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A BEDOUIN'S
TALE

WORLD 8

SYRIAN REFUGEE CAMP BURNT TO
GROUND IN NORTHERN LEBANON

SPORT 12

DHONI CAPTAIN OF ICC'S
WHITE-BALL TEAMS OF DECADE

NEW DELHI, MONDAY DECEMBER 28, 2020; PAGES 12 ₹3

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TO KEEP
MASKS ON
10 VIVACITY*Late City Vol. 30 Issue 361
*Air Surchage Extra if ApplicableDELHI LUCKNOW BHOPAL BHUBANESWAR
RANCHI RAIPUR CHANDIGARH
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Untraceable fliers fuel UK strain fear

State Govts unable to locate returnees as their addresses are wrong, phones switched off

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

In an alarming development, hundreds of passengers who recently returned from the United Kingdom have not been traced across the country due to incorrect contact details furnished by them. The State administrations are finding it difficult to locate a number of these passengers as their contact numbers are either switched off or not traceable. In many cases, their addresses are also proving to be incorrect.

For instance 279 returnees in Talangana, 151 in Karnataka, 15 in Gurugram are untraceable so far. Meanwhile, 22 more passengers (16 in Maharashtra, two in Delhi, two in Telangana and one each in MP and UP) who returned from the United Kingdom have been tested positive.

According to director of Public Health G Srinivasa Rao, 1,216 people have arrived in Telangana from the United Kingdom since December 9 and a total of 937 have been identified and tested for Covid-19 and 279 passengers are still untraceable. Of the total 279



Representational image

fliers, 92 untraceable passengers are from Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, and Kerala.

The Karnataka Government is now on the lookout for the 151 untraceable United Kingdom returnees. All of them have returned to

Bengaluru since December 7 but have gone missing.

These 151 people are yet to be traced as their phone numbers are either switched off or not traceable. In Gurugram at least 15 returnees from the United Kingdom, in the last

two weeks, couldn't be traced. Additionally, seven travellers have refused to get themselves tested for Covid-19.

In Uttar Pradesh one passenger has gone missing after returning from the United Kingdom.

As per the data, 1,822 travellers to Punjab from the United Kingdom in the last one month landed at the Delhi international airport. As many as 1,604 travellers to Punjab and elsewhere landed at the Sri Guru Ram Das Jee International Airport after November 25. Of a total of 3,426 returnees, nearly 2,500 are still believed to be in the State.

As many as 16 returnees from the United Kingdom, where a new variant of coronavirus was detected recently, have tested positive in RT PCR tests conducted on their arrival in Maharashtra. Two more passengers tested positive in Telangana after landing from the United Kingdom.

One United Kingdom returnee has tested positive in Jalore in Madhya Pradesh. He had tested negative on December 7 after arriving in Delhi. He, along with two members of his family, has tested positive now. A merchant navy captain, who returned from the United States and the United Kingdom recently in Bareilly, has tested positive for Covid-19.

Meanwhile, two more persons who recently returned to Delhi from the United Kingdom were found to be Covid positive during a door-to-door contact-tracing and testing exercise. With this, the number of people testing positive for the disease after returning from the United Kingdom has gone up to 21 in the national capital. All of them returned from the United Kingdom after November.

India registers lowest daily cases in nearly six months

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India registered 18,732 fresh cases of Covid-19, the lowest in nearly six months, while 97,61,538 people have recuperated so far from the disease pushing the national recovery rate to 95.82 per cent, according to the Union Health Ministry data updated on Sunday.

The death toll climbed to 1,47,622 with the novel coronavirus virus claiming 279 lives in a span of 24 hours in the country, the data updated at 8 am showed. A total of 18,732 daily new cases were recorded in the past 24 hours. The number of new daily cases last reported a dip on July 1 when 18,653 cases were registered.

The Covid-19 case fatality rate was registered at 1.44 per cent. There are 2,78,690 active cases of coronavirus infection in the country which comprises 2.73 per cent of the total caseload, the data stated.

According to the ICMR, a cumulative total of 16,81,02,657 samples have been tested up to December 26 with 9,43,368 samples being tested on Saturday.

Bone-chilling cold to ring in New Year

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

The weather is set to turn murkier for the plains of northwest India next week as forecasts suggest the possibility of severe cold gripping the region.

Several places in north India, including Uttar Pradesh and Punjab, recorded their minimum temperature below the five degrees Celsius mark on Sunday. The India Meteorological Department has forecast severe cold wave in parts of the region later this week and warning of dense fog.

The IMD on Sunday said the "cold wave" to "severe cold wave" conditions are also likely in Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh and Delhi on December 28 and 29 and over North Rajasthan on December 29 and 30 and also in isolated pockets over Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh due to consequent strengthening of cold and dry northwesterly and northerly lower level winds.

Delhi, whose minimum temperature has been hovering around 4 to 5 degrees Celsius this week, is likely to witness mercury levels fall below 3 degrees Celsius by the end of December. In Delhi, December temperatures have fallen to the lowest low of around 2.5



degrees Celsius in the past two years in the last week of December. From 2015 to 2017, the mercury levels never dropped below five-degree Celsius in December. This year, the prevailing strong La Niña conditions over the Pacific Ocean are said to be the major driver behind the ongoing colder-than-normal winter.

For declaring the cold day or severe cold day, the IMD considers the wind chill factor — the effective minimum temperature due to wind flow. The cold wave conditions are associated with the fall of minimum temperature much below normal and are usually less than 10 degrees Celsius and the maximum temperature is 4.5 degrees Celsius or 6.4 degrees Celsius below normal.

Continued on Page 2

We saw spirit of Atmanirbhar Bharat in 2020, claims Modi

PM pays tributes to several revered Sikh personalities in his Mann Ki Baat

PNS ■ NEW DELHI



esting news" of increase in the population of lions, tigers and leopards in the country.

Modi's radio-talk came at a time when thousands of farmers are protesting on the outskirts of Delhi against new farm laws. The PM greeted coronavirus warriors saying people of the country applauded their work and learn new lessons in past several months and developed spirit of self-reliance.

"Every citizen has felt the changes triggered by the pandemic. The supply chain was completely disrupted but people learnt new lessons from challenges. We saw a new spirit among the people, we saw the spirit of Atmanirbhar Bharat in 2020," said Modi in his address.

Modi said in the drive towards "self-reliance" quality should not be compromised.

"I call upon our manufacturers and industry leaders that when people have taken determined step forward & when the mantra of 'Vocal for Local' is resonating in every house, it is time to ensure that our products are world-class", he said.

Modi said in May this year, the Kashmiri saffron was given the Geographical Indication Tag or GI tag. Through this, we want to make Kashmiri saffron a globally popular brand", he said.

The PM spoke about happy increase in the population of lions and tigers in the country from 2014 to 2018 and attributed the success to the non-governmental efforts, among others, of the civil society and other organisations.

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Farmers beat thali during Mann Ki Baat

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI



December 29 as the date for the next round of talks, farmer leader Rakesh Tikait said. So far, five rounds of talks have already taken place between farmers and the Government.

176 more telecom towers damaged, Punjab CM fails to pacify farmers

Chandigarh: Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh's appeal to protesting farmers to not damage telecom infrastructure seems to have failed to deter new attacks, with more than 176 signal transmitting sites being vandalised in the last 24 hours, sources said on Sunday.

This has taken the total number of telecom tower sites damaged to 1,411, they said.

Cong readies to elect next party chief in virtual polls

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Congress is in advance stage of updating the list of party delegates and preparing the schedule to elect its next chief in a digital AICC meeting via the electoral college process in January-February 2021.

"CEA is drawing up a voters' list of around 1,500 AICC delegates and is planning to hold digital elections, marking a first — with the term of the presidency to be only for two years," AICC sources said.

The five-member CEA is headed by Madhusudan Mistry and its members are Rajesh Mishra, Krishna Byre Gowda, S Jothimani and Arvinder Singh Lovely. Lovely is one of the 23 signatories to a letter written to Sonia Gandhi in August this year seeking complete overhaul of the party and a full-time leadership to stem the steady decline of the 135-year-old organisation.

The party is likely to announce the schedule for the internal polls in the first week of January. Sources in CEA said the panel was to announce the schedule by December-end but got delayed as efforts to build consensus on the presidential candidate are still on.



A senior AICC functionary said the delay could be because of the former party chief Rahul Gandhi's visit to Italy beginning Sunday for about a week.

"We will meet in the first week of January and finalise the schedule," said CEA sources, adding after that the party's highest decision making body, Congress Working Committee (CWC), will meet to clear the name of the chief post.

At a meeting convened by Sonia early this month with dissenters and other senior leaders there was a renewed call for Rahul to return as the party chief. While Rahul said it would not be appropriate to interfere in the ongoing inter-

national election process, the dissenters are firm that they will not accept a "proxy" candidate and insisted that polls should be held at all levels, including the CWC.

As per the Congress constitution, 12 of the 25 CWC members have to be elected by All India Congress Committee (AICC) delegates and the rest are appointed by the party president. The CWC has not witnessed any election in over two decades now. The last time there was an election to the CWC was in 1997 during the Kolkata plenary. Prior to that, the CWC polls took place in 1992 at the Tirupati session.

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Centre extends validity of DL, RC till Mar 31

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Centre on Sunday extended the validity of vehicular documents like driving licences, registration certificates, permits etc., till March 31, 2021 in the light of need to prevent spread of Covid-19.

The Union Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH) has issued directives to the States and Union Territory administrations in the regard.

"Taking into consideration the need to prevent the spread of Covid-19, it is further advised that the validity of all of the above referred documents may be treated to be valid till March 31, 2021. This covers all documents whose validity has expired since February 1, 2020 or would expire by March 31, 2021."

enforcement authorities are advised to treat such documents valid till March 31, 2021. "This will help out citizens in availing transport related services, while maintaining social distancing," the statement said. MoRTH had earlier issued advisories regarding extension of validity of documents related to Motor Vehicles Act, 1988 and Central Motor Vehicle Rules, 1989. It was advised that the validity of fitness, permit (all types), license, registration or any other concerned document(s) may be treated to be valid till December 31, 2020. Two days earlier the Delhi High Court had suggested to the Delhi Government to give more time to people to obtain colour-coded fuel stickers and high-security registration plates (HSRP) before it starts fining them.

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TN setback for BJP! ADMK says no allies in next Govt

PNS ■ CHENNAI

The possibility of an AIADMK- BJP alliance suffered a major setback on Sunday as the former made it clear in unequivocal terms that there would be no coalition Government in Tamil Nadu in the aftermath of the upcoming assembly election.

"It will be an AIADMK Government led by Edappadi Palaniswami and there is no place for our electoral allies in the Government," declared KP Munusami, Rajya Sabha member and a senior leader of the party. He was addressing the meeting convened by the party leadership to launch AIADMK's election campaign 2021. Interestingly, Munusami did not mention the name NDA part-

ners even once in his speech which was heard in rapt attention by Chief Minister Palaniswami and his deputy O Panneerselvam.

The AIADMK had taken note of BJP leader Murugan's statement the other day that the name of the NDA's Chief Ministerial candidate has to be endorsed by JP Nadda, BJP's national president.

Munusami also declared that AIADMK would not yield or compromise with its stance on Dravidianism. "There is no place for nationalist parties in our alliance" declared the AIADMK leader amidst thunderous applause from the party delegates.

The AIADMK had made it known in the month of August that Tamil Nadu would not have three-language policy and

the State would shun Hindi.

He hinted that the BJP should accept that AIADMK was the senior partner, endorse the candidature of Palaniswami or the saffron party may reconsider its electoral options for the 2021 polls. Though Munusami did not mention BJP by name directly, it was clear that the message was intended for the national party that led the Central Government.

"Be it a national party or State party,....the Government will be led by the AIADMK. There is no necessity for a coalition Government. If any political party comes forward for an alliance arrangement with an idea of a coalition Government, let them please think about it," he said.

Saradha tainted firm's salaries paid from CM relief fund: CBI to SC

IANs ■ WEST BENGAL

In a development which may further increase the political heat in West Bengal where Assembly polls are slated early next year, the CBI in a contempt plea in the Saradha chit fund scam has informed the Supreme Court that the Chief Minister's Relief Fund of West Bengal regularly paid for a period of 23 months, purportedly towards the salaries of employees of Tara TV which was under investigation for being part of Saradha Group of companies.

