.gov.in> from 11-12-2020 after 1600Hrs.

b. Pre Bid meeting :- On 21-12-2020 at 1200 Hrs. in the Office of Executive Engineer, TLMD-VIII, JKPTCL Jammu, Ambedkar Chowk Railway Road Jammu, J&K.

c. e-Bid submission start date :- 11-12-2020 1600 Hrs. Onwards.

d. last date & Time for e-Bid submission :- 01-01-2021 up to 1400 Hrs.

e. Online Commercial and Technical e-Bid opening date & Time :- 02-01-2021 at 1400 Hrs.

No. : DIP/J-3028-P/20 Sd/- Executive Engineer
Dated :- 15.12.2020 TLM-D-VIII, JKPTCL, Jammu.

Nepal's iconic Pashupatinath Temple opens with safety protocols after nine months

Kathmandu: Nepal's iconic Pashupatinath Temple, the 5th century holy Hindu shrine, opened for pilgrims on Wednesday after being closed for nine months due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Pashupatinath Temple is the largest temple complex in Nepal and stretches on both sides of the Bagmati River and sees thousands of worshippers from Nepal and India daily.

Entry of devotees inside the temple premises was prohibited since the Nepal government imposed a lockdown in March to curb the spread of the coronavirus. Special safety measures have been adopted to open the temple which is situated in the outskirts of Kathmandu, said Pradeep Dhakal, chief of the Pashupati Temple Area Trust. **PTI**

Nigerians anxious after 330 boys kidnapped by extremists

Kankara (Nigeria): Anger, fear and exhaustion. Anxiety has overwhelmed many parents in Nigeria's northern village of Kankara who await word on their sons who are among the more than 330 kidnapped by extremists from a government boys' school late Friday.

Nigeria's Boko Haram jihadist rebels have claimed responsibility for the abduction of the students from the Government Science Secondary School in Kankara.

Hundreds of other students managed to escape by jumping the fence during the extremists' attack or by fleeing as they were taken into the nearby forest.

Boko Haram kidnapped the boys from the school because it believes Western education is un-Islamic, the rebels' leader Abubakar Shekau said in a video claiming responsibility for the attack, according to SITE Intelligence Group. **AP**

PROCLAMATION REQUIRING THE APPEARANCE OF A PERSON ACCUSED
SEE SECTION U/S 82 Cr. P.C.

Whereas complaint has been made before me that accused **Nazare Huq, S/o Wai Mohd., R/o A-578, Mandoli Road, Harijan Basti, Delhi**, has committed (or is suspected to have committed) the offence in case **FIR No. 68/18, u/s 33/58 (D) Delhi Ex. Act, at P.S. Alipur, Delhi** and it has been returned to a warrant of arrest thereupon issued that the said accused **Nazare Huq** cannot be found and whereas it has been shown to my satisfaction that the said accused **Nazare Huq** has absconded (or is concealing himself to avoid the service of the said warrant). Proclamation is hereby made that the said accused **Nazare Huq** of case **FIR No. 68/18, u/s 33/58 (D) Delhi Ex. Act, at P.S. Alipur, Delhi** is required to appear on this Court to answer the said complaint on or before **19.01.2021**

By Order
Sh. Satvir Singh Lamba,
Chief Metropolitan Magistrate (North),
Room No. 115, Rohini Courts, Delhi

DP/656/ON/2020-(Court Matter).

SEARCH FOR MISSING

General public is hereby informed that a lady namely **Ajmat Jahan, W/o Mohd. Ayub R/o H.No. E-2950, J.J Colony Bawana, Delhi** has been missing since 23.11.2020 at about 12 p.m. from her house. In this regard, **DD No. 44-A dated 27.11.2020 has been registered at P.S. Narela Industrial Area, Delhi.** Sincere efforts have been made by the local police to trace out the missing lady but no clue has come to light so far. The description of the missing lady is as under:

Name: Ajmat Jahan, **Gender:** Female, **Age:** 24 years, **Height:** 5', **Complexion:** Shallow, **Face:** Round, **Built:** Strong, **Wearing:** Red colour suit-salwar, black colour burka and sandal on her feet.

If anyone has any information regarding this missing lady, kindly inform SHO/Narela Industrial Area, Delhi.

E-mail : cic@cbi.gov.in
Ph.: 011-24368638, 24368641
Fax : 011-24368639

SHO
P.S. Narela Industrial Area, Delhi,
Ph. No. 011-27787592, 27787593

DP/644/ON/2020

SEARCH FOR MISSING GIRL

General public is hereby informed that this girl namely **Manpreet Kaur @ Manu D/o Bahadur Singh R/o J-519, Gali No. 8, Sardar Colony, Sector-16, Rohini, Delhi Age : 21 years, Height : 5'5", Complexion : Sallow, Face : Round, Build : Normal, wearing blue colour T-shirt, fauji colour pant and white colour shoes in feet, has been missing since 04.12.2020 at about 08:00 P.M. from her house. In this regard DD No. 33-A dated 04.12.2020 has been lodged at P.S. K.N. Katju Marg, Delhi.**

Any person having any information or clue about this missing girl may kindly inform to the following.

E-mail : cic@cbi.gov.in
Website: <http://cbi.nic.in>
Fax: 24368639, SHO : P.S. K.N. Katju Marg, Delhi
Tel.: 24368638/24368641 Ph. : 011-27571162, 27571171

DP/650/AD/20

BEFORE DEBTS RECOVERY TRIBUNAL-II, DELHI
4th FLOOR, JEEVAN TARA BUILDING, PARLIAMENT STREET, NEW DELHI-110001

O.A. No.190/19 Date: 01.12.2020
CENTRAL BANK OF INDIA Applicant
Versus
SHRI YUDHVIR SINGH & ORS. Respondent

TO, DEFENDANT
3. M/S. SHUBHKAMNA BUILDTECH PVT. LTD.
A-102, 1st Floor, Star House, Sector-4, Noida, U.P.
Also at: 197-E, Pocket-IV, Mayur Vihar, Phase-I, Delhi-91.
Also at: A-50, Sector-2, Noida, U.P.

Whereas the above named applicant(s) has/have instituted a case for recovery of **Rs.75,33,567/- (Rupees Seventy Five Lakhs Thirty Three Thousand Five Hundred and Sixty Seven Only)** against you and whereas it has been shown to the satisfaction of the Tribunal that it is not possible to serve you in the ordinary way therefore, this notice is given by advertisement directing you to make appearance in the Tribunal on **18.01.2021 at 10:30 A.M.** Take notice that in default of your appearance on the day before the mentioned, the case will be heard and determined in your absence.

SEAL OF COURT
BY ORDER OF THE TRIBUNAL
For Registrar, DRT-II, DELHI

Sensex, Nifty extend record run

HDFC TWINS, IT PACK LEAD CHARGE

PTI ■ MUMBAI
Equity benchmarks raced to new peaks for the fourth straight session on Wednesday as participants took note of continuously improving macroeconomic indicators and positive trends in global markets.
The BSE Sensex settled 403.29 points or 0.87 per cent higher at 46,666.46, while the NSE Nifty climbed 114.85 points or 0.85 per cent to 13,682.70 -- record closing for both the benchmarks.
Both the indices also marked their all-time intra-day highs of 46,704.97 and 13,692.35, respectively.
In the Sensex pack, HDFC, ONGC, Bharti Airtel, Asian Paints, Titan, TCS and Mahindra and Mahindra were

the prominent gainers, advancing up to 3.11 per cent.
On the other hand, ICICI Bank, IndusInd Bank, NTPC, UltraTech Cement, Tech Mahindra and HCL Tech were among the major laggards, skidding up to 1.09 per cent.
Asian bourses closed broadly higher amid hopes that COVID-19 vaccines and economic stimulus by governments around the world will revive economic growth.
European equities surged to 10-month highs on prospects of a Brexit trade deal and expectations of swift rollout of coronavirus vaccination.
"Domestic equities remained in the grip of bulls, recording fresh highs fairly supported by firm global markets. Emerging prospects of additional fiscal stimulus in the US and satisfactory progress on coronavirus vaccination bolstered investors' sentiments. Barring PSU banks, all key sectoral indices recorded gains."
"Encouraging data for key economic indicators and positive news flows continued to attract investors' interest in domestic equities. Further, improving prospects of corporate earnings recovery, weak dollar index, consistent improvement in coronavirus recovery rates, government's

strong commitment to revive the economy and dismal real interest rate scenario globally continued to act as key tailwinds to attract FPIs flows into Indian equities," said Binod Modi, Head-Strategy at Reliance Securities.