In an application, the CBI said the CM Relief fund has regularly paid the amounts — at the rate of Rs 27 lakh per month — for a period of 23 months from May 2013 to April 2015." It is submitted that the said amounts were pur-

portedly given towards salary payments of the employees of the said media company that was under investigation being part of group companies of Saradha Group of Companies," said the application.

A total of ₹ 6.21 crore was paid to the Tara TV Employees Welfare Association from the Chief Minister Relief Fund of West Bengal. The CBI said in order to further look into the gravely suspicious payments to a private media entity, a letter dated October 16, 2018 was written to the Chief Secretary, West Bengal to provide information about the constitution and functioning of the Chief Minister's Relief Fund.

Despite repeated efforts, the State Government has parted with incomplete and evasive replies, said the CBI.

Continued on Page 2

CAPSULE

PM TO FLAG OFF FIRST DRIVERLESS TRAIN

New Delhi: Prime Minister Narendra Modi will flag off the country's first ever fully-automated driverless train service on the Magenta Line of the Delhi Metro on Monday that will herald a new era of enhanced mobility driven by cutting-edge technology.



NITISH'S CLOSE AIDE RCP SINGH JD(U) CHIEF

Patna: RCP Singh, a close confidant of Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar, was on Sunday chosen as the new president of Janata Dal (United). Kumar had proposed the name of Singh for the top post, which was then approved by other members during the party's national executive meeting, a senior leader told PTI.

RCP Singh becomes new JD(U) president

Patna: Bureaucrat-turned politician Ram Chandra Prasad Singh, better known by his initials RCP, owes his rise to become the president of the Janata Dal (United) to Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar.

Singh, a close confidant of Kumar, was on Sunday chosen as the new president of the JD(U).

At the party's national executive meeting, Kumar proposed the name of Singh for the top post and it was then approved by other members.

The chief minister, who was re-elected as the JD(U) president in 2019 for three years, gave up the post in favour of Singh, its leader in the Rajya Sabha.

The man who prefers to keep a low profile was so far the general secretary (organisation) of the regional party.

The 1984 batch IAS officer of Uttar Pradesh cadre has been with Kumar since his stint as the Railway minister in the government led by late Atal Bihari Vajpayee.

When Kumar returned to the Bihar politics becoming chief minister in November 2005, Singh too came to his native state and became Principal Secretary to the CM.

Months before retirement from service, he quit the job and joined politics in 2010. Kumar soon made him a member of the Rajya Sabha and he continues to be part of the Upper House of Parliament.

A man of a few words, Singh loves to stay in the shadow of his master (Kumar) with whom he shares not only the Kurmi caste affiliation but also close personal bondage.

With the JD(U) passing through hard times losing its "elder brother" status to the BJP in the NDA in Bihar after

not faring well in the recently concluded assembly election, the task is cut out for the 62-year-old Singh to strengthen the organisation as well as deal astutely with the saffron party.

The JD(U) could win only 43 seats in the Bihar polls, down from 71 in the last elections held in 2015. The BJP, on the other hand, bagged 74 seats to help the NDA retain power in the state.

The saffron party kept its promise of making Kumar a chief minister irrespective of numbers scored by the partner parties, but Kumar lost the sheen which he enjoyed in the ruling coalition since the Vajpayee-LK Advani era. The exodus of six of the seven JD(U) MLAs in Arunachal Pradesh to the BJP and the upcoming polls in neighbouring West Bengal are immediate challenges for the new JD(U) president. Polls in West Bengal, which is due in April-May next year, also came up for discussion at the national executive meeting.

Born on July 6, 1958, at Mustafapur in Nalanda district, Singh did his schooling from a School at Hussainpur in the same district.

He graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree in History from Patna College and did Master of Arts from Jawaharlal Nehru University.

Singh married Girija Singh on 21 May 1982, and they have two daughters. One of his daughters, Lipi Singh, is a 2016 batch IPS officer.

She had hit the national headlines when the police opened fire on a group of people going for immersion of goddess Durga idol in Munger district in October. In the face of raging protests over the event, she was removed as the district SP on the order of the Election Commission. **PTI**

PMC Bank case: ED summons Sanjay Raut's wife for questioning

■ MUMBAI

Close on the heels the agency issuing summons to senior NCP leader Eknath Khadse in a Pune land scam case, the Enforcement Directorate (ED) has summoned Shiv Sena MP and MP Sanjay Raut's wife Varsha Raut to appear before it on December 29 in the PMC Bank money laundering case.

Informed sources in the agency said on Sunday that the latest was the third summons issued to Varsha by the ED in the PMC Bank money laundering case. She

had earlier been summoned by the ED on December 11 and one more occasion earlier. She had skilled the ED's two earlier two summons.

There was no reaction from Raut in this regard. Nor was there any information available from the ED about the nature of involvement of Varsha in the scam. The ED had earlier summoned Khadse to appear before it on December 30 in connection with an alleged MIDC land scam in Pune. Khadse had received summons from the ED two months quit the BJP and joined

the NCP. Earlier, the agency had summoned the NCP's senior MLA Pratap Sarnaik in connection with another money laundering probe.

The Sjhiv Sena and NCP are constituents of the MVA government in Maharashtra. The summons issued by the ED to Sarnaik, Khadse and Vasha Raut are being seen as "acts of vindictiveness" by the BJP-led Union government.

On his part, BJP leader and former MP Kirit Somaiya demanded to know from Raut if the latter's family was a beneficiary in the scam.

"I heard about the ED notice

to Sanjay Raut Family. Will Mr Raut tell us, is his family beneficiary? Whether earlier any inquiry, notices received? 10 lacs Depositors are sufferers. If ED wants any information Political Protection is not a healthy idea. All wants revival of PMC Bank," Somaiya tweeted. He also released a video on social media.

It may be recalled that on September 24 last year placed Punjab & Maharashtra Cooperative (PMC) Bank Ltd under regulatory restrictions, following the detection of the scam.

The ED registered a case of

money laundering against Housing Development Infrastructure Ltd (HDIL) promoter Rakesh Kumar Wadhawan, his son Sarang Wadhawan, Waryam Singh and Joy Thomas, the then Chairman and Managing Director of PMC Bank Ltd, respectively and others on the basis of an FIR registered by the Mumbai Police's Economic Offences Wing in September last year. The FIR was registered for causing wrongful loss to the tune of Rs 4,355 crore to PMC Bank and corresponding gain to themselves.

3,314 more test +ve in Maha

■ MUMBAI

In an increase in the number of Covid-19 infections and fatalities, Maharashtra recorded 3314 new infected cases and 66 infections on Sunday.

A day after infections dipped to 2854 and deaths in Maharashtra came down to 60, there was marginal increase in the deaths and deaths on Sunday.

With 3314 fresh infections reported on Sunday, the total number of infections in Maharashtra climbed from 19,16,236 to 19,19,550. Similarly, with 66 new deaths, the Covid-19 toll in the state rose from 49189 to 49,255.

As 2124 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 went up to 18,09,948. The recovery rate in the state dropped marginally from 94.34 per cent to 94.29 per cent.

With 8 new deaths, the total number of deaths went up from 11,068 to

11,076, while the infected cases rose by 578 to trigger a jump in the total infections from 290336 to 2,90,914.

Meanwhile, the number of "active cases" total cases in the state rose from 58,091 to 59,214. The fatality rate in the state stood at 2.57 per cent.

Pune district, which continued to be the worst-affected city-district in Maharashtra, saw the total number of cases increase from 3,70,049 to 3,70,635, while the total number of deaths in Pune remained static at 7725.

Thane district remained in the third spot --after Pune and Mumbai -- after the total number of infections rose from 2,52, 629 to 2,53,012, while the total deaths climbed from 5547 to 5551.

Of the 1,25,02,554 samples sent to laboratories, 19,19,550 have tested positive (15.35 per cent) for COVID-19 until Sunday.

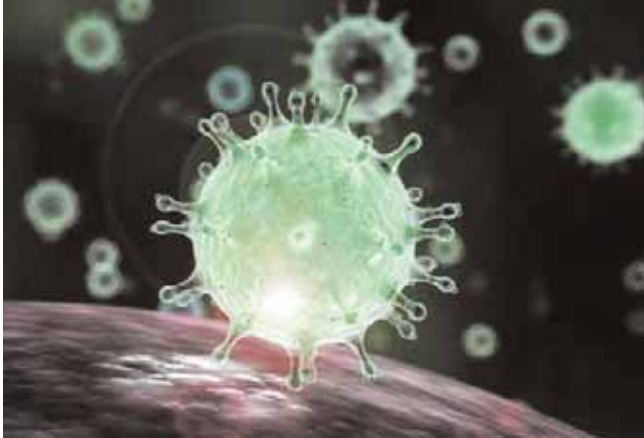
Currently, 4,57,385 people are in home quarantine while 3,323 people are in institutional quarantine.

Recoveries stay marginally ahead of new Covid-19 cases in J&K

Jammu: Recoveries remained marginally ahead of new coronavirus cases in J&K on Sunday as the total number of people infected with Covid-19 crossed the 120,000 mark in the Union Territory.

An official bulletin said on Sunday, 260 people tested positive -- 141 in the Jammu division and 119 in the Kashmir division -- while 264 patients were discharged from different hospitals after recovery within the last 24 hours.

The total number of people infected with coronavirus stood at 120,137 out of which



114,986 have recovered, while 1,869 have succumbed so far, including two on Sunday.

The UT has 3,282 active cases, out of which 1,667 are in the Jammu division and 1,615 in the Kashmir division. **IANs**

We saw spirit of Atmanirbhar Bharat in 2020, claims Modi

From Page 1

India has seen a 60 per cent rise in the leopard population between 2014-2018. In 2014, the leopard population in India

was around 7,900. This rose to 12,852 in 2019. Their population has increased in most parts of the country, especially in Central India," Modi said.

Saradha tainted firm's salaries paid from CM...

From Page 1

The CBI cited the High Court order which ordered that the "salary of the employees should be paid from the available funds" and it nowhere states that employees of a private TV channel can be paid out of State funds collected in the name of Chief Minister's relief work.

"The Court order expressly states that the employees are to be paid out of the funds of the company. The payments from CM Relief Fund, ex-facie point towards a larger conspiracy and nexus," said the application.

Pointing the needle of suspicion at Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee in the scam, the CBI said: "Communication between the CBI and State Authorities will show that there has been a concerted effort to evade, avoid and to escape the process of law and a conscious effort on part of the authorities to scuttle the investigation." The CBI pointed at the examination of former Rajya

Sabha MP Kunal Kumar Ghosh, one of the accused in the case, by Enforcement Directorate during October 2013 revealed that the Chief Minister and promoter of Saradha Group - Sudipta Sen, had very good relationship."It is submitted that the same establishes that the Chief Minister used to talk to Sudipta Sen using phone of Kunal Kumar Ghosh," said the application.

The investigating agency said the call detail record of two numbers of Sen spanning for one year reveals that he and Ghosh had contacted 298 times on one number and 9 times on another number. Seeking custodial interrogation of former Kolkata Police Commissioner Rajiv Kumar, the CBI said investigation has also revealed that evidence, which connected the ruling dispensation of West Bengal, financially and protecting with Saradha group of companies was concealed by the Bidhannagar police under stewardship of Kumar, in order to shield and

save everyone concerned.

Ghosh's examination as witness by the Enforcement Directorate, during October 2013, revealed that respondent Kumar was in active contact with officers of ED during the course of examination of arrested accused persons, Sudipta Sen, Debjani Mukherjee or of witnesses Ghosh and others carried out by the Enforcement Directorate during September to November 2013.

"It was ensured by the officials that grave facts narrated by these accused persons or witnesses must not be taken on record as part of investigation with a purpose to shield the influential persons," said the CBI. The CBI said more evidence has emerged substantiating further the active connivance of Kumar, the then Commissioner of Police, Bidhannagar, in shielding and protecting the influential co-accused persons who had promoted the illegal business activities of the group of Ponzi companies and benefited from

the illegally collected funds.

The CBI also cited examination of Saifur Rehman, an employee of Saradha group of companies.

"It is submitted that as per the said statement (by Rehman), when the Chief Minister, West Bengal contested for MLA seat, Sudipta Sen was forced to sponsor all the Pujas of Bhawanipur, Kolkata. Rehman further stated that 'Jangalmahal' project was flagged off by Chief Minister, West Bengal in a ceremony held at Writers Building, Kolkata," said the application. In 2013, during Kumar's tenure as the Bidhannagar police commissioner, the scam was unearthed. Kumar was part of the SIT set up by state government to probe the scam, before the top court handed over the investigation to CBI in 2014. The top court, in November last year, had sought the response of the IPS officer on the CBI's appeal against the anticipatory bail granted to Kumar in the case by the Calcutta High Court.

Cong readies to elect next party...

From Page 1

A CEA member quoted explained the panel is expected to wind up the organisational polls by February-end as per the deadline to inform the Election Commission of the completion of the process. He said that in view of the Covid-19 pandemic, the CEA has decided to restrict the electoral college to AICC members only. "We will not include the co-opted members this time. So, the electoral college will have around 800 members only," he added.

The CEA member said that the digital IDs of the AICC members are almost ready to enable the panel to hold a virtual session in case it is difficult to have the physical presence for such a convention due to Covid-19.

Moreover, according to sources, hectic parleys have begun for a possible takeover of the UPA by NCP supremo Sharad Pawar as chairperson in place of Sonia Gandhi. Shiv Sena which is part of Congress NCP alliance Government in Maharashtra too has backed Sharad Pawar's candidacy for UPA chairperson.

New Okhla Industrial Development Authority
Administrative Building, Sector-6, Noida-201301 (U.P.)
Website : www.noidaauthorityonline.com

E-TENDER NOTICE
E-Tenders are invited from firms/contractors registered with UPLC Lucknow for the following jobs against which bids can be uploaded and same shall be opened/downloaded as per schedule mentioned. The details and conditions of all tenders are available on Noida Authority's official website: www.noidaauthorityonline.com & <http://etender.up.nic.in>
Please ensure to see these website for any changes/amendments & corrigendum etc.

A) (1) 42/SM-Jal-II/ET/20-21. Disposal of Storm Water lin slip Road Under Mahamaya flyover Sector-44 Site) Noida.
Cost Rs. 89.90 Lacs

(2) 43/SM-Jal-II/ET/20-21. D/o Village (Annual R/o Bowl Assly and Tubeshaft for Network Village-Illabans & Asgarpur) Noida. (For Two Years) Cost Rs. 18.42 Lacs

The above tenders can be uploaded by date 11.01.2021 upto 5.00 PM. Pre-qualification shall be opened/downloaded on date 12.01.2021 at 11.00 AM.

(M.K. JAIN)
Office SENIOR MANAGER (JAL)-III
Sector-39 NOIDA
CLEAN, GREEN, SAFE & SECURE NOIDA

AFFORDABLE HOUSING SCHEME
Under Affordable Housing Policy 2013 of Haryana Government

APPLICATION
Application are invited from general public in Re-draw for booking of Residential Apartments in the Affordable Housing Project proposed to be developed as per terms and conditions of the Policy prescribed by the Town & Country Planning Department, Government of Haryana vide notification no PF-27/48921 dated 19.08.2013 (detail is available at the Department website tcharyana.gov.in).

PAYMENT TERMS
1. With application: Booking amount, i.e. 5% of the total cost of flat.
2. On Allotment: Additional 20% of the total cost of flat.
3. Balance 75% of the amount in six equal half yearly installments over three year period.
4. After fixation of date for draw of lots, an advertisement shall be issued by the Developer informing the applicants about the details regarding date/time and venue of the draw of lots in the same newspaper in which the original advertisement was issued.
5. For detailed criteria and time-frame to be adopted for scrutiny and allotment, the applicants may also refer to the details in the Affordable Housing Policy 2013 notified vide no. PF-27/48921 dated 19.08.2013 (available at the Department website, tcharyana.gov.in).

PROJECT DETAILS
PROJECT: M/S JOTINDRA STEEL AND TUBES LTD.
APPROVALS: Licence No. 105/2019-10.09.2019
PROVISIONS: Project Area 4.681 Acres LOCATION: Sector-45, Faridabad
No. of Flats 696
No. of Towers 13
Sale Price: Rs. 4000/- PSF + (Rs. 500/- PSF upto 100 sq.ft. balcony) + GST.

SPECIFICATIONS
Drawing/Lobby/Flooring: Floor Tiles/IPS Wall/Ceiling: OBD Bed Room Floor: Tiles/IPS Kitchen Floor: Tiles/IPS Wall/Ceiling: Tiles upto 2 feet high above Marble/Tile Counter and OBD in balance area Counter Top/Platform: Stone/Tiles/Plaster Finish Fittings & Fixtures: Single Bow Stainless Steel Sink & C/F Fittings Balconies Floor: Tiles/IPS Toilet & Bath Floor: Tiles/IPS Wall: Tiles/OBD Doors & Windows: M.S./UPVC/Aluminium/Fish Doors Door Frames & Window Frames: Hardwood/MS-Z Section/UPVC/Concrete/Aluminium frame windows etc. OTHER DEVELOPMENT: Common Area Flooring: Stone/Tiles/IPS

APARTMENT DETAILS
S.No. Type Carpet Area (in sq.ft.) Balcony Area (in sq.ft.) Sale Price (in INR) Booking Amount
1. A 645.80 120 26,33,200 1,33,000
2. B 645.80 120 26,33,200 1,33,000
3. D 454.60 100 19,88,400 94,355
4. E 433.14 100 17,82,560 90,000

APPLICATION TIMELINES
Application can be procured & submitted at: M/S JOTINDRA STEEL AND TUBES LTD., 14/3, Mathura Road, Faridabad, Haryana-121010 by paying an application fee of Rs. 1000/- (Incl. GST)
Last date of submission for booking is **15 February 2021**
ELIGIBILITY: 1. Any person can apply but person which includes his/her spouse or his/her dependent children who do not own any flat/plot in any HUDA developed colony/sector or any licensed colony in any of the Urban Areas in Haryana, UT of Chandigarh and NCT Delhi shall be given first preference in allotment of flats.
2. The applicant should not be debarred from entering into legally binding contract under any prevailing law.
3. Any applicant can make only one application. Any successful applicant under this policy shall not be eligible for allotment of any other flat under this policy in any other colony. In case, he/she is successful in more than one colony, he/she will have choice of retaining only one flat.
ALLOTMENT CRITERIA: 1. The allotment of apartments shall be done through draw of lots in the presence of a committee consisting of Deputy Commissioner or his representative (at least of the cadre of Haryana Civil Services), Senior Town Planner (Circle office), DTP of the concerned district and the representative of coloniser concerned.
2. After fixation of date for draw of lots, an advertisement shall be issued by the Developer informing the applicants about the details regarding date/time and venue of the draw of lots in the same newspaper in which the original advertisement was issued.
3. For detailed criteria and time-frame to be adopted for scrutiny and allotment, the applicants may also refer to the details in the Affordable Housing Policy 2013 notified vide no. PF-27/48921 dated 19.08.2013 (available at the Department website, tcharyana.gov.in).

Jotindra Steel & Tubes Ltd., 14/3, Mathura Rd., Faridabad-121010, Haryana
Email: info@sarvome.com | Phone: 9599297309

TEMPORARY CANCELLATION AND DIVERSION OF TRAINS
In order to upgrade the infrastructure Delhi Division of Northern Railway will undertake the Non-interlocking work in connection with commissioning of Platform No. 8 at Hazrat Nizamuddin Railway station. To execute this work Delhi Division will take suitable traffic blocks of different durations from 28.12.2020 to 31.12.2020. During this period following trains will be cancelled and diverted on the dates shown against each:-

CANCELLATION OF TRAINS	
Train No. & Name	Date of cancellation (from the Originating Station)
01841 Khajuraho-Kurukshetra Express	28.12.2020
01842 Kurukshetra-Khajuraho Express	28.12.2020 & 29.12.2020
02059/02060 Kota Jn.- Hazrat Nizamuddin-Kota Jn. Jan Shatabdi	28.12.2020 to 31.12.2020
02127 Jabalpur-Hazrat Nizamuddin M P Sampark Kranti	30.12.2020
02128 Hazrat Nizamuddin-Jabalpur M P Sampark Kranti	31.12.2020
02173 Hazrat Nizamuddin-Jabalpur Shridham Superfast Express	30.12.2020 & 31.12.2020
02174 Jabalpur-Hazrat Nizamuddin Shridham Superfast Express	29.12.2020 & 30.12.2020
02263 Pune Jn.-Hazrat Nizamuddin Duranto Express Special	29.12.2020
02264 Hazrat Nizamuddin-Pune Jn. Duranto Express Special	28.12.2020
02413 Madgaon-Hazrat Nizamuddin Rajdhani Special	28.12.2020
02917 Ahmedabad Jn.-Hazrat Nizamuddin Special	28.12.2020 & 30.12.2020
02918 Hazrat Nizamuddin-Ahmedabad Jn. Special	29.12.2020 & 31.12.2020
02963 Hazrat Nizamuddin-Udaipur Superfast Special	28.12.2020 to 31.12.2020
02964 Udaipur-Hazrat Nizamuddin Superfast Special	28.12.2020 to 30.12.2020

DIVERSION OF TRAIN

Train No. & Name	Diverted Route	Date (from the Originating Station)
00762 Hazrat Nizamuddin-Renigunta Jn.	Via New Delhi- Delhi Jn.-Ghaziabad-Mitawal-Agra Cantt. instead of Hazrat Nizamuddin-Palwal	31.12.2020

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

For any kind of information such as Time-Table/Diversion of trains, the passengers are requested to contact Railway Enquiry No. 139 or visit Indian Railways website <https://enquiry.indianrail.gov.in> or may refer to NTES App please.

Security Helpline No. 182 | Integrated Helpline No. 139

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Public Relations - Northern Railway

Bone-chilling cold to...

From Page 1

A cold wave occurs in plains when the minimum temperature is 10 degrees Celsius or below, and is 4.5 notches lesser than the season's normal for two consecutive days. In the winter season, the cold wave conditions prevail mainly along the Indo-Gangetic Plains.

"A western disturbance has approached North India this weekend and is likely to continue causing widespread rain and snowfall across Jammu & Kashmir, Ladakh, and isolated parts of Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Punjab and Haryana till Monday. As the system moves on, cold and dry northwesterly winds are likely to strengthen at lower levels across the plains of northwest India from Tuesday onwards," the IMD said.

The IMD has also forecasted that 'Ground Frost' conditions are likely in isolated pockets over Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh, Delhi, Rajasthan and West Madhya Pradesh during December 29-31 whereas cold day conditions are likely over Punjab during next 24 hours. "Dense to very dense fog are likely to occur over Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh and Delhi in morning hours and dense fog also likely over Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand and Uttar Pradesh in morning hours during on December 29-31.

Biting cold conditions persisted in Haryana and Punjab with Gurdaspur reeling at a minimum temperature of 2 degrees Celsius. Gurdaspur was the coldest place in Punjab, while Narnaul, at a low of 3.3 degrees Celsius, was Haryana's coldest place. In Punjab, Pathankot, Halwara and Faridkot recorded a low of 3.7 degrees Celsius, 5.7 degrees Celsius and 4.6 degrees Celsius. Himachal Pradesh's Keylong, Kalpa, Manali, Mandi, Solan, Sundernagar and Bhuntar shivered at sub-zero temperatures. The cold wave intensified in Kashmir with the minimum temperature dropping across the Valley to stay several notches below the freezing point on Sunday. The weather has remained dry and cold across Kashmir since the snowfall on December 12, with the night temperature staying several degrees below the freezing point. The MeT office has forecast light rain or snow in the Kashmir Valley over the next three days. The officials said Srinagar - the summer capital of Jammu & Kashmir - recorded a low of minus 5.2 degrees Celsius - down from the previous night's minus 3.7 degrees Celsius. Gulmarg in north Kashmir recorded a low of minus 7.2 degrees Celsius - down from minus 6.5 degrees Celsius the previous night. It was the coldest recorded place in the Valley.

Churk in Sonbhadra district in UP, was the coldest place with a minimum temperature of 2.6 degrees Celsius. Northern parts of Saurashtra and Kutch is also likely to experience cold wave conditions on December 28-29. Mount Abu, the only hill station of Rajasthan, was recorded the coldest place in the State at 2 degrees Celsius even as several places saw an increase of two-three notches in night temperatures.

Centre extends validity of DL, RC till Mar 31

From Page 1

A bench of Justices Siddharth Mridul and Talwant Singh said the Delhi government should not create panic among the citizens which would make some people take advantage of the situation.