Gold gains ₹215; silver jumps ₹1,185

PTI ■ NEW DELHI
Gold price gained ₹215 to touch ₹49,059 per 10 gram in the national capital on Wednesday supported by strong global precious metal prices, according to HDFC Securities.
In the previous trade, gold had closed at ₹48,844 per 10 gram. Silver price jumped ₹1,185 to ₹64,822 per kilogram. It was at ₹63,637 per kilogram in the previous trade.

₹ climbs 5 paise to 73.58 per US dollar

PTI ■ MUMBAI
The rupee appreciated 5 paise to close at 73.58 against the US dollar on Wednesday, propped up by sustained foreign fund inflows and a weak greenback overseas. Strong domestic equities also strengthened investor sentiment, traders said. At the interbank forex market, the rupee opened at 73.49 against the US dollar and witnessed an intra-day high of 73.48 and a low of 73.60.

Cyber security, data protection must to promote financial inclusion: RBI Guv

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Issues concerning cyber security and data protection must be addressed to gain confidence of the excluded section in use of technology, which is necessary for promoting financial inclusion, Reserve Bank Governor Shaktikanta Das said on Wednesday.
"Technology, though being a great enabler, can also lead to exclusion of certain segments of society," Das said in his keynote address at a webinar on 'Investing in Investor Education in India: Priorities for Action', organised by the NCAER.
The RBI Governor added that it was imperative to build trust in formal financial services among the hitherto excluded population.
"Adequate safeguards need to be reinforced to address issues of cyber security, data confidentiality, mis-selling, customer protection and grievance redress through appropriate financial education and aware-

ness. These cast great responsibility on financial education providers," he emphasised.
Financial inclusion in the country, he said, is poised to grow exponentially with digital savvy millennials joining the workforce, social media blurring the urban-rural divide and technology shaping the policy interventions.
For harnessing the near universal reach of bank accounts across the length and breadth of the country, there needs to be greater focus on penetration of sustainable credit, investment, insurance and pension products by addressing demand side constraints with enhanced customer protection, Das said. The interventions in financial education would have to be customised in local language and local settings keeping the different target audience in mind, he pointed out.
The scaling up of Centre for Financial Literacy (CFL) projects across the country at the block level would be the cornerstone of community-led

participatory approaches in the journey towards greater financial literacy, he added.
The Governor also stressed that in a large country like India with an aspiring population, financial education cannot remain just the responsibility of financial sector regulators.
This aspect has been highlighted in the National Strategy for Financial Education (NSFE 2020-2025) document which recommends a multi-stakeholder led approach to achieve financial wellbeing of all.
"Going forward, increasingly, educational institutions, industry bodies and other stakeholders like think tanks, research institutions should come forward to shoulder the responsibility of increasing financial literacy through appropriate awareness campaigns," Das said. Financial inclusion initiatives in India started in the aftermath of first All India Rural Credit Survey in 1954 with promotion of cooperatives.

Tech firm NTT appoints Abhijit Dubey as Global CEO

PTI ■ LONDON

Global technology services company NTT Ltd. on Wednesday said Abhijit Dubey will succeed Jason Goodall as its Global Chief Executive Officer. Dubey takes the role following over 20 years with global advisory firm McKinsey & Company. Dubey will join NTT in early February and formally step into his new role on April 1, 2021. He will be based at the company's headquarters in London. "We are looking forward to welcoming Abhijit to the NTT family in 2021 to lead the next generation of our business," Goodall who is the current Global CEO for NTT Ltd. said in a statement. Following a three month handover period, Goodall will retire from his executive role on June 30, 2021 and will remain as a Board Director for NTT Ltd. and Dimension Data, as well as act as a strategic advisor for the NTT Venture Capital business.

Farm Acts already national laws; States need not notify separately: Experts

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Amid ongoing protests by thousands of farmers against three new Farm Acts and assertions by some states that they would not notify these legislations, government officials and constitutional experts said these are already national laws and therefore states are not required to notify them separately.
The Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement of Price Assurance and Farm Services Act, the Farmers Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Act, and the Essential Commodities (Amendment) Act 2020 -- are three farm laws which the central government

notified in the 'Gazette of India' on September 27 after receiving the President's assent.
A senior Agriculture Ministry official told PTI: "The three farm laws enacted by the central government are national laws."
They have come into force across the country from the date of notification. So, a separate notification by each state is not required."
In some states, farmers are already taking advantage of various provisions of these legislations, the official added.
Asked if there was a special provision for the Delhi government which notified one of the three farm laws early this month, the official said, "It was not required."
Expressing similar views,

constitutional expert and former Lok Sabha Secretary-General Subhash Kashyap said: "These are national laws applicable throughout the country. They are printed in the Gazette and that is the notification for the entire country."
"I don't think it is necessary for states to separately notify them," he added.
Farmers, mostly from Punjab, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh, have been protesting at Delhi's borders demanding the repeal of the three farm laws.
Enacted in September, the three farm laws have been projected by the government as major reforms in the agriculture sector that will remove the middlemen and allow farmers to sell anywhere in the country.

Cabinet approves auction of spectrum worth ₹3.92 lakh cr

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Union Cabinet on Wednesday approved a proposal for the auction of 2,251.25 megahertz of spectrum worth ₹3.92 lakh crore at the base price.
The telecom ministry plans to issue a notice to invite bids in December and hold the spectrum auction by March, telecom minister Ravi Shankar Prasad said.
The government, however, has decided not to auction frequencies in 3,300-3,600 Mhz bands that were identified for 5G services.
"The auction will be for spectrum in 700 MHz, 800 MHz, 900 MHz, 1800 MHz, 2100 MHz, 2300 MHz and 2500 MHz frequency bands. Spectrum will be offered for

assignment for a validity period of 20 years.
A total of 2,251.25 MHz is being offered with a total valuation of Rs 3,92,332.70 crore (at reserve price)," an official statement said.
"The notice inviting application shall be issued in this month and by auction will be conducted by March," Prasad told reporters after the Cabinet meeting. The Digital Communications Commission, the apex decision making body of the Department of Telecom, in May had approved the spectrum auction plan worth Rs 5.22 lakh crore which included radiowaves for 5G services as well.
However, a part of the 300

Mhz of spectrum identified by the DoT for 5G services is being used by the Navy, and the Department of Space has also made claims on a significant portion of these radiowaves.
The industry has also been demanding the government to lower the base price of 5G spectrum as each operator will need to shell out around Rs 50,000 crore for the required quantum of radiowaves for the next generation services.
Prasad did not reply to questions on the status of 5G spectrum. The minister said that the government has retained rules of 2016 for payments in the upcoming auction as well.

Sebi eases profitability criteria for mutual fund sponsors

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Market regulator Sebi on Wednesday decided to relax profitability criteria for becoming a mutual fund sponsor with a view to facilitating innovation and expansion in the MF sector. The regulator has also decided to segregate and ring-fence assets and liabilities of mutual fund schemes, Sebi said in a statement after its board meeting. This is in addition to the existing requirement of segregating bank accounts and securities accounts. The Sebi board also approved proposals including dispensing with the requirement to issue physical unit certificates, reducing maximum

permissible exit load and reducing the timeline for payment of dividend. Also, the board cleared a proposal for permitting other modes for payment of dividend and providing clarity with respect to payment of interest and penalty in case of delay in dividend payment. With regards to sponsor eligibility, Sebi said sponsors that are not fulfilling profitability criteria at the time of making application, will also be considered eligible to sponsor a mutual fund. This is subject to having a net-worth of not less than Rs 100 crore for the purpose of contribution towards the net-worth of the Asset Management Company (AMC).