The court also said that advertising the requirement for stickers and HSRP by the Delhi government in August this year was not the ideal time

THE PIONEER CLASSIFIEDS

THANKS GIVING

Thank you St. Jude for all Blessings. Upendra.
PD(8848)C
Thank you Holy Spirit for your Blessings.
PD(8849)C

PUBLIC NOTICE
Notice is hereby given on behalf of Mr. Aarti Ravinder Kumar who is purchasing the Entire Second Floor, Entire Third Floor with terrace, of property no. 453 & 454, feels ram market bhoil nagar out of Kharsa No. 428, situated in the abadi of Lal dora in village masjid mohd. New Delhi-110049 from Mrs. Kamlesh Kaur Arora W/o Late Mr. Joginder Singh Arora who is owner vide Relinquishment Deed dated 30.09.2013 registered vide doc No. 5140, book no. 1, vol no. 436, pages 120-123, dated 30.09.2013, SRYA A Huz. Khos. New Delhi and same to be finance & mortgage by Aditya Birla Housing Finance Limited. That, the Surviving Member Certificate of Late Mr. Joginder Singh S/o Mr. Chain Singh is not available so to comply the requirements of BANKINGFC, we give this public notice that if any person(s) having any objection regarding ownership and/or creating mortgage of the said property is/are hereby requested to intimate in writing to the undersigned within a week at below address.
Lucem Legal LLP
269, Rama House, Ground Floor, Masjid Mohd. Opp. Uday Park, South Ext., New Delhi-49, Contact 9011-40046316

Kejriwal visits Singhu Border

Joins ‘Safar-e-Shahadat’ Kirtan Darbaar

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal visited Singhu border and joined the ‘Safar-e-Shahadat’ Kirtan Darbaar organized by the Punjabi Academy of the Delhi government at Guru Tegh Bahadur Memorial in the memory of the martyrdom of four Sahibzaade and Mata Gujri Kaur Ji.

Addressing the farmers protesting against the three farm laws of the Central government, Kejriwal said that more than 40 people have lost their lives protesting against the contentious farm laws of the Centre.

The chief minister said that these farmers are being called terrorists and anti-nationals without thinking that if these farmers are terrorists, who will feed the nation?

Kejriwal said that various parties and leaders have only betrayed the farmers for the last 70 years and now they want to take farming away from the farmers and hand it over to big companies.

“The farmers who are sitting on the borders today with their families are sitting here for their survival because if the big companies take over farming, the farmers will be left with nothing,” he said.

“Te Central government fielded all their big leaders, ministers and CMs but none of them could tell the benefit of the laws to the farmers, since these laws are for the benefit of the big companies and not the farmers,” he said.

Kejriwal challenged the

Centre to send their ministers who are experts on these farm laws and have a public debate with the leaders of the farmer unions after which the whole nation will get to know how dangerous these farm laws are.

The chief minister also appealed to the Centre government to not let any more farmers sacrifice their lives and said that the Centre should repeal these farm laws as soon as possible, guarantee MSPs in the law, and end the struggle of the farmers.



Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal visits Guru Teg Bahadur Memorial Park at Singhu Border during the Martyr day of Mata Gujri Kaur in New Delhi on Sunday

Man shot dead as two groups clash

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A man was shot dead while some others were injured when two groups clashed with each other after a shop employee was beaten up. Police said that the incident took place on Saturday in East Delhi’s Trilokpuri area and several rounds were fired between the groups, who are also neighbours.

The deceased has been identified as Shahid. According to Jasmeet Singh, the Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP), East district, the clash took place at around 10 PM on Saturday when Kasim and Shahid, belonging to one group, and the other faction led by Mannan clashed over the issue of beating up of a shop employee.

“Bullets were fired by both the groups and some people were injured in the firing. They have been admitted to a hospital. Shahid succumbed to his injuries during the treatment,” said the Deputy Commissioner of Police.

“A case under relevant sections of Indian Penal Code (IPC) has been registered and there is no communal angle involved in the incident,” said the Deputy Commissioner of Police.

AAP councillors protest at residence of all three mayors

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) councillors and hundreds of its volunteers held a protest at the residence of all three mayors of the BJP-ruled municipal Corporations on Sunday, demanding a CBI enquiry into the alleged scam of Rs 2,400 crore in the BJP-ruled North Delhi Municipal Corporation.

The AAP councilors and members under the leadership of party’s ‘Leaders of Opposition’ (LoP) in north Corporation Vikas Goel, Manoj Tyagi, LoP in East Delhi Municipal Corporation and Prem Singh Chouhan, LoP in South Delhi Municipal Corporation surrounded the houses of the mayors of the three MCDs and raised slogans against the BJP and the mayors, demanding a CBI inquiry into the Rs 2500 crores scam in the BJP-ruled corporation.

Senior AAP leader and MCD in-charge Durgesh Pathak said, “The BJP has been in power in the MCD for the last 15 years. In these 15 years, the BJP did not do anything other than corruption. The people of Delhi handed over the MCD to the BJP for the responsibility of cleaning Delhi which is one of the most important works of the MCD, along with hundreds of other responsibilities that come under the ambit of the MCD but you can find

Modi to flag off first driverless train today

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will inaugurate India’s first ever driverless train operations on the Delhi Metro’s Magenta Line (Janakpuri West – Botanical Garden) and National Common Mobility Card (NCMC) services on the Airport Express Line via video conferencing on Monday.

These innovations are going to herald a new era of travelling comfort and enhanced mobility for the National Capital Region (NCR)’s residents. With the commencement of driverless trains on the Delhi Metro’s Magenta Line, DMRC will enter the elite league of seven percent of world’s Metro networks which can operate without drivers.

After starting driverless



services on the 37 kilometre long Magenta Line (Janakpuri West – Botanical Garden), another major corridor of the Delhi Metro, the 57 kilometre long Pink Line (Majlis Park – Shiv Vihar) will also have driverless operations by the mid of 2021, a senior DMRC official

These innovations are going to herald a new era of travelling comfort and enhanced mobility for the NCR’s residents

said.

After this, Delhi Metro will have a driverless network length of about 94 kilometres, which will be approximately nine percent of the world’s total driverless Metro network.

The driverless trains will be fully automated which will

require minimum human intervention and will eliminate the possibilities of human errors. Delhi Metro has been a pioneer in introducing technology driven solutions for passenger comfort and this is another step in the same direction.

“The National Common Mobility Card, which will be fully operationalised on the Airport Express Line will also be a major milestone as anyone carrying a RuPay -Debit Card issued recently in the last 18 months by 23 banks (all these are NCMC compliant as per directions of the Department of Financial Services, Government of India) from any part of the country will be able to travel on the Airport Express line using that card. The same facility will become available on the entire Delhi Metro network by 2022,” he said.

The Delhi Metro currently operates on a network of about 390 kilometres with 285 stations spanning 11 corridors (including NOIDA – Greater NOIDA). Pre Covid, about 60 lakh journeys were being performed everyday on the Delhi

Metro network making it the mass transportation backbone of the National Capital Region (NCR).

The Metro rail scenario in the entire nation has undergone a massive transformation in the last six years.

While in 2014, only 248 kilometres of Metro lines were operational in five cities, presently 702 kilometres of Metro lines are operational in 18 cities in India.

In the days to come, over a thousand kilometres of new lines shall be added and about 27 cities in the country will have Metro connectivity. By 2022, when the nation celebrates its 75th Independence Day, India will have a combined Metro network of over a thousand kilometres which will carry more than a crore passengers every day.

Over 800 arrests made, 5,000 kg drugs recovered

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

With focus to make Delhi ‘Drug Free’, the Delhi Police organised several operations and arrested around 882 people and they also recovered more than 5,000 kilogram (kg) of narcotics substance this year. Police said that several Nepali and Nigerian drug suppliers active in Delhi have also been arrested in the National Capital.

The data shared by the Delhi Police showed that they have registered 726 cases and recovered more than 5000 kg drugs.

According to the data, police have recovered 23.6 kg charas, 29.184 kg opium, 4205.939 kg ganja, 84.932 kg heroin, 699.538 kg poppy head and 1.035 kg cocaine.

“Around 10.46 lakh tablets of Tramadol and Nitrazepam, 19560 bottles of Codeine based syrup bottles and 500 kilogram Ganja trafficked from Andhra Pradesh was seized by the Narcotics Cell of Crime Branch. Two persons have been arrested indulging in trafficking of ganja and charas from the USA through courier using “Dark-Web” by the crime branch. Around 5 kg of charas was also seized from two Nepali citizens by the narcotics cell of the crime branch,” said Anil Mittal, the Additional Public Relation Officer (APRO) of Delhi Police.



“This year, Special Cell seized around 66 kg heroin and 27 kg of Opium. Several Nepali and Nigerian citizens active in supplying and selling drugs in the city were also arrested by the police this year. Beside them, several notorious drug suppliers including Sharafat Sheikh, Bishan alias Natiya, Rocky, Javed alias Sulemani, involved in drug trafficking previously were arrested this year,” said the APRO.

“In order to curb drug menace, the police had been working on the twin objective of taking focused action against the drug suppliers and simultaneously educating the general public about drug abuse,” said the APRO.

“This year based on the past experience, a comprehensive strategy was formulated to take maximum action against the drug traffickers active in Delhi by involving all the field and investigating units including Crime Branch, Special Cell, and District police,” said Mittal.

“The Narcotics Cell, Crime being nodal agency of Delhi Police in all matters related to drugs started drive along with other police units with focus on busting of interstate network of drug traffickers whereas, the district police focused on the arrest of local drug peddlers and suppliers at police station level,” said Mittal.

“The concerted action of different wings of Delhi Police

In order to curb drug menace, the police had been working on the twin objective of taking focused action against the drug suppliers and simultaneously educating the general public about drug abuse



has led to busting of networks and arrest of drug suppliers having links with drug suppliers of different states like Uttar Pradesh (UP), Madhya Pradesh, Haryana, Rajasthan, Odisha, Andhra Pradesh and Manipur,” said Mittal.

“Even during the lockdown period, the police kept the pressure mounted on drug suppliers, developed information about drug traffickers and took timely action. Mapping of the hotspots was done and teams constituted with specific tasks to focus on those areas and to arrest the drug traffickers,” said Mittal.

GURUGRAM SUICIDE CASE FIR filed against Faridabad cops

PARVESH SHARMA ■ GURUGRAM

In the alleged suicide case of a 22-year-old woman Asha, which took place on Saturday morning at Rajendra Park area, the Gurugram police late on Saturday night, registered a case of abetment of suicide and other relevant sections of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) against more than four policemen including a Sub-Inspector Rajesh of Cyber Crime police station Sector- 19 of the Faridabad police.

The station house officer (SHO) of Surrender Singh of Rajendra Park police station has confirmed the development.

“An investigation in the matter is underway. The culprits will be arrested after an investigation,” he told The Pioneer.

Meanwhile, the body of the victim has been handed over to her family after an autopsy on Sunday.

Sandeep, the complainant in this case said, an FIR into the matter has been registered against the policemen. We are seeking a stern action against the policemen”.

“On Friday the police personnel of the Faridabad police were present at the victims house who had trashed and abused the entire family including

ing the deceased,” Sandeep alleged.

On Saturday the 22-year-old woman had allegedly committed suicide after she was thrashed and abused by the Faridabad police at her house in Rajendra Park area.

In connection with the incident the victim’s family had filed a complaint against the Faridabad police alleging it thrashed and abused the deceased and her family members.

“The cyber crime police station team of the Faridabad police conducted a raid in a house located at Rajendra Park area in Gurugram on Friday night around 11.30 p.m. looking

for an accused identified as Shankar who was involved in a cheating case of Rs 6 lakh and had also helped his accomplice in escaping from the custody of the Faridabad police in Gurugram on Friday a separate case was registered against him in this matter,” said Sube Singh, spokesperson of the Faridabad police.

He said if the Gurugram police have registered a case against the Faridabad police personnel in connection with suicide case.

“We will go through to the FIR registered in Gurugram and we will also check the involvement of the policemen, Singh said.

Dense fog likely to engulf city over next few days

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Dense morning fog is likely to engulf for the next three

days and temperature will plunge on the New Year’s Eve, as the Indian Meteorological Department (IMD) on

Sunday predicted minimum temperature below four degree Celsius on December 31.

The MeT has predicted

cold wave from December 29 to January 1st.

However, on Sunday, the minimum temperature in the National Capital rose slightly under the influence of a Western Disturbance affected the upper Himalayas.

The Saffardarjung Observatory, which provides representative data for the city, recorded a minimum of 6 degrees Celsius as against 4.6 degrees Celsius on Saturday.

In weekly weather forecast, the minimum temperature will fluctuate between three degree to five degree Celsius and maximum temperature will remain at 21 degree Celsius. From January 2nd onwards, there will be foggy days ahead and the maximum temperature will be fluctuate between 20 to 22 degree Celsius.



Delhi reports 757 fresh Covid cases

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi reported 757 fresh cases on Sunday and the daily positivity rate reached to 0.01 per cent.

The Covid-19 situation in the national Capital has improved in the last several days. According to the latest health bulletin the death toll rose to 10,453 with 16 new fatalities.

The number of cases and the single-day fatality count now indicate a marked improvement in the situation since the third wave of the pandemic had hit the city in November.

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal had said that the national capital has now overcome the third wave of Covid-19 infections.

The highest single-day spike 8,593 cases till date was reported on November 11.

Soon after the third wave of the pandemic hit the national capital, daily cases had surged and containment zones count also kept mounting.

According to health bulletin the number of containment zones in Delhi has shown intermittent rise and fall in the last several days, with the figure standing at 4931 on Sunday.



India reports lowest daily Covid spike

18,732 new cases seen on Sunday; Union Health Ministry calls it landmark

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India reported its lowest daily spike in Covid infections since June at 18,732 new cases on Sunday. The Union health ministry termed this a “landmark peak in country’s infection trajectory”.

This is the second time in the week that the daily cases number has dropped below 20,000, said the Health Ministry adding that of the 1.01 crore cases, active infections stand at 2.78 lakh.

“This is the lowest after 170 days. The total active cases were 2,76,682 on 10th July, 2020. The toll has remained below 300 level in the second consecutive day while India’s Covid-19 tally of cases climbed to 1,01,87,850 on Sunday,” said the Ministry.



“Landmark peak in India’s Covid-19 trajectory as daily new cases drop to 18,732 after 6 months. India’s total active caseload has fallen to 2.78 lakh (2,78,690) today. This is the lowest after 170 days, the min-

istry tweeted.

It also said that India has reported a trend of sustained decrease in the number of active cases. “India’s present active caseload consists of just 2.74 per cent of India’s total

positive cases,” it said adding that the total recovered cases stand at 97,61,538, with 21,430 new discharges in the last 24 hours, according to health ministry tally.

The gap between recovered

and active cases, that is steadily increasing, is nearing 95 lakh and presently stands at 94,82,848, it said.

Maharashtra has 59,223 active cases while Kerala has 63,927 active Covid-19 cases. 72.37% of the new recovered cases were concentrated in ten States/UTs with Kerala reporting the maximum number of single day recoveries at 3,782 newly recovered cases. 1,861 people recovered in West Bengal followed by 1,764 in Chhattisgarh.

Meanwhile, a total of 16,81,02,657 samples were tested for Covid-19 up to December 26. Of these, 9,43,368 samples were tested yesterday, according to the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR)

Race for CBI chief hot up, many top cops in fray

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The race for the CBI chief post hots up with the names of Gujarat cadre IPS officer Rakesh Asthana, Kerala cadre IPS official Loknath Behera and Director General of Police of Uttar Pradesh HC Awasthi doing the rounds in bureaucratic circles.

The CBI Director RK Shukla is scheduled to retire on February 1 after completion of the fixed two-year tenure in the agency.

While Asthana, a 1984-batch IPS officer, was removed from the post of Special Director in the CBI following an ugly spat with the then agency chief Alok Verma, Behera, a 1985-batch IPS officer, was shunted out from the National Investigation Agency

(NIA) over allegations of leaking information about the arrest of Indian Mujahideen operative Yasin Bhatkhal.

Asthana is currently the Director General of the Border Security Force (BSF) and also heads the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB). Behera is currently the police chief of Kerala.

While Asthana is considered close to the top political executive at the Centre, Behera is a Kerala cadre Indian Police Service (IPS) officer. National Security Advisor Ajit Doval is also from the same cadre. Both Asthana and Behera have experience of postings in the CBI.

The possibility of granting an extension of service to the outgoing CBI boss cannot be ruled out given his handling of the agency in a non-controversial manner, especially after

the removal of the then CBI chief Alok Verma.

Uttar Pradesh police chief Awasthi, an IPS officer of 1985 batch, may emerge as a dark horse for the top post in the CBI given his 12-years of experience in the Central anti-corruption agency. He also headed the vigilance department of the State police and also enjoys proximity to UP CM, the sources said.

The posting of the CBI chief is cleared by a three-member panel headed by the Prime Minister. The Chief Justice of India and the Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha being are two other members.

Once appointed, the officer gets a fixed two-year tenure of service unless the government extends the service of an official.

Vaping increases risk for respiratory diseases by 43%

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Those who used e-cigarettes or vaping in the past are 21 per cent more likely to develop a respiratory disease while those who currently use them has a 43 per cent increased risk, a study has said.

It warned that because of vaping, there might be an increase in respiratory disease as youth and young adults age into midlife, including asthma, COPD, and other respiratory conditions.

The new study is one of the first to look at vaping in a large number of otherwise healthy people over time, examining the effects of e-cigarette use independently from other tobacco product use. The findings have appeared in journal

JAMA Network Open.

Because using e-cigarettes or (“vaping”) has been marketed as a less harmful alternative to smoking traditional cigarettes, it has been difficult to tell whether the association between vaping and disease is just a matter of smokers switching to vaping when they start experiencing health issues, pointed out the researchers.

Further, because e-cigarettes are relatively new to the scene, until recently it hasn’t been possible for researchers to conduct long-term studies tracking how vaping impacts health, they said.

“This provides some of the very first longitudinal evidence on the harms associated with e-cigarette products,” said lead study author Andrew

Stokes, assistant professor of global health at Boston University’s School of Public Health.

Evidence of the health effects of vaping, from this and other studies, “highlights the importance of standardizing documentation of e-cigarette product use in electronic health records,” said co-author Hasmeena Kathuria, a Pulmonary Center faculty member.

For this study, researchers used data on 21,618 healthy adult participants from the first four waves (2013-2018) of the nationally representative Population Assessment of Tobacco and Health (PATH), the most comprehensive national survey of tobacco and e-cigarette use to date.

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To make sure their findings weren’t accounting for cigarette smokers switching to e-cigarettes specifically because of existing health issues (rather than the vaping itself causing these issues), the researchers only included people in the study who reported having no respiratory issues when they entered PATH, adjusting for a comprehensive set of health conditions. The researchers found, overall, that former e-cigarette use was associated with a 21% increase in the risk of respiratory disease, while current e-cigarette use was associated with a 43% increase.

More specifically, current e-cigarette use was associated with a 33% increase in chronic bronchitis risk, 69% increase in emphysema risk, 57% increase in chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) risk, and 31% increase in asthma risk.

Congressmen question Rahul, Priyanka’s frequent vacations

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Amid the farmer agitation and impending organisational elections of the party, former Congress chief Rahul Gandhi left for Milan on Sunday. His absence from India comes also at a critical juncture for Congress and its Central Election Authority (CEA) which is preparing for party’s presidential elections.

His departure Italy comes a day before Congress’ foundation Day.

Several senior Congress leaders have questioned the frequent vacations by Rahul Gandhi and his sister party general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra and urged them to spare time and effort for the revival of the party.

RJD leader Shivanand



Tewari had slammed Rahul for holidaying in Shimla during the Bihar election campaign and held him responsible e for the Grand alliance narrow defeat at the hands in NDA.

After facing criticism Rahul had to cancel a two day vacation in Jaisalmer.

Both Rahul and party Chief Sonia Gandhi had also missed the parliamentary debate on the three farm laws due to Sonia Gandhi’s ill-health- necessitating her visit to



the USA. Rahul had accompanied her.

Rahul had chosen to go abroad when Congress had been exchanging barbs with the BJP over the farm laws. Punjab Congress leaders have been providing logistical support to the protesting Punjab farmers.

Rahul Gandhi had recently met President Ram Nath Kovind as part of two separate Opposition delegations, demanding the repeal of the three controversial farm laws.

Muzaffarnagar records 26 fresh Covid-19 infections

Muzaffarnagar: The son of a local BJP leader in Muzaffarnagar in Uttar Pradesh has died due to COVID-19, according to his family. Thirty-two-year-old Vinit Tyagi, the son of former BJP district president Devert Tyagi, died at a Ghaziabad hospital Saturday evening. He was cremated here on Sunday. Union minister Sanjeev Balyan, Uttar Pradesh minister Kapil Dev Aggarwal and several BJP leaders expressed their condolences over Vinit Tyagi’s death. Meanwhile, Muzaffarnagar recorded 26 more COVID-19 infections on Sunday, taking the number of active cases in the district to 369. According to District Magistrate Selva Kumari J, four inmates of the district jail were among those found infected with the virus on Sunday. *PTI*

DEBTS RECOVERY TRIBUNAL-1, DELHI
4TH FLOOR, JEEVAN TARA BUILDING,
PARLIAMENT STREET, NEW DELHI- 110001

O.A. NO. 246/2019

Bank of India Applicant
Versus
Ms. Prema Kapoor & Ors..... Defendants

To,

1. (i) Ms. Prema Kapoor D/o Mr. Krishan Kumar Kapoor Flat No. E-11/B, 2nd Floor, Kiran Garden, Uttam Nagar, New Delhi-110059. **(Defendant No. 01)**

Also at

(ii) Ms. Prema Kapoor D/o Mr. Krishan Kumar Kapoor C/o. United Health Group 4th Floor, Tower-D, 3CS Oxygen SEZ, Sector-144, Noida (U.P.) 201306

Whereas the above named applicant has instituted a case for recovery of **Rs. 22,64,379.02/-** (Rupees Twenty Two Lacs Sixty Four Thousand Three Hundred Seventy Nine & Two Paisa Only) against you and whereas it has been shown to the satisfaction of the Tribunal that it is not possible to serve you in ordinary way. Therefore, this notice is given by advertisement directing you to make appearance before Ld. Registrar on **05.04.2021 at 10.30 A.M.** (for further details kindly visit DRT website www.drttribunal.gov.in, Phone Number: **011-23748473**)

Take notice that in case of your failure to appear on the above mentioned day before this Tribunal, the case will be heard and decided in your absence.

Due to ongoing Pandemic Situation, all the matters will be taken up through Video Conferencing and for that purpose:-

(i) All the advocates/Litigants shall download the “Cisco Webex” application/Software;

(ii) “**Meeting ID**” and “**Password**” for the next date of hearing qua cases to be taken by ‘Registrar/Recovery Officer-I/and Recovery Officer-II shall be available one day prior to the next date at DRT Official Portal i.e. “**drt.gov.in**” under the Public Notice Head.

(iii) In any exigency qua that, the Advocates/ Litigants can contact the concerned official at Ph. No. 011-23748473.

Given under my hand and seal of the Tribunal on this 21st December of 2020

Respondent may contact under mention Ph. No. for further enquiry
Mr. Amit K. Dar, Ld. Registrar
DRT-1, New Delhi,
Phone No.: 011-23748473
Email : drt1delhi-dfs@nic.in

By Order of this Tribunal

For Registrar

DEBTS RECOVERY TRIBUNAL-1, DELHI
4TH FLOOR, JEEVAN TARA BUILDING,
PARLIAMENT STREET, NEW DELHI- 110001

O.A. NO. 248/2019

Bank of India Applicant
Versus
Mrs. Rachna Singh & Ors..... Defendants

To,

1. (i) Mrs. Rachna Singh w/o Sh. Rajender Singh Flat No. 22/132, Block- 23, Lodhi Colony, New Delhi-110003. **(Defendant No. 01)**

Also at

(ii) Mrs. Rachna Singh w/o Sh. Rajender Singh, House No. 56, Block-E, B.K. Dutt Colony, New Delhi- 110003.

Also at

(iii) Mrs. Rachna Singh w/o Sh. Rajender Singh, Village- Massan, Kholi Patti Sawli, Videkhal Ghadwal, Tehri Garhwal Uttaranchal-246177.