Pure EV signs MoU for indigenous lithium-ion technology

Hyderabad: IIT Hyderabad-incubated startup Pure EV is collaborating with CSIR-CECRI on indigenous Lithium-Ion Battery (LIB) technology for electric vehicles. Pure EV has signed a MoU with CSIR-CECRI to undertake joint research on the production of battery packs, validation of LIB cells and addressing the specific requirements to ensure the suitability of developed LIBs for critical performance at the Standard Operating Procedure (SoP) conditions.
Lithium battery is the most reliable and commercially-viable choice for electric vehicles across the world. Currently, in India, Lithium cells are

mainly imported from China, which is a very critical dependence necessary for final battery packs required for electric vehicles. To address this market monopoly, CSIR has launched a project titled, 'CSIR Innovation Centre for Next Generation Energy Storage Solutions (ICeNGESS)' with an aim to produce LIBs on a 100 MW scale. Pure EV is an electric vehicle version of the start-up PuREnergy that is engaged in design and development of advanced LIBs manufacturing with core focus on battery thermal management system, hence making it one of the top picks in this mission.
IANS

Pandemic struck: Auto parts industry's H1FY21 turnover de-grows 34%

New Delhi: The Automotive Component Manufacturers Association of India on Wednesday reported a de-growth of 34 per cent in industry's turnover during April to September 2020 period on a year-on-year basis. Accordingly, the turnover of the automotive component industry stood at Rs 1.19 lakh crore (USD 15.9 billion) for the period April 2020 to September 2020.
"The auto industry witnessed a downturn in FY2019-20, the situation further aggravated with the outbreak of the pandemic and the lockdown," said Vinnie Mehta, Director General, ACMA.
"While the first quarter for FY20-21 was significantly

stressed, however with unlocking of the economy, the sales of vehicles witnessed improvement, month-on-month, in the second quarter."
However, for the first time ever, the industry witnessed a trade surplus with auto component exports at Rs 39,003 crore (\$5.2 billion) and imports at Rs 37,710 crore (\$5 billion); both exports and imports declined by 23.6 per cent and 32.7 per cent, respectively, he said. The aftermarket, estimated at Rs 31,116 crore, also witnessed de-growth of 15 per cent. Component sales to OEMs in the domestic market contracted the most to Rs 87,120 crore (USD 11.6 billion), declining 42 per cent. PTI

Petrol, diesel prices remain static

New Delhi: Oil marketing companies continued to hold back any change in retail prices of petrol and diesel continuing with their wait and watch stance that has kept the prices of the two auto fuels static for past nine days.
Accordingly, there was no change in retail price of auto fuels on Wednesday with price of petrol remaining at Rs 83.71 a litre and diesel Rs 73.87 a litre in Delhi. Across the country as well the price of the two petroleum products remained unchanged. IANS

GE pitches for faster deployment of renewables, gas power to achieve climate goals

PTI ■ NEW DELHI
Accelerated and strategic deployment of both renewable energy and gas power can make substantial progress in combating climate change in the near term, while securing a path to a lower carbon-emitting world in the future, according to a paper published by GE.
It noted that just one of these two power sources would not be sufficient, and when deployed in tandem, they can provide decarbonization at the pace and scale needed to help

achieve substantial climate goals. In addition, the paper outlines multiple technical pathways for gas power to achieve a lower carbon-generating footprint through the use of low and zero-carbon fuels—including hydrogen—as well as carbon capture utilization and sequestration (CCUS) technologies.
"Addressing climate change is an urgent global priority and one that we think we can do a better job of accelerating progress on—starting now—not decades from now," said Scott Strazik, CEO of GE

Gas Power." We believe there are critical and meaningful roles for both gas power and renewable sources of energy to play, advancing global progress faster today with coal-to-gas switching while continuing to develop multiple pathways for low-to-zero carbon gas technologies in the future," he said.
To help meet urgent climate goals while at the same time increasing power demand across the globe, the report details the merits of gas-fired generation as a complement to support and accelerate renewable energy penetration.

JAMMU & KASHMIR POLICE HEADQUARTERS
Phone/Fax No.: 0194-2443031/2443032 (Sgr), 0191-2459029/2459255 (Jmu)
Website :- www.jkpolice.gov.in, E-mail :- phqj@jkpolice.gov.in
TENDER EXTENSION NOTICE
Due to administrative reasons, date for tender submission and online opening of technical bids in respect of PHQ J&K NIT Nos. 52 of 2020 dated 19.11.2020 floated for purchasing Anti Riot Gas Mask is rescheduled as per following details :-
I) Last date for tender submission - 18.12.2020
II) Date of online opening of technical bids - 20.12.2020
Other terms and conditions of the tender shall remain unchanged.
Sd/- (Rayees Mohammad Bhat) - IPS,
AIG of Police (Provision/Tpt),
No: DIP/J-8668/20
Dated: 16.12.2020
For Director General of Police, J&K Jammu.

CENTRAL RAILWAY
VARIOUS WORKS
Open e-tender notice No. CR-DRM(W)BB-2020-45 of 14-12-2020. [Sr. No. 1].
Name of the work : IGP-PWAY WORKS related to Titoli Yard cabin at Igatpuri under ADEN (M) IGP as a part of Elimination of mechanical signalling of Titoli & Trombay A & B Cabin (PH-33) PB Item No.616 of 2018-19, 631 of 2020-2021. Project ID No. 01.02.33.18.1.14.005. Approximate Value : Rs.38.79 lakh. EMD : Rs.77600/-. Completion period : 4months [Sr. No. 2]. Name of the work : Providing channel sleepers, fitting and chequered plate at various Bridges under DEN (South) section. Approximate Value : Rs. 35.80 lakh. EMD : Rs. 71600/-. Completion period : 2 months [Sr. No. 3]. Name of the work : KYN : Miscellaneous Pway work for SSE(Pway) E/KYN section under ADEN (T) KYN for year 2021. Approximate Value : Rs.80.61 lakh. EMD Rs.161200/-. Completion period : 12 months [Sr. No. 4]. Name of the work : KYN : Miscellaneous Pway work for SSE(Pway) NRL section under ADEN (T) KYN for year 2021. Approximate Value : Rs.79.43 lakh. EMD : Rs.158900/-. Completion period : 12 months [Sr. No. 5]. Name of the work : (Two packet) Karjat-Lonavla : Provision of dynamic Rock fall barrier with secure drapery of Geo composite steel grid mesh at km 116.86 to 117.04 KJT-LNL SE ghat section. Approximate Value : Rs.1280.47 lakh. EMD : Rs.790200/-. Completion period : 9 months [Sr. No. 6]. Name of the work : Karjat-Lonavla: Rehabilitation of Tunnel No 37 and constructing tunnel portal on left over open portion ahead of the tunnel along with lining & repairs of damaged tunnel portion in the gap created due to boulder falling and landside on MID Line in a length of 90 m in KM 115 on Thakurwadi-Monkey Hill section of SE Ghat. Approximate Value : Rs.901.09 lakh. EMD : Rs.600600/-. Completion period : 9 months [Sr. No. 7]. Name of the work : (A) Replacement of sleepers by TRT machine on CSMT-Panel section under DEN(HB)jurisdiction. (B) Replacement of sleepers by TRT machine on CSMT-Kalyan section under DEN(S) jurisdiction. Approximate Value : Rs.56.20 lakh. EMD : Rs.112400/-. Completion period : 6 months [Sr. No. 8]. Name of the work : Supplying and stacking of 85mm machine crushed ballast at Nagotha Depot, Mumbai Division. Approximate Value : Rs.118.42 lakh. EMD : Rs.209200/-. Completion period : 12months [Sr. No. 9]. Name of the work : CTR (P)-10.10 km and deep screening work in Diwa-Roha section under DEN(E)CSMT. Approximate Value : Rs.216.96 lakh. EMD : Rs.258500/-. Completion period : 6 months [Sr. No. 10]. Name of the work : Repairs to Bituminous road surface at Level crossing Gates Nos. LC 1, 4, 6, 8, 9 & 10in DWBSR section and LC 47, 48, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 57, 58, 59, 64 & 65 in KYN-ASO section under ADEN (NE) KYN & Level crossing Gate Nos. 67, 69, 73, 74 & 76 under ADEN (M) IGP. Approximate Value : Rs.59.98 lakh. EMD : Rs.120000/-. Completion period : 4 months [Sr. No. 11]. Name of the work : (Two packet) New Delhi (NDLS) :- House Keeping and maintenance of Officer Rest house complex at Lajpat Nagar, New Delhi under ADEN (W) CSMT for two years. Approximate Value : Rs.55.40 lakh. EMD : Rs.110800/-. Tender Cost : Rs. 5000/-. Completion period : 24 months. I) Tender closing date & time of aforesaid tender : Up-to 11.00 hrs. of Sr. No. 2, 3, & 4 on 29-12-2020. Sr. No 1 on 01.01.2021, Sr. No. 7, 8, 9, 10 & 11 on 04.01.2021 & Sr. No 5 & 6 on 07.01.2021 will be opened after 11.00 hrs. II) The prospective tenderers are requested to visit the website www.ireps.gov.in for details of tenders & corrigendum, if any. III) Tenderer may participate in above e-tender electronically through website www.ireps.gov.in only & submission of manual offers against e-tender are not allowed. Manually, if submitted shall neither be opened nor considered. IV) Tender document cost & EMD will be accepted through net banking or payment gateway only. V) For further enquiry, may contact : Divisional Railway Manager (Works) Office, Central Railway on phone. 022-67455323. VI) This tenders complies with Public Procurement Policy Order 2017 dated 16-9-2017. Complete details of tenders are available at the website "www.ireps.gov.in". The complete details of tenders are also available in the "Notice Board" of the Divisional Railway Manager (Works) Office, Mumbai CSMT. 627
Railway Helpline 139 RPF Security Helpline -182