Whereas the above named applicant has instituted a case for recovery of **Rs. 28,34,641.25/-** (Rupees Twenty Eight Lacs Thirty Four Thousand Six Hundred Forty One & Twenty Five Paisa Only) against you and whereas it has been shown to the satisfaction of the Tribunal that it is not possible to serve you in ordinary way. Therefore, this notice is given by advertisement directing you to make appearance before Ld. Registrar on **05.04.2021 at 10.30 A.M.** (for further details kindly visit DRT website www.drttribunal.gov.in, Phone Number: **011-23748473**)

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Email : drt1delhi-dfs@nic.in

By Order of this Tribunal

For Registrar

NSDC collaborates with DigiVidyapeeth to formulate e-curriculum

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In keeping with the changed reality in Covid times, the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) has joined hands with online educational portal DigiVidyapeeth to formulate e-curriculum for skills upgrade for both professionals and students.

In this regard, the Media and Entertainment Skills Council (MSEC), a setup of the NSDC, has inked a pact with DigiVidyapeeth, under which the portal will develop online courses keeping with industry needs and the former will accord recognition to them.

The agreement was signed recently by MSEC CEO Mohit Soni and DigiVidyapeeth MD Pradeep Khatri here..

To begin with, DigiVidyapeeth has developed courses in the field of digital media marketing and mobile journalism to enhance the skills of professionals and will train them in line with latest technological advances. Later, new courses will be developed for other sectors too. On the occasion,



Soni said that DigiVidyapeeth has the capacity to give shape to the future career of youth. The e-platform engaged in providing online professional certificate courses, has developed solutions to the new challenges which will be faced by students in the changing post Covid scenarios, he said. Khatri added that the pact aims to give a boost to the Skill India Mission and Digital India Mission launched by the Government.

The Narendra Modi Government has set up a target of skill development through MSEC to over 12 lakh people till 2022. However, due to the covid crisis, it is pushing its skill development programs through digital mediums.

4 contacts of UK returnees in Andhra test Covid positive

Amaravati: Six returnees from the UK to Andhra Pradesh and four of their contacts have so far tested positive for Covid-19, health officials said on Sunday.

In all 1,216 people from the UK returned to Andhra Pradesh and of them 1,187 were traced. Efforts were on to trace the remaining 29.

A total of 1,162 returnees were in quarantine. Six of the returnees found infected by coronavirus. They include two from Guntur district and one each from East Godavari, Krishna, Anantapur and Nellore districts.

Officials also traced 3,282 contacts of UK returnees and sent their

samples for testing. Four of the contacts have tested positive. While three are from Guntur district, one person is from Nellore.

The samples of those tested positive were sent to National Institute of Virology, Pune and Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology (CCMB) for genome sequencing to find out if they are infected by the new strain of the virus found in the UK. “We have not yet received the reports,” said an official.

Meanwhile, Andhra Pradesh on Sunday reported 349 new Covid cases, pushing the state’s tally to 8,81,061.

One person succumbed to the virus during the last 24 hours. With this, the death toll rose to 7,094.

According to state command control room, 422 people recovered from the virus during the last 24 hours ending 10 a.m. on Sunday. The cumulative recoveries mounted to 8,70,342.

The number of active cases dropped further to 3,625.

During the last 24 hours, 46,386 tests were conducted. With this, the total number of tests conducted so far rose to 1,16,20,503. Tests per million ratio in the state increased to 2,17,612.

IAN S

Women lawyers seek Bar’s intervention in Paracha raid issue

New Delhi: Days after the Special Cell of Delhi Police raided the office of advocate Mehmood Pracha, one of the defence counsels in the northeast Delhi riots case, the Delhi High Court Women Lawyers Forum has written to the President of the Delhi High Court Bar Association (DHCB).

In its letter written to DHCBA President Mohit Mathur, the women lawyers expressed deep concerns over the investi-

gating agency arraigning lawyers as accused in criminal cases.

“We write to you as a group of lawyers who are deeply concerned about the recent instances where the investigating agency has been arraigning lawyers as accused in criminal cases,” the letter read.

The letter further said that though the proceedings initiated against such lawyers are ostensibly independent of the matters being handled by

them, but the pattern emerging from all such instances, where lawyers are being targeted, is hard to ignore.

“Raids in the office of Mr Mahmood Pracha, advocate is the latest example of such intimidation by the Delhi Police. Mr Pracha is representing several accused persons in the recent riot cases in Delhi.

The recent trend indicates that there are other lawyers too who are being intimidated and discour-

aged from representing their clients in these cases,” the letter said.

The letter also said that this is also a larger issue that goes beyond the riots case, wherein lawyers who are vocal about defending civil liberties are being systematically targeted.

“This is clearly an act of vindictiveness on part of the investigating agencies whose actions are preventing lawyers from carrying their out professional duties,” it said. *IAN S*

NE development PM’s dream, many projects sanctioned: Amit Shah

ArrayImphal: Prime Minister Narendra Modi has kept the northeast in his heart and thus showered the region with a huge amount of central funds, tamed the decades-old terrorism and established peace, Union Home Minister Amit Shah said on Sunday.

“Development of northeast region is the mantra (vision) of Modi ji, hence he (Prime Minister) and the government led by him excelled all-round development of the region -- connectivity to infrastructure and economic upliftment of all sections of people,” Shah said after laying the foundation stone of various development projects.

Addressing a gathering at the Hapta Kangleibung ground here, he said: “Prime Minister Narendra Modi has visited all the states of the region around 40 times so far. The BJP government led by Modi ji has given a fresh identity to the region.

“After the BJP led NDA government came to power, the northeastern region has given the priority in development.”

The Home Minister, who came here from Guwahati on Sunday on a day’s visit, said that

previously, Manipur was known for terrorism, blockades, shutdown, agitations, but at present, most terrorist outfits have shun their violent activities and joined the mainstream.

“Those extremists remained off the track, they would also do so following efforts of the BJP government,” the Union Minister said.

Criticising the Congress, which ruled the northeastern state until 2017, Shah said that it failed to solve the numerous problems of Manipur.

“During the past three years, under the BJP led government under Chief Minister N. Biren Singh, the state is moving ahead on the path of progress.

Doing justice for Manipur, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had given the biggest gift to the people of the state by promulgating the Inner Line Permit into Manipur as the people of the state had been agitating for the ILP for many years.”

The ILP was enforced in the entire state of Manipur on December 11, 2019 for the protection of the indigenous people.

IAN S

Terrorists with explosives held in Poonch

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ JAMMU

A joint team of security forces on Sunday apprehended terrorists with explosive material near Galuthi area of Mendhar in Poonch district.

Meanwhile, in Kashmir valley a Special police officer (SPO) who had decamped with service weapons was also apprehended along with three other associates by the police.

According to police records, the SPO identified as Altaf Hussain had earlier decamped with two AK 47 rifles along with one Jahangir who was later on arrested by the security forces in a cordon and search operation.

This is the third incident of weapon recovery in the last 48 hours and has alerted Jammu and Kashmir police to uncover the nexus between the local conduits and terrorist handlers sitting across the border. Earlier on Friday evening

two Kashmiri youth were also apprehended after a long chase in Narwal area of Jammu along with weapons and ammunition.

Sharing details of the operation launched in Mendhar tehsil of Poonch, a Jammu based Defence PRO Lt-Col Devender Anand said, “The terrorists apprehended possibly belong to a terror outfit ‘Jammu and Kashmir Ghaznavi Force’. He said, the apprehended terrorists were likely to carry out a blast in Rajouri district and were probably attempting to disrupt the communal harmony prevailing in the region. Defence PRO said, “with the arrest of these terrorists, the security forces have unearthed a nexus involving local terrorists which were involved in ferrying war like stores and narcotics”. He said a thorough search operation was still going on to recover more arms or explosive material from their hideouts.



Earlier, on December 13, two foreign terrorists possibly belonging to Jammu and Kashmir Ghaznavi Force were also killed in an encounter at Dogrian (Poonch) on old Mughal Road. He said, their connection to Pak handlers is also being probed.

In Srinagar, a police spokesman said, in a joint operation Budgam police along with 53RR and 181 Bn CRPF launched a CASO at Hayatpora, Chadoora. During

search, one vehicle tried to flee from the cordon which was stopped tactfully, the occupants tried to resist who were overpowered by the security forces.

Out of them one was identified as Deserter SPO turned terrorist Altaf Hussain. The other 3 have been identified as Shabir Ahmad Bhat, Jamsheed Magray, and Zahid Dar all residents of Pulwama. On their search, arms & ammunition and other incriminating mate-

rial were recovered.

On further enquiry, it was found that the group is associated with banned terror organization JEM and were operating in the area with the intention to carry out some subversive activities.

The two terrorist associates apprehended in Jammu were identified as Raees Ahmad Dar, son of Ghulam Hassan Dar of Churath, Qazigund and Subzar Ahmad Sheikh, son of Ghulam Ahmad Sheikh of Ashmuji, Kulgam. One AK rifle, one pistol, two magazines and some rounds have been recovered from their possession.

According to police records, Raees Ahmad Dar had a previous history of involvement in terror activities having four cases registered against him. Initial investigation revealed that he is working for terrorists. The role of his associate is also being ascertained.

Pakistan may try to escalate border tensions: Lt-Gen Raju

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ JAMMU

A senior Army officer heading Srinagar based 15 corps headquarters on Sunday said in order to divert the attention of its people from internal issues, Pakistan may try to escalate tensions along the border by pushing in terrorists even during peak of winter or resorting to ceasefire violations.

In both eventualities, we are ready and will give a befitting response to any such misadventure,” Lt-Gen BS Raju said in Srinagar.

Referring to the prevailing security situation along the LoC in the region, Lt-Gen Raju claimed there are more than 200-250 terrorists waiting for their turn across different launch pads to infiltrate inside

Referring to the prevailing security situation along the LoC in the region, Lt-Gen Raju claimed there are more than 200-250 terrorists waiting for their turn across different launch pads to infiltrate inside the Indian territory

the Indian territory.The frontier districts of Rajouri and Poonch this season have already witnessed a spike in the number of ceasefire violations and infiltration bids under the garb of cover firing by the forward posts across the line of control.

Sharing his assessment about the recently concluded DDC polls in Jammu and Kashmir the senior army commander said these polls were held peacefully and the people got to vote to invigorate grass-

roots democracy in Jammu and Kashmir.

“It is now time for the elected representatives to work for the people and for the people to seek delivery in terms of development activity,” he said.

On winter posturing along the LoC wherein infiltration is more likely through lower heights, he said there are continued reports of 200-250 terrorists in launch pads in PoK looking for a chance to infiltrate.

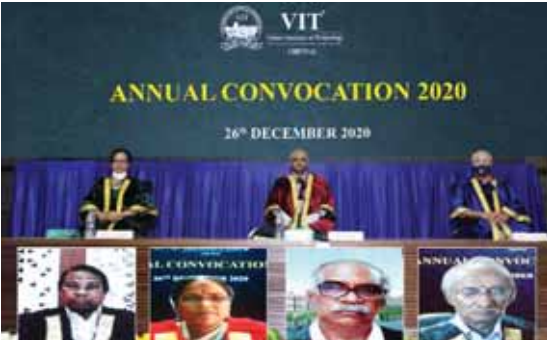
“They will try to exploit bad weather to infiltrate, but the security forces are focusing on both direct infiltration into Kashmir through the LoC and those attempted through the south of Pir Panjal.

The deployment on the LoC is robust and supported by layers of surveillance devices,” he added.

VIT Chennai holds virtual convocation ceremony

Chennai: On 26th December 2020 the Annual Convocation Ceremony of VIT Chennai was conducted virtually to confer degrees on 2,039 graduands who have successfully completed their respective courses: Ph.D., MS (By Research), MBA, MCA, M.Tech. Software Engineering (Integrated), M.S Software Engineering (Integrated), M.Tech., B.Tech., B.A.,LL.B.(Hons.), and B.B.A.,LL.B.(Hons.).

The Chief Guest, Hon’ble Justice V Bhavani Subbarayan, Judge, High Court of Madras, in her the Convocation Address congratulated the graduands; applauded the achievements of VIT and appreciated the pioneering efforts taken to complete the courses in online mode without any disruption and conducting the convocation ceremony virtually in all its



grandeur

She called upon the graduands, “Realise your responsibility as the youth of this great nation; keep upskilling, keep contributing towards more productivity and efficiency; innovate and learn to relearn for sustenance; solve the contemporary, real world complex problems.” She recalled the clarion call of Swami Vivekananda, “Arise, awake, and stop not till the goal is reached.”

Dr. G. Viswanathan, Founder and Chancellor, Vellore Institute of Technology (Deemed to be University) in

his presidential address requested the Central and State Governments to spend more on higher education and stated, “development of a country depends on the development of higher education and higher education is not for academic qualification alone; it increases employment opportunities, economic productivity and growth.” Scholarships have been offered to more than 6000 students so far by VIT through the Higher education trust and

“Higher education can stop child marriages”, he opined. Professor Rambabu Kodali, Vice Chancellor welcomed the gathering and briefed about the achievements of VIT at National and International level. Vice Presidents Mr.Sankar Viswanathan, Dr.Sekar Viswanathan, Mr. G.V.Selvam and Asst.

Dada meets Guv in 2-hour courtesy call

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

While the last Sunday of the year saw BJP leader Suwendu Adhikari and Trinamool Congress MP Abhishek Banerjee trading volleys of fire from two public rallies a silent development with suspected political ramifications took place at Raj Bhavan where BCCI president Sourav Ganguli met Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar for about two hours before exiting as quietly as he came.

Moments after the former India southpaw’s exit the Governor tweeted about his meeting with “Dada” and BCCI president saying he “accepted the invitation” extended to him to visit Eden Gardens.

While the former India captain before entering the Governor’s house said that his was a “courtesy call” the Governor said that a lot of issues were discussed with him adding it was a great experience talking to him.

But none would dwell on the reasons behind an unusually long discussion in a courtesy call limited to extending invitation to visit the Eden Gardens. “Ever since he came to Bengal last July he has not

yet visited the Eden Gardens... He once told me that... so I went to invite him for a visit to the stadium,” Ganguli said saying “please do not spin stories about the visit.”

Dhankhar later tweeted “Had interaction with ‘Dada’ @SGanguly99 President @BCCI at Raj Bhawan today at 4.30 PM on varied issues. Accepted his offer for a visit to Eden Gardens, oldest cricket ground in the country established in 1864.”

Though the Raj Bhavan sources too said that there was nothing much to be read into the discussion stories did the rounds that the BJP wanted one of India’s most successful captains to begin a new innings in politics while the star cricketer had not given his words regarding the issue.

Meanwhile, Adhikari a former Bengal Minister and close Mamata Banerjee aide who left that party early this month launched a scathing attack on the TMC leadership, particularly Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee’s nephew and Diamond Harbour MP Abhishek Banerjee saying every leaf turned in the TMC at the instance of the Bhaipo (read the nephew) and every step was

taken in his interest.

“It is a party of extortionists the led by the Bhaipo,” he said adding how the villages were being ignored by the top TMC brass in the interest of a handful people in South Kolkata.

“Most ministries are enjoyed by a handful of people living in South Kolkata and the districts and villages are made to serve only ... I hate that party in which I was there for the past 21 years and saw things taking shape personally,” Adhikari said asking the people to “gift Bengal to Narendra Modi if you really want to save Bengal from the hands of ‘tolabaz’ (extortionists).”

There was a dire need for the State to be in the hands of a party that rules the Centre. “Then only an all round development can come.. Continuous anti-Centre stance will lead us to nowhere,” he said telling a massive audience at Danton in West Midnapore that “the State must be protected from the hands of extortionists.”

Reacting sharply to his attacks Banerjee told an equally big rally at Diamond Harbour that “some people have sold their spines to the

BJP and joined that party to save their skins ... today they call the Bhaipo an extortionist but I want to remind you that this was the man whose name appears in Narada, Sharada, Rose Valley and other scams ... This was the man who was seen collecting cash rapped in towel in Narada videos and now they call me an extortionist... these people are the real extortionists... I am not afraid of the CBI or ED because there is no proof of extortion against me.”

He said “If they can prove that I am corrupt then they will need no CBI or ED ... I will go to the gallows myself” wondering why Adhikari was asking Bengal to be handed over to Modi.

“Is Bengal a commodity like onion, potato or tomato that it can be handed over ...” he asked saying “till Mamata Banerjee is there no one can defeat TMC.”

Asking the “traitors” to quit the TMC in bigger numbers he said “Go out in as many numbers as you want because Mamata Banerjee is like Sachin Tendulkar ... till the time she is batting there is no tension even if the 9 wickets have fallen.”

Miserable condition of gaushalas in Aligarh

PRADEEP SAXENA ■ ALIGARH

For the protection of the Cow, CM Yogi Adityanath had built gaushalas from the cities to the villages. These gaushalas are now facing the problem of budget shortage. Most of the gaushalas in the district have not received government grants in the last four months resulted in a shortage of fodder and straw.

Currently, the gaushalas have a debt of 3.98 crores. In this financial year, only 4.55 crore has been paid while the department sent a demand of 11 crores to the government.

In 2017, CM Yogi Adityanath has emphasized cow protection and opened the treasury of the budget for

building the gaushalas. Along with the urban bodies, a large number of gaushalas have been built in the cities and the villages. So far 161 Gaushalas have been established by the Animal Husbandry Department in the district having about 19000 cows.

The Animal Husbandry Department demands a budget in the financial year. In April, 11 crores were demanded for the financial year 2020-21 but now 9 months have been passed and only 4.55 crores have been released.

This amount has been paid till August-September. Since then no money has been received for gaushalas. Gaushalas owe 3.98 crores till December.

Fresh spells of snowfall in J&K

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ JAMMU

Ahead of the New Year celebrations fresh spells of snowfall in different parts of Jammu and Kashmir brought cheer on the faces of those linked with the tourism and winter sports activity as more tourists are expected to arrive here to usher in the new year 2021.

The cave shrine of Mata Vaishno Devi also witnessed the season’s first snowfall late Sunday evening. Pilgrims present at the cave shrine welcomed the snowfall amid religious chants.

Chief Executive Officer, Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine Board ,Ramesh Kumar also posted a video clip saying pilgrims at the cave shrine enjoying snowfall.

Meanwhile, traffic on the Jammu-Srinagar National high-



way remained disrupted following fresh landslides at several places between Udhampur and Ramban.

Several passenger vehicles remained stranded at different locations due to suspension of traffic.

Shopian fake encounter: J&K police files chargesheet against Army officer, 2 others

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ JAMMU

After the Jammu and Kashmir police on Saturday submitted a 1,400 page chargesheet against the accused Army captain and others in the Amshipora encounter, in which three labourers from Rajouri were killed on July 18, 2020, in the local court in Shopian, the Chief Judicial Magistrate has issued a fresh order asking the Army authorities under relevant sections of law to give their opinion whether the accused Captain Bhoopendra Singh @ Major Basheer Khan of 62 RR and Tabish Nazir S/O Nazir Ahmed Malik R/O Chowgam, for commission of offences u/s 302,364,201,436,120B,182 IPC r/w 7/25 IA Act”.

According to a statement issued by the spokesman of the Jammu and Kashmir police late Sunday evening, “a 1400 page chargesheet was presented before the CJM, Court Shopian against the accused Captain Bhoopendra Singh @ Major Basheer Khan of 62 RR and Tabish Nazir S/O Nazir Ahmed Malik R/O Chowgam, for commission of offences u/s 302,364,201,436,120B,182 IPC r/w 7/25 IA Act”.

During the investigation, a statement of 49 witnesses was recorded under relevant sections of law and a total of 75 witnesses were listed under the list of witnesses .

According to a police spokesman, “investigations revealed a conspiracy was hatched by accused Captain Bhoopendra Singh @ Major Basheer Khan of 62 RR, Tabish Nazir S/oNazir Ahmed Malik R/o Chowgam and Bilal Ahmed Lone S/o Ghulam Nabi Lone R/o Arabal Nikas Pulwama to abduct

and staged the encounter”.

“They deliberately and purposefully chose not to follow SOPs, they planted illegally acquired weapons and material on their dead bodies after stripping them of their identities and tagged them as hardcore terrorists in possession of war-like stores and deliberately providing false information to colleagues/senior”, police spokesman said.

As per SOPs Army informed the police for registration of FIR. During investigation of above said FIR, sections 307 IPC, 7/27 Arms Act, 16 ULA(P) Act against the slain youth were dropped and the offences under section 302, 364, 201, 436, 120-B, 182 IPC and section 7/25 IA Act against accused Captain Bhoopendra Singh @ Major Basheer Khan of 62 RR, accused Tabish Nazir S/O Nazir Ahmed Malik R/O Chowgam and Bilal Ahmed Lone S/O Ghulam Nabi Lone R/O Arabal Nikas Pulwama was established and therefore incorporated in the instant Case.

During the course of investigation, the disclosure of accused persons led the SIT to recreate all the scenes of crime which includes routes used after meeting the victims and the place where the victims were murdered. During further investigation all the circumstantial evidence which includes two Vehicles, service rifle of Captain Bhoopendra Singh of 62 RR etc. were seized.

During investigation, accused Bilal Ahmed Lone S/o Ghulam Nabi Lone R/o Arabal Nikas Pulwama has become approver under relevant Section of law and his statement has been recorded before the Court of CJM, Shopian.

Kerala logs 4,905 fresh Covid-19 cases, 25 fatalities

Thiruvananthapuram: Kerala registered 4,905 New Covid-19 cases and 25 related deaths on Sunday, taking the total number of those affected in the state to 7.40 lakh. Health Minister K K Shailaja said out of the total positive cases, 4,307 were of local transmission and the contact source of infection for 471 was not traceable.

“There are 44 healthcare workers among those infected. At the same time, 3,463 patients have recovered from the disease. Of those diagnosed with the disease, 83 have travelled to the state from outside,” the Minister said in a release. The Minister noted that 46,116 samples were tested in the last 24 hours and the

test positivity rate was 10.64 per cent. A total of 76.95 lakh samples have so far been sent for testing. The district-wise figures for those who tested positive today for coronavirus are Ernakulam 605, Kozhikode 579, Malappuram 517, Kottayam 509, Kollam 501, Thiruvananthapuram 322, Kannur 289. **PTI**

A Christmas present

Dharavi is the first ward in Mumbai to register zero new Corona cases since the first one was detected on April 1



It is not very often that Indians feel proud of Mumbai's Dharavi, which has the dubious distinction of being Asia's largest slum. But make no mistake about it, where the flattening of the COVID-19 curve is concerned, the slum cluster has shown the privileged citizens of the country, and the world too, how it's done. On December 25, Dharavi gave the rest of Mumbai a Christmas gift by becoming the first ward in the metropolitan to register zero new Coronavirus infections from the time the first COVID-19 case was detected here on April 1. This is despite the fact that COVID-19 cases are on the rise in Mumbai and in other parts of Maharashtra. So much so that the "Dharavi Model" has come in for high praise from the World Health Organisation (WHO) time and again, with the global health watchdog saying that the slum's success stemmed from following most of its instructions with regard to the management of the pandemic, plus a combination of customised solutions, community involvement and perseverance. And the praise is well deserved, given the constraints that the population of 6.5 lakh living in an area of just 2.5 km faces in following the golden mantras for fighting the pandemic, namely social distancing, frequent hand washing and living in well-ventilated spaces. This is because a minimum of seven to eight people live together in small, 100 sq ft dwellings and queue up for water each day as piped water at home is a luxury they can only dream of. A whopping 80 per cent of the slum dwellers are forced to use community toilets, and fresh air and good ventilation are a rarity as homes and factories coexist in single buildings lining the slum's narrow lanes. Dharavi's success in beating the virus can be attributed to the fact that to the WHO's instructions, the slum added its own touch by arranging quarantine facilities for those with mild symptoms and their close contacts, and it religiously and rigorously adhered to the 4Ts ie, Tracing (screening), Testing, Tracking and Treatment. In fact, the management of the Dharavi outbreak is a model example of how effective community engagement, awareness and deployment can tame the virus in resource-scarce and congested clusters.