SEARCH FOR MISSING
General public is hereby informed that a female namely Naseem Bano (along with her son namely Ayan, Age 11 Years) D/o: Salahuddin, R/o: H. No. 1737, Hauz Suiwala, Katra Dobiyan, Chandni Mahal, Delhi has been reported missing since 06.12.2020 at 10:00 AM from the area of P.S. Chandni Mahal, Delhi. In this regard DD No. 38, dated 13.12.2020 has been registered at P.S. Chandni Mahal, Delhi. The description of missing female and her son is as under:
Name: Naseem Bano, Age: 41 Years, Height: 5', Complexion: Fair, Face: Long, Build: Medium, Hair: Black Long, Wearing: Cream colour Kurta Phool Pattidar, green colour salwar and Sandal in feet and Golden colour ring in ear.
Name: Ayan, Age: 11 Years, Height: 3'6", Complexion: Fair, Face: Round, Build: Thin, Hair: Black Short, Wearing: Shirt Checkdar, Blue Jeans and Black Shoes.
If anyone have any information about these missing female and her son please inform P.S. Chandni Mahal, Delhi.
Web: http://cbi.nic.in, Email: cbc@cbi.gov.in
Ph: 011-24368638/24368641, Fax: 011-24368639 SHO
Police Station, Chandni Mahal, Delhi
Ph: 011-23271751, 875087423
DP/550/CD/2020

APPEAL FOR IDENTIFICATION
General public is hereby informed that an unidentified deadbody of male Age : Approx. 35-37 years, Height : 5'8", Complexion : Wheatish, Build : Thin, Face : Long, Identification : OM written on hand, wearing black colour checkdar shirt and black colour pant, was found dead on 06.12.2020 at Y point, Patri Ring Road, Near Nigambodh Ghat, Kashmere Gate, Delhi. In this regard a DD No. 38-A dated 06.12.2020 u/s 174 Cr.P.C. has been lodged at P.S. Kashmere Gate, Delhi.
Any person having any information or clue about this found person may kindly inform to the following:-
SHO : P.S. Kashmere Gate, Delhi
Tel. No. 011-23968730
DP/799/N/20

SEARCH FOR MISSING
General public is hereby informed that a girl namely Moni Kumari, D/o: Santosh Shah, R/o: Mage Ram Ka Makan, Pal Wali Gali, Bakauli Village, Delhi has been reported missing since 24.11.2020 from the area of P.S. Alipur, Delhi. In this regard DD No. 567/20 U/s 363 dated 25.11.2020 has been registered at P.S. Alipur, Delhi.
The description of missing girl is as under:
Name: Moni Kumari, Age: 17 Years, Height: About 5', Face: Round, Complexion: Wheatish, Hair: Black, Wearing: Black paint, Chocolate Shirt and black sweater.
If anyone have any information about this missing girl please inform P.S. Alipur, Delhi
Web: http://cbi.nic.in, Email: cbc@cbi.gov.in
Ph: 011-24368638/24368641, Fax: 011-24368639 SHO
Police Station Alipur, Delhi
Ph: 011-27202265, 7065036325
DP/641/ON/2020

DELHI JAL BOARD
OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER WEST-III
NANGLOI PH-III: NEAR BARAT GHAR: NEW DELHI-110041
"STOP CORONA: Wear Mask, Follow Physical Distancing, Maintain Hand Hygiene"
N.I.T. No. 21 WEST-III(2020-21)
S. No. Description Amount put to tender Tender Fee Earnest Money Date of release of tender in e-procurement solution Last date/ time for tender download through e-procurement solution
1. Hiring of Sewer jetting cum suction machine of 9000 liter Capacity for Nangloi Jat Constituency in AC-II under EE(West) III Item Rate Rs. 500/- Rs. 51,500/- 14.12.2020 I.D.No. 197482_1 31.12.2020 at 3:00 PM
Further details in this regard can be seen at (http://govtprocurement.delhi.gov.in)
ISSUED BY P.R.O. (WATER) Sd/-
Adv. No. J.S.V. 260/2020-21 EX. ENGINEER (WEST) III

PUBLIC NOTICE
Termination of Franchise Agreement
Notice is hereby given to all concerned person that our Client NewYork Slice Private Limited, Udyog Vihar Gurugram has terminated the Franchise of New York Slice given to Danica Enterprises Private Limited situated at E-584, GK-II, New Delhi-110048 due to violations of terms & conditions.
Therefore, they have no authority whatsoever to transact any business or to act in any way for and behalf of our Client NewYork Slice Private Limited in any capacity whatsoever. Anyone dealing with them will be doing so at their own risk and responsibility and our Client will not be liable or responsible for the same.
SHIMPY ARMAN SHARMA - ADVOCATE
A-24, LGF, CHITRANJAN PARK, NEW DELHI-110019 Ph:014109020

Trend Glazer

I miss the stage: Ayushmann

Actor **AYUSHMANN KHURRANA** misses performing live, and says he also misses touching the hands of fans at gigs.

The actor has posted a picture from one of his past gigs on Instagram to share how much he misses performing live.

"I miss the stage. I miss people screaming at my gigs. I miss touching the hands of the crowd. I miss being part of the crowd of a local artiste's gig somewhere in Eastern Europe. I miss being missed when I get late for my concert," he wrote with the image.



'A lot of people have approached me to act in their films. After watching my music videos, people feel I can become an actor. I think that I don't want to do anything half-heartedly. I have been learning music since childhood. I don't want to act just for the sake of it. I want to be well prepared before coming into films.'

—Armaan Malik

Actor **KARTIK AARYAN** flaunts his locks in a new post on Instagram, saying long hair has swag.



In the image, the actor is seen dressed in a denim jacket paired with a yellow T-shirt.

"Lambe Baalo ka Swag hi Alag hai. Phir se trend shuru karein (Long hair has a different swag. Shall we start the trend again)?"

Kartik has started shooting for his next film, Ram Madhvani's *Dhamaka*. The film, which will be produced by Ronnie Screwvala's RSVP and Ram Madhvani Films with Co-Producer Amita Madhvani, gives a bird's eye view into the working of a news channel.

'It has been a bittersweet year'

For Hollywood star **JAMIE FOXX**, 2020 has been a bittersweet experience. The Oscar-winning actor says he is learning to overcome the loss of his younger sister, adding that he finds joy in things she taught him and the wisdom she left behind.

Earlier this year, Foxx lost his younger sister DeOndra Dixon, who was born with Down Syndrome, at the age of 36.

"This year has been bittersweet for me. I'm living in a situation where my family has been affected by someone we love very dearly — my sister, who has transitioned," Foxx said.



A podcast titled *Mafialand*. What would be your instant reaction as soon as you hear about the show? Well, most or almost all of us would immediately interpret it to be the story of underworlds, dons, drugs and weapons. However, only when one goes into the details of it, s/he realises how it has an entirely different take. *Mafialand* is a glimpse into India's most flourishing industry, i.e. that of the mafia. After all, in every corner of the country there's a mafia, who's probably — at first glance clearing your garbage, parking your car, or selling you groceries, but we tend to ignore them. The show focusses on issues that operate in broad daylight, under our very eyes.

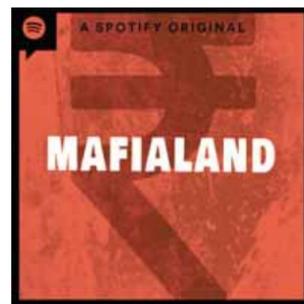
The Spotify Original is made in collaboration with Sikhya Entertainment. Its founder and film producer, Guneet Monga, delves into the making of the podcast, and more. Excerpts:

How did you conceptualise it?

The initial idea was to explore the world of mini-mafias in India that control our daily lives. The focus was always on looking at how there is a mafia hidden in every corner of our existence, and we don't even know about it. We drew a parallel with the underworld, because that is the immediate response we get from people when we say the name *Mafialand* — they think we are looking at the pulpy world of the Mumbai mafias. But no! Our show would actually be about something like the garbage disposal mafia in Mumbai. That was how we pitched it to Spotify.

Your voice matters

Podcasts are gaining ground in India. Producer **GUNEET MONGA** tells **SAKSHI SHARMA** that the trend indicates people's hunger for exciting stories in various forms for different purposes



What research went into it?

Our co-producer, Confluence Media, is led by a team of established, senior investigative journalists including Josy Joseph. It has a network of stringers across the country, who would bring us the access, the voices, and the story on the ground. The team of

researchers would then prepare extensive and detailed research docket, from which a writer would craft a compelling and tight narrative. We would give this one brief to all writers: 'Don't use Google!' Our ambition was to create original work that went straight to the source, instead of relying on what was already out there. The purpose was to demonstrate that podcasts can be a form of journalism too, but with a twist. It was also important to identify the right audio streaming platform to work with — one that would give you creative freedom and is open to exploring new podcast concepts.

"Mafia sirf underworld mein nahi hai, Mafia humari galiyon mein hai, humare gharon mein hai." The podcast says that right from nursery admissions in Delhi to getting admission in sports to parking a car, there's involvement of mafia all around... What do you intend to say?

I think every Indian knows that there is something wrong in the way things are going. Every young parent in Delhi knows this. Every driver who has to park their car in an Indian city knows this. Every person in Bangalore dealing with dry water taps knows this. So people are aware. What we are telling them is the scale of the problem, the mafia modus operandi, and what combating this mafia nexus means. We are empowering them with insight about their own lives.

How did you come across people who have been at the receiving end and were ready to open up as these things are usually done secretly?

One of our most harrowing episodes is Episode 6 — *Amreeka ke Jawai*, where we explore the immigration mafia in Punjab. We had Nirmal Singh, whose teenage son lost his life on his way to the United States, because of the cruel conditions this mafia subjected him to.

Nirmal spoke to us over the phone while he was working on board a ship in Germany. His story opens the episode. This is a testament to the kind of trust the research team built with our various guests, including former or current members of the mafia themselves.

How challenging was it to explore this subject?

One of the main challenges was getting larger character camps in place. Not only did the researchers have to build relationships of trust with everyone, from victims to the accused, but we also had a lot of last-minute dropouts. Especially with the accused, who fear that the authorities will gun for them on the basis of their interviews with us. We have had to navigate through these challenges not just for one story but for all 12. The scope of research is so vast because we are incorporating so many different geographies. All the researchers were working under COVID restrictions, which made access and mobility even more difficult. But through all of that, we persevered. We are grateful to the team of researchers who worked with us and to the streaming platform for being patient given these external challenges.

In today's world of enhanced visual effects and works, why did you think a podcast would turn out to be better than a visual series for this show?

Podcasts are a great way to experiment with non-fiction storytelling. It's a more stripped down version of storytelling compared to visual series, which can often hide behind big-name actors, lush production design, and enhanced visual effects. We've seen the growth of podcast consumption across the world and believe that India is heading in the same direction. What's fascinating about a podcast is that it just does not work if the basics of storytelling aren't in place, so it's easier to spot mistakes, but also a great way to hone your skills if you are an emerging writer or filmmaker.

You have directed and produced another crime podcast, *The Big Shots - Dosa King*. How was the experience of exploring this genre with podcasts?

The vision for *Dosa King* was always cinematic. We wanted it to be a character study of a great man — P Rajagopal, the man behind Saravana Bhavan. It's a story everyone thinks they know, but we found a whole rich world behind the headlines. So we were excited to jump on the opportunity to tell it through an immersive podcast, where we could marry narration, dramatised scenes, and interviews. And given that Spotify recently produced a true crime podcast in India, it seemed like the perfect fit.

What would you say about the status of this genre in India? Why do you think podcasts are dominating the media landscape here?

We are very excited that podcasts are gaining ground in India. It shows that people are hungry for exciting stories, and they want them in different forms, and for different purposes. We hope that our two original podcasts turn out to be gripping, informative, and help further the podcast format in the country.

Beyond the borders

Writer-director **AJITPAL SINGH's** debut Hindi feature film, *Fire In The Mountains*, will have its world premiere at the Sundance Film Festival virtually



tragedy, when my cousin sister Amarjeet Kaur died because her husband didn't take her to the hospital thinking she was possessed by a ghost. The film is about the clash of two world views — traditional and modern, with a strong woman at the heart of it. I hope my film will make people ask some relevant questions about their blind faiths."

The producer and co-founder of Jar Pictures who has produced award-winning films such as Berlinale winner *Killa* and Oscar entry from India, *Liar's Dice* and commercial hits like *Gangs Of Wasseyapur 1 and 2*, *Nil Battey Sannata* and *Qarib Qarib Single*, Ajay Rai says, "We are thrilled to start our film journey here. This is our second film after to be selected at Sundance, after a gap of seven years. It feels truly special."

The Jar Pictures producer Alan McAlex who did individual projects *Dangal* and Amazon series *Made in Heaven* as an Executive Producer and co-produced *A Suitable Boy*, says, "We

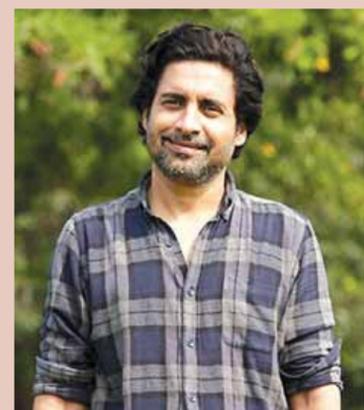
are delighted to end this difficult year on an exciting note. It's a great joy to be among 10 films from across the world."