Apart from the slum dwellers, a part of the credit for this goes to the Maharashtra Government, too. Especially, Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray, who was yet to settle into the Chief Minister's role before the State was hit by the Corona tsunami on March 9. This posed as much a challenge to the inexperienced Chief Minister as it did to the State's health-care systems. And before he could get a grip on it, Maharashtra became the State with the highest number of cases across India. Then the exodus of migrant labourers caught him by surprise, a fact played up by the BJP as an example of his ineptitude and lack of foresight. Still, Uddhav did not lose cool and went in for aggressive containment measures, testing and medical protocols as Dharavi put him on trial. In the end, Dharavi did better than the rest of the country in handling the pandemic despite its infrastructural weaknesses. One day, when this is all over, the residents of Mumbai and the Maharashtra Government will look back at the pandemic and the lessons that Dharavi taught them. They will certainly look upon this marginalised part of the nation's financial capital with new respect. Credit must also be given to the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) which decided to take the bull by the horns and involved the community in its efforts to chase away the virus. The corporation set up teams to reach out to families and got doctors, private clinics and mobile vans to screen the residents of Dharavi. As the key to containing any pandemic is rigorous testing, the BMC also ran fever clinics to allow people to get themselves checked. They also checked people's oxygen saturation levels and, if it was below 95 per cent, took them to quarantine centres. The logic was that this was faster than testing. The BMC also employed local private practitioners and if someone was found to have symptoms, they could volunteer to be quarantined even without getting tested. Since home quarantine was never an option in Dharavi, local clubs and schools were converted into quarantine facilities where free food and health check-ups were provided. Thousands of the elderly were taken into protective quarantine and only the critically ill patients were admitted to hospitals while 90 per cent of the patients were treated inside the slum. A 200-bed hospital was also set up in a record 14 days. What Dharavi did to make a positive difference was that it focused on community engagement.

Youth power

As 21-year-old Arya Rajendran is set to be India's youngest Mayor, the young nation needs more youth in politics



Arya Rajendran, a 21-year-old college student, is very likely to take office as the Mayor of Kerala's capital Thiruvananthapuram soon which will make her the youngest ever Mayor in the nation. While she is still too young to hold an office in either a State or Central legislative body, by taking up the top post available for any municipal councillor, she has set a new benchmark for young Indian politicians and should inspire many more young people to make it to office. The gradual decline in the standards of student politics in India over the past few decades has meant that youth have found it difficult to move into politics over the years and, even in most municipalities, the councilmen and women are quite old. In a country where demographics favour the young, the move by the Communist Party of India (Marxist) should be commended and maybe other political parties would do well to take note of it. Maybe it is time where an upper age limit for politicians in municipal and panchayat bodies is set so as to encourage those between the ages of 20-40 to apply for such posts. Electoral and political experience that the youth thus gain will hold them in good stead as they rise through the political ranks. The lack of youth in India's politics is startling; most 'younger' politicians are almost always scions of political dynasties and have little interest in changing the *status quo*. After all, nepotism is as nepotism does.

While top leaders — from Narendra Modi and Rahul Gandhi — want to involve the youth into their politics, they should ideally get their political parties to revitalise their youth movements, the BJYM and the IYC, respectively, both of which have become social media activist forces rather than actual activism, although one expects big things from the BJYM's new face, Tejasvi Surya. Having young and articulate spokespersons and political leaders will hold both national parties in good stead and help them in future elections. The CPI(M), for decades the party of dyed-in-the-wool, septuagenarian leaders who are considered to fight shy of letting the younger generation take charge, has taken the lead and while the communist movement will remain moribund outside Kerala, this is an idea that the other parties would do well to copy. India has more than 50 per cent of its population below the age of 25 and more than 65 per cent below the age of 35. It is expected that, at the turn of 2020, the average age of all Indians will be 29 years, compared to 37 for China and 48 for Japan. Across the world too, there is a generational change in politics. Even in the United States, Joe Biden's Presidency will be the last hurrah of his generation. By giving those under 40 a political voice, the Government and political parties will pre-empt any possibility of any trouble occurring later because if you do not give the next generation members their rightful share of policy-making, they will take it by force later on. And that may lead to things turning quite ugly indeed.

opinion06

A Bedouin's tale

Despite the Supreme Court's 14-year-old directions aimed at kickstarting the process of implementing police reforms, no State is still fully compliant



There is a parable which is popular in the corridors of establishments where police officers and other security personnel are trained. The parable is of an old Bedouin who owned many horses, chickens, cattle and other farm animals. One night while the Bedouin was asleep, a chicken was stolen from his farm. The next morning, the Bedouin woke up to find the chicken missing and turned the whole farm upside down. He instructed his workers to look for the bird everywhere and asked fellow Bedouins to trace and catch the man who had stolen the chicken. Since the chicken was among the hundreds that the Bedouin reared on his farm, the workers were shocked by the fervour with which he pursued the chicken thief. After all, he owned many and this was hardly a loss. In light of the minimal loss, the search crew made little effort to discover the identity of the thief and gave up the hunt soon.

Understandably, with the lack of serious efforts to trace the chicken thief, they never did find him. Over the next few weeks, others who reared farm animals found that their cattle and horses were the target of repeated acts of theft. Perplexed, the younger Bedouins went to the senior Bedouin to seek counsel. The old Bedouin repeated what he had said numerous times before — "Find the chicken thief".

The moral of the story is fairly simple. It is a cautionary tale about dealing with petty crimes with seriousness because even such crimes have a habit of devolving into major ones. The principle is translatable to most walks of life, too. With this context in mind, this week I want to discuss the Supreme Court's recent directives that were issued while disposing a Special Leave Petition (SLP) raising issues regarding audio-video recording of statements and the installation of CCTV in police stations. In its directives and with the aim of preventing custodial torture, the Supreme Court, in an admirable move, ordered the installation of CCTV cameras in the offices of the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), Enforcement Directorate (ED), National Investigation Agency (NIA) and other similar agencies, in addition to police stations across the country. As good as a move this is, the



Supreme Court had passed a similar order in the past too and actually extended the ambit of an order passed by it in 2018, wherein it directed that at least the first phase of implementation of crime scene videography was required to be introduced by July 15, 2018, in at least some places. There was some flexibility allowed by the apex court when it said that this direction was subject to viability and priority as determined by the Central Oversight Body.

Based on my experience with the police and with the Central and State Governments, I am reasonably sure that to a large extent this flexibility granted by the Supreme Court in 2018 has been misused in so much that the directions of the highest court of the nation are not actually followed. While you may feel that such a statement is presumptuous, there is a rich body of evidence which would make this merely a logical inference. The most obvious example that forms the basis of this view is the case of police reforms and the manner in which State Governments have taken on board the Supreme Court's directions to date.

In 2006, the Supreme Court — pursuant to a public interest litigation filed in 1996 by two distinguished former Director Generals of Police, Prakash Singh and NK Singh — passed directions and laid down seven directives based on

“THE SUPREME COURT HAD PASSED A SIMILAR ORDER IN THE PAST TOO AND ACTUALLY EXTENDED THE AMBIT OF AN ORDER PASSED BY IT IN 2018, WHEREIN IT DIRECTED THAT AT LEAST THE FIRST PHASE OF IMPLEMENTATION OF CRIME SCENE VIDEOGRAPHY WAS REQUIRED TO BE INTRODUCED BY JULY 15, 2018, IN AT LEAST SOME PLACES”

the various recommendations made by the National Police Commissions since 1979. The directives are aimed at kickstarting the process of implementing police reforms that have been pending since the British era and include constituting a State Security Commission to ensure that the States do not exercise unwarranted influence or pressure on the police, providing a minimum tenure of two years for the DGPs, setting up a Police Establishment Board to decide transfers, postings (as opposed to the State Government) and a number of other crucial steps to actually modernise the Indian police force which is in desperate need to step out from under the thumb of its political masters and step into its rightful position as a modern police force.

However, despite these directions from the apex court, as per a report by the international non-profit Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative, no Indian State is fully compliant with the 14-year-old decision. In fact, as per this report, only two Indian States — Andhra Pradesh and Arunachal Pradesh — were partially compliant with the binding directives issued by the Supreme Court. This is especially tragic because India is in desperate need of police reforms. Firstly, because of the sheer minuscule size of the existing police force — as per *IndiaSpend*, India has 151

police personnel per 1,00,000 population which is much lower than the sanctioned 193 per 1,00,000 persons. Secondly, and more importantly, such reforms are the first step in modernising India's police force and sensitising its police officers. According to the reports available, one in five police personnel is of the view that killing dangerous criminals is better than a legal trial. That is a staggering number for a country that is meant to be a democracy.

However, despite the appalling state of affairs and despite a directive from the highest court of the land, we have seen little to no movement from the side of the elected representatives. The lack of intent and inclination is easy to understand; by implementing these police reforms, the Governments will automatically be forced to yield their significant control over the police, which is an important tool for abuse in the hands of politicians. Therefore, unless the Supreme Court decides to take action against the Governments and bureaucrats who refuse to adhere to its orders, any step forward — including the latest decision of the Supreme Court — will merely be a pyrrhic victory for us to celebrate while the "chicken thief" is still at large.

(The author is a former IPS officer and member of the Congress party. The views expressed are personal.)

SOUND BITE

The RSS headquarters is giving directions to the Centre to pass on to the Kerala Governor. He knows the situation but he is feigning ignorance.

Senior CPI(M) leader
—MA Baby



Remarkably, a year that has necessarily kept people apart has, in many ways, brought us closer. Even on the darkest nights, there is hope in the new dawn.

UK's monarch
—Queen Elizabeth II



Digital entertainment is actually way safer a place to prove our talent. We are outsiders and before investing money in us, naturally, producers will think twice.

Actor
—Bidita Bag



Very surprised that Tim Paine survived that run out review! I had him on his bike and thought there was no part of his bat behind the line! Should have been out in my opinion.

Legendary spinner
—Shane Warne



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Focus on agri uplift

Sir — This refers to the editorial 'Modi's outreach' (December 26) wherein the newspaper rightly suggests that the Union Government should give a price guarantee of sorts on all crops. Although the Modi Government has transferred funds from the Kisan Samman Nidhi to farmers' accounts, some organisations are agitating on the borders of the NCR without knowing the technical, legal and practical aspects of the new agricultural laws.

It is ultimately the loss of the nation, society and the farmers. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has stated that the Government is not in favour of withdrawing these laws. The farmer outfits should understand this and, instead of wasting their time, money and energy, pay due attention to the development of agriculture and family uplift, which will lead to their economic growth. It would be better if the farmers' representatives interact with the Government and manage to get a more agriculture-friendly deal. The farmers should now take the decision to conclude the current phase of protests.

Yugal Kishore Sharma
Faridabad

Time to introduce simplified Income Tax Act

Our six-decades-old Income Tax Act, 1961, which is outdated and full of amendments, needs to be replaced by an altogether new Income Tax Act which must be simple, abolishing components like cess, surcharge and exemptions with tax rates incorporated in the new Act, according to the recommendations of the Raja Chelliah Committee.

— The maximum tax rate at one time effectively used to be as high as 98 per cent, causing high levels of tax evasion with people paying up to even 52 per cent to whiten their black money. However, good sense prevailed and the maximum tax rate was slashed down to just 30 per cent in tune with most other countries. But surcharges, cess and other such additives have again raised the effective tax rate to nearly 50 per cent.

The new I-T Act should fix the tax slabs at 10, 20 and 30 per cent even though taxable amounts may not be included in the Act to keep flexibility on taxable income without any cess or surcharge. The idea should be that people find it advantageous to declare more income by inducing healthy competition for the tax paid in our status-conscious society by honouring those who pay higher taxes. A few sops, like jumping the queue at airports or railway stations, may be provided to those in the highest tax slab. At the same time, all tax exemptions — including on agricultural income, charity and contribution to political parties — may be abolished with the basic exemption limit raised to ₹5 lakh.

Also, the loopholes in the GST system may be plugged so that India may move towards cashless economy. The GST rates should be minimised to just two slabs of 10 and 30 per cent.

Subhash Chandra Agrawal
Delhi

A dangerous sport

Sir — Jallikattu is a dangerous sport of bull-taming which is mostly performed in the villages of Tamil Nadu as part of the Pongal (harvest carnival) celebrations. Jallikattu or Manju Virattu is played generally on the second and third days of the Pongal fair.

Injuries and deaths are common because, as you can well imagine, one strong hit by a bull on the wrong part of the human body can be deadly. This is one of the oldest sports which has managed to survive in the modern era too. In Jallikattu, all that the fighters have to do is to jump on a running bull, try to grip on to its bulge and move along with the animal without falling down or getting injured.

It needs quick reflexes and a fleet-foot to tame the recalcitrant bull which will try to shake off the fighter and, at times, stamp on or gore the fallen participants. The risks involved can be gauged by the fact that even capturing the photographs is a tough task.


CK Subramaniam
Chennai

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

Gundu K Mani
Thane

FIRST COLUMN

From the ridiculous to the sublime



GWYNNE DYER

Surely you don't want to read about the new, faster-spreading variant of the Coronavirus during the festive season, or