Having promoted indie gems, Mauli Singh produced her award-winning first short film *Rammat-Gammat* with Drishyam Films. Excited about the premiere of her debut feature, the film publicist turned producer says, "Over the past seven years as a publicist, I have passionately promoted some of the best independent films premiering at the top film festivals, all the while harbouring a dream of producing films which will connect with the audience across the world. I couldn't have asked for a better start than this. The film is our labour of love and I am excited to see how the world audience will connect with it."

On her collaboration with Jar Pictures, Mauli says, "I worked with Ajay and Alan as their publicist. It's a joy to collaborate with them as a co-producer on my first feature and learn from the best in the business."

Artists from several countries have collaborated on the film which includes the veteran French DOP Dominique Colin (who collaborated with many auteur filmmakers including Gaspar Noë and Cédric Klapisch) who shot the film, Simon Price from New Zealand edited the film along with Parikshith Jha, and the music is composed by Arnaud van Vliet of South Africa. The Indian crew includes the production designer Mausam Aggarwal, sound recordist Kanishk Bhoklay, sound designer Mohandas VP, costume designer Karishma Vyas and casting director Taran Bajaj. Additional dialogues are written by Uttarakhand based actor-writer Sudarshan Juyal.

Earlier titled *Switzerland*, the film won two awards, 'Prasad Lab DI' and 'Moviebuff Appreciation' for the best WIP project at 2019 Film Bazaar's Work-In-Progress Lab. It was also part of NFDK Screenwriters Lab 2018-19 and Marche Du Film 2020's, Goes to Cannes Section.



Fortunate to enjoy audience support: Chandan

Actor Chandan Roy Sanyal's passion for cinema has resulted in a filmography spanning over 14 years. Way before that he established his banner, Proscenium Film Company, under which he created a live film titled, *In Between* (2020). The film was presented over BookMyShow; it opened to appreciation and attracted 500 viewers.

A commentary on the vibrant lives of actors, the film deals with a few actors auditioning for roles amid the emotional turmoil that takes a toll on their profession. Chandan's film borrows heavily from his two decades of theatre experience and one and half decade of experience in cinema.

The actor-producer roped in his team of old actors for the one-take film & theatre phenomenon. He reveals that the project is inspired by his personal experiences and he remarks that he pieced together the script to depict the reality of an actor's life.

Chandan says, "I am grateful to viewers for embracing the film despite it being a relatively alien form of entertainment. Everyone associated with the film is truly excited to bring it back to the audiences and we all realise we're fortunate to enjoy this kind of support. What's interesting is that because the film is about the hardships of an actor's life it is relatable to those acting and it is a revelation for those who think acting is just a glamorous job that pays well."

(The live film will have two shows at 7 pm and 9 pm each on December 19 and 20 on BookMyShow.)

PAUSE AND REFLECT

The Ministry of Jal Shakti holds a review meeting of the National Hydrology Project

The National Hydrology Project was started in the year 2016 as a Central Sector Scheme with 100 per cent grant to implementing agencies with a budget outlay of ₹3,680 crore to be spent over a period of eight years. The project aims at improving the extent, reliability and accessibility of information related to water resources and to strengthen the capacity of water resource management institutions in India. The efficient and reliable information paves the way for an effective water resource development and management.

The project, in its mid term, has made significant progress in the fields of water resource monitoring system, water resource information system (WRIS), water resource operation and planning systems, institutional capacity enhancement and trainings.

The Minister of State, Jal Shakti, Rattan Lal Kataria, informed that under the NHP, a nation wide repository of water resources data — NWIC has been established. Approximately 1,900 real time data acquisition stations (RTDAs) have been set up and contract for 6,500 RTDAs have already been awarded. He informed that near real time data acquisition systems (NRTDAs) as well as manual data acquisition stations are being set up. India WRIS, water information and management system WIMS have been revamped. The major success has been bringing all states on board for data sharing on water resources, a task hitherto left unaccomplished by previous governments.

Kataria also directed authorities to share the valuable research work carried out under NHP in public domain and encourage universities/research institutes globally to benefit as well as contribute towards it. He termed NHP as a project of national importance. He stated that collecting data from scattered agencies posed a major bottleneck in effective water



resource management and also a stumbling block in important policy level decision making.

Acknowledging progress made in data collection, he informed that 12,273 surface water stations have been set up by 2020 as compared to mere 878 in the year 2016. Around 70,525 ground water stations have been set up in a span of four years.

Kataria stated that data is a valuable resource and lack of interest shown by previous governments has resulted into unavailability of reliable historic data. He emphasised that the NDA government, under the dynamic leadership of Narendra Modi, is trying to amend all historical wrongs committed by the previous governments and correct the myopic perspective with which water resource manage-

ment was being handled. He also hailed the very first step in this direction of setting up of Ministry of Jal Shakti for adopting an integrated approach towards effective water management.

He further informed that through NHP, the management of water resources shall witness a sea change since it will adopt an integrated approach and make use of latest cutting edge technology. For

example, opening of gates for dams has so far been a manual operation but through NHP, these operations shall be changed into automatic mode on pilot basis for a few dams.

He lauded the efforts of Haryana government in implementing NHP and informed that Haryana is among the top ten performing states in terms of percentage of funds utilised.



Baghel celebrates virtual marathon

Chhattisgarh celebrated the completion of two years of Bhupesh Baghel-led state government by participating in the virtual marathon campaign. More than one lakh people hailing from 28 districts took part in the virtual race. The Chief Minister Baghel also took part in the event.

The allocated time for the marathon was set from 6 am till 11 am, but the enthusiasm filled statesman continued the marathon even after the deadline had passed. It was organised by the Sports and Youth Welfare and Public Relations Department of the state. Unlike the commonly held marathon, participants in this virtual marathon had to upload their running photos or videos on social media.

The theme of the event was — *Baat Hai Abhiman Kee, Chhattisgarh Ke Swabhimaan Kee.*

Approximately 71,000 people registered to participate in the event but by 11 am more than one lakh people joined the campaign. Baghel uploaded his photos on social media while sporting a special t-shirt. He said that the entire state and its zeal is running with me. He motivated others to run as well.

The Food Minister Amarjeet Bhagat, School Education Minister Dr Prem Sai Singh Tekam, Forest Minister Mohammad Akbar, Women and Child Development Minister Anila Bhedia, Excise Minister Kavasi Lakhma, Rajya Sabha MP Chhaya Verma, Raipur (Rural) MLA Satyanarayana Sharma, Raipur Mayor Ejaz Dhebar and many other public representatives attended the event and participated with enthusiasm.

Several bureaucrats including Chief Secretary Amitabh Jain and Director General of Police DM Avasthi, Additional Chief Secretary Subrat Sahu, Principal Chief Conservator of Forests Rakesh Chaturvedi and Secretary to Chief Minister Siddharth Komal Singh Pardeshi also took part in the campaign. People from all age groups, gender and diverse sections of society participated in the campaign and made it a huge success. Women, children, old-aged and elderly people uploaded their pictures on social media with the #RunwithChhattisgarh hashtag.

LIC INTRODUCES CUSTOMER-CENTRIC INITIATIVES

LIC is devising better methods to provide services to its esteemed policyholders in the times of the pandemic. The policyholders can now avail its improved customer-centric initiatives. Online facility for switching of funds under ULIP

policies has been introduced through LIC's Customer Portal, registered for premier services. This facility is available for New Endowment Plus (Plan 935), Nivesh Plus (Plan 849) and SIIP (Plan 852), the three plans current-

ly being sold. The facility of online switching of funds is free of cost. One switch is allowed per day per policy through an OTP based authentication system. All rules applicable for offline requests are applicable for the online system as well.

LIC has also extended the bi-lingual customer care support. The services are now additionally available in Marathi, Tamil and Bengali. The company also has a

Conversational Artificial Intelligence/Machine Learning enabled bi-lingual chatbot, which is a one stop platform for providing information regarding premium due date, various products, including the newly launched plans

and customer queries. The chatbot has answered 1,20,75,440 queries so far since its launch in January 2020. LIC is well advanced with digital transformation and has responded to the pandemic with great speed and agility.

GSL launches patrol vessel for Indian Coast Guard

The fifth and the last vessel of the indigenous project for 05 Offshore Patrol Vessels for Indian Coast Guard was launched at the hands of Jayanthi Natarajan, President, Coast Guard Wives Welfare Association, in the presence of DG K Natarajan, DGICG, who was the chief guest for the event at Goa Shipyard Limited. The vessel was named as ICGS Saksham. Considering the ongoing restrictions due to COVID-19, the function was held in a scaled down manner at GSL in distinguished presence of Flag Officer Goa Area Rear Admiral Philipose G Pynumootil, NM, chairman and MD of Goa Shipyard Limited — Commodore BB Nagpal and various other dignitaries.



launch the vessel within 18 months from keel laying, which was in June 2019. The vessel is in advanced stage of outfitting and will be ready for delivery by October 2021 as per the contractual schedule.

Entirely designed in-house by the professionals of GSL, these OPVs will form a formidable part of the Coast Guard Fleet and used for protection of Exclusive Economic Zone of territorial water

of the nation. These vessels will be fitted with modern and technologically advanced machinery and computerised controls systems, making them the advanced patrol vessels in service with the Indian Coast Guard on delivery. These 2,400 tonnes vessels will be equipped with features like quick response boats for rescue and anti piracy, gunnery simulators and many more features. The hull would be the most efficient form

designed by GSL and would provide for fuel efficiency, crew comfort and excellent sea keeping qualities.

While complementing GSL for achieving yet another milestone in execution of five CGOPVs Project, DGICG K Natarajan said, "The launching of this majestic ship, which is an example of fine workmanship and equipped with most advanced machineries, will help Indian Coast Guard in performing multifarious roles chartered to Indian Coast Guard more effectively."

On this occasion Cmde BB Nagpal, CMD GSL, said, "The launch of the fifth OPV despite the serious supply chain constraints imposed by COVID-19 is a major feat for GSL. In line with the shipyard's tradition of delivering on time, we are confident to deliver this last vessel of the project. Our endeavour has been to maximise the indigenous content on these ships. I am happy to state that more than 70 per cent indigenisation has been achieved for these ships."

SAIL receives Golden Peacock Award

The Steel Authority of India Limited (SAIL) has been awarded with the prestigious Golden Peacock Environment Management Award for the year 2020 by the Institute of Directors. Anil Kumar Chaudhary, chairman of SAIL, lauded the efforts and said, "SAIL has been the winner of this award for successive two years and this bears testimony to the efforts made by the company for sustainable and environmentally responsible steel making. This award is one of the most coveted awards in

the category. Considering various environmental issues leading to global warming and climate change, the award encourages corporates to enhance their environmental performance and to compete with peers to set benchmarks."

SAIL, as its corporate responsibility for environment protection, continuously focuses on adopting various environmental measures including upgrading of pollution control facilities, treatment and recirculation of wastewater from individual units and outfalls, efficient handling of different solid wastes, carbon sequestration through afforestation, among others. Also, the impact of



VIT-AP hosts international conference

VIT-AP University, Amaravati, conducted three days virtual international conference in the area of applications of fluid dynamics. The conference, ICAFD-2020, is the fifth international conference in the series. It was aimed at establishing a premier international forum that brought together scientists, engineers and industrial experts to present the latest achievements and innovations in the areas of Applied Mathematics and Mechanics.

ICAFD-2020 invited resource persons from abroad (USA, Australia, UAE, Singapore, South Africa) and reputed universities (IIT, NIT, VIT, Central University) from India for the talk. The conference was the result of a long collaborative effort between the School of Mechanical Engineering, VIT-AP University and the Department of Mechanical Engineering Science, University of Johannesburg, South Africa.

In the welcome address, VC Dr SV Kota Reddy welcomed the founder and chancellor Dr G Viswanathan, VIT University. Dr Reddy highlighted the role of conference for intellectual growth of an individual, followed by the importance of applications aspects of fluid dynamics influencing our daily life.

Dr Pankaj Tambe, chairperson of the conference said that 175 participants registered for the conference. Hundred participants presented their papers. Out of this, 25 participants were from USA, Canada, South Africa, Kenya, Nigeria, Malaysia, UAE, Singapore, West Indies, Australia. The rest of the papers were from different states of India. The inaugural address was given by Dr R



Paneer Selvam, University of Arkansas, USA. He highlighted the important challenges a fluid dynamics researcher has to work in the near future for the advancement of this area. Dr Viswanathan praised the School of Mechanical Engineering, VIT-AP University for organising the conference during the pandemic.

Dr S Srinivas, co-chair and convener of the conference highlighted the objectives. Dr CLV Sivakumar, registrar, VIT-AP University, presented the vote of thanks. He praised the efforts taken by Dr S Srinivas, Dr Pankaj Tambe, Dr Mohanty, Dr Satyanarayana Badeti, Dr Amit, Dr VR Reddy, S Karthikeyan and Dr J Prakash for successfully arranging the conference.

ESIC Med College gets new equipment

Santosh Kumar Gangwar, Minister for Labour and Employment (Independent Charge), and G Kishan Reddy, Minister of State for Home Affairs, jointly dedicated new services and equipment at ESIC Medical College, Hyderabad. The services and equipment dedicated are:

- (i) Innovative portable point of care (RTPCR), a user friendly, quick sample processing device for COVID patients.
- (ii) Remote health monitoring system — COVID BEEP services to COVID and Non-COVID patients. It's a comprehensive indigenously developed physiological parameter monitoring system to measure remotely heart rate, blood pressure, body temperature, respiratory rate and oxygen saturation. It is the first of its kind wearable device that gives all parameters simultaneously. The device can be controlled by the doctors remotely for measuring blood pressure.
- (iii) COVID-safe incubators for new born babies, indige-



nously developed by modifying existing incubators.

(iv) Round the clock in-house dialysis services with 50 beds: There are about 600 dialysis patients in the hospital who were being referred to the private hospitals. During the

pandemic, referral and transport increased the risk of infection of SARS-CoV-2. Therefore, with starting of the dialysis services, all ESIC insured persons and beneficiaries at Hyderabad will get in-house dialysis services.

GAIL launches testimonial videos

Advocating natural gas as a cleaner and convenient fuel option towards a gas-based economy, as envisioned by the Government of India, GAIL has established a Natural Gas pipeline network of over 12,500 kms. GAIL has been spreading the clean energy to various nooks and corners of the country by spreading the length of its pipeline network and connecting more and more number of cities.

To facilitate energy empowerment and fuel the nation, the company has launched three testimonial videos under its online initiative #SpreadingEnergyofHappines.

It is to motivate the masses and enhance the usage of natural gas. These testimonial videos showcase an autorickshaw driver from Bhubaneswar, a homemaker from Patna and an industrial unit in Bengaluru using natural gas as fuel.

The initiative advocates the use of uninterrupted, convenient supply of piped natural gas (PNG) at homes. It promotes affordable environment-friendly fuel for transportation through compressed natural gas (CNG) and encourages convenient, soot-free and workers' health-friendly energy for better work environment in manufacturing and industries. It also advocates the usage of cleaner natural gas for captive power generation for industries and SMEs. The usage of the cleanest fossil fuel will help in reducing emissions of GHG, thereby, facilitating in reduction of air pollution, climate change, global warming and rising sea levels.

An engagement activity has been initiated along with the initiative. An engagement activity has been initiated along with the initiative, asking netizens to share their stories, pictures and quotes on how cleaner energy has brought convenience and happiness in their lives. GAIL has tied up with an NGO to plant a tree for every comment on social media platforms. The trees will be geo-tagged and the live location will be shared with the social media users.

Game for Night Life

India begin quest to repeat 2018-19 heroics with Pink Ball affair

PTI ■ ADELAIDE

A peerless Virat Kohli and his "fearless" India would look to unleash their might on an Australian team which is ready for revenge but not exactly in 'pink of health' ahead of the first Day/Night Test starting here at Adelaide Oval on Thursday.

Media mogul Kerry Packer, while promoting his path-breaking 'World Series Day/Night Test matches' on Channel 9 back in late 1970s, had an unforgettable caption "Big Boys Play At Night".

Even in 2020, there couldn't have been a more appropriate catch-line for a series where Kohli's magnificence meets its match in Steve Smith's manic consistency, Cheteshwar Pujara's doggedness challenged by a much younger Marnus Labuschagne, ready to show the world that he isn't a one-season wonder. All this would be under lights at the Adelaide Oval.

And then there are those mean fast men on both sides aiming to instill the fear of pink ball in twilight zone, creating all sorts of doubts in the batsmen's minds.

A Josh Hazlewood versus Mohammed Shami will be as enticing a sub-plot as Jasprit Bumrah bowling those yorkers in reply to Pat Cummins' barrage of bouncers.

With a workhorse like Ishant Sharma missing from Indian ranks and the enforcer David Warner absent in the Australian line-up, the teams are evenly placed in terms of strength.

However, there will certainly be some distinct home advantage for Australia along with the experience of playing more Day/Night Tests.

A Day/Night Test match has its own little grammar where batsmen are expected to attack in the first session while bowlers are



Indian skipper Virat Kohli bats during net session @imkholi/Twitter

INDIA-AUSTRALIA TEST ENCOUNTERS

Venue	M	Ind	Aus	Draw
In Aus	48	7	29	12
In India	50	21	13	15
Total	98	28	42	27
Since 2000	42	17	15	10
At Adelaide	12	2	7	3

HIGHEST INNINGS TOTALS

Ind	705-7 at Sydney	2003-04
Aus	674 at Adelaide	1947-48

LOWEST INNINGS TOTALS

Ind	58 at Brisbane	1947-48
Aus	83 at Melbourne	1980-81

Faisal Features

at their peak once the sun sets, allowing the pink kookaburra to pick its pace up.

Never has an Indian team been so spoilt for choices with multiple options in place for various positions.

But Indian skipper Virat Kohli made it clear that Shubman Gill and KL Rahul will have to wait for their chances with the management deciding to stick to an out-of-form Prithvi Shaw in the opening slot.

"Shubman hasn't got opportunities at this level yet in Test cricket, so as and when he gets an opportunity it will be great to see how he goes about things, because he is a very, very confident young man," Kohli said on the eve of the game.

"Prithvi has performed at the Test level, but he will be playing in Australia for the first time. So, I think it is very exciting to see his progress as well."

Can Rahul be fitted in the team at some stage?

"KL is obviously a quality player and hence he has been included back into the Test squad and you know we have to see what combinations suits the balance of the team best," skipper's statement stressed that Hanuma Vihari, with his part-time off-

1st Test. Day 1
Live from 9:30am IST
SONY TEN 1, 3 & SIX

breaks, is the choice for now.

For the much-specified wicketkeeper's slot, Wriddhiman Saha was preferred over the explosive but erratic Rishabh Pant.

In the build-up to the series, Saha's fifty in the red-ball first-class match was achieved in a tougher setting than Pant's 73-ball 100 under lights against a second string Australia A attack.

Also, Umesh Yadav predictably, after his good show in the practice game, got his place in the side as the third pacer.

On Tuesday, India's top batters were being troubled by Thangarasu Natarajan's incoming deliveries with pink kookaburra at the Adelaide nets.

If Natarajan, at 130-plus, can trouble them so much, then Mitchell Starc, the world's top wicket-taker in pink ball Tests, can be menacing.

At times, less options make it easier to choose and Kohli would hope that he has made the right choices so that Ajinkya Rahane can help India do an encore once he takes a break.

SQUADS

India (playing XI): Virat Kohli (captain), Mayank Agarwal, Prithvi Shaw, Cheteshwar Pujara, Ajinkya Rahane (vc), Hanuma Vihari, Wriddhiman Saha (wk), Ravichandra Ashwin, Mohammed Shami, Jasprit Bumrah, Umesh Yadav.

Australia: Tim Paine (captain & wicketkeeper), Joe Burns, Pat Cummins, Cameron Green, Marcus Harris, Josh Hazlewood, Travis Head, Moises Henriques, Marnus Labuschagne, Nathan Lyon, Michael Neser, James Pattinson, Steven Smith, Mitchell Starc, Mitchell Swepson, Matthew Wade.

Rahane will do tremendous job in my absence: Kohli

PTI ■ ADELAIDE

India captain Virat Kohli on Wednesday backed his deputy Ajinkya Rahane to "do a tremendous job" in leading the side once he goes on paternity leave after the first Test against Australia and described their relationship as the one built on "trust and mutual respect".

"Well, firstly we had a lot of mutual understanding and respect over the years, we have had some great partnerships batting together which is based on trust and understanding on what needs to be done for the team," Kohli said when asked how he sees Rahane faring in his absence.

He believes that both have been on the same page and know how this team functions.



"Jinks has done a tremendous job in the two tour games and he seems to be very composed and he knows the strengths of our team and how we need to go about things," he said. Kohli made it clear that

Rahane will certainly follow the template set by him and there is no ambiguity as far as both of them are concerned.

"...We already know the template that we play with and how we want to go about things, so we are absolutely on the same page and I am sure he will do a tremendous job in my absence as well," the skipper seemed very confident.

As of now, Kohli is keen on setting up the base for Rahane to consolidate once he leaves.

"...The focus remains till the time I am here is to be able to provide, you know, captaincy and leadership and performances as a player to the best of my abilities and from then on, I am pretty confident that Jinks will do a tremendous job."

Smith fit to play Green made for Test cricket, will make debut: Paine

PTI ■ ADELAIDE

Australian batting mainstay Steve Smith, whose fitness became a cause of concern after he missed a training session, was merely down with a stiff back and will play in the opening Test against India here, skipper Tim Paine said on Wednesday.

After doing a few stretching exercises and running drills at the Adelaide Oval on Tuesday, Smith had skipped the routine football session and headed straight to the dressing room in some discomfort.

Paine said it was not a serious niggle and a day's rest came as a "blessing in disguise" for the star.

"We expect Steve to be there. He has had a stiff back a number of times before and you can have that if you bat as much as he does at the nets," Paine said at the pre-match media interaction.

"He has a stiff back before and yesterday (Tuesday) was more precautionary. Obviously, come tomorrow (Thursday), he gets through stiff back and finds a way to score runs like he always does," he added.



ADELAIDE: Rookie all-rounder Cameron Green is made for Test cricket and will make his debut in the pink ball match against India, Australia captain Tim Paine announced on Wednesday.

The giant seam-bowling all-rounder made an impressive hundred in the first warm-up game against India A and was drafted into the Test team. While he got concussed in the second game due to a straight drive from Jasprit Bumrah, Paine indicated that the baggy green is waiting for him.

"He trained well. If all things go well, Cam Green will be making his Test debut tomorrow (Thursday). Great news for him. Great news for us and great news for all Australian cricket fans," Paine said ahead of the series-opener.

Paine, who batted alongside Green in the warm-up game and has also seen him score a lot of runs in Sheffield Shield, is confident that he has a bright future ahead of him.

"He is really impressive for a guy of his age and understands his game pretty well. He has smart cricket brain and is calm under pressure. He is made for Test cricket," Paine complimented the 21-year-old West Australian's skills.

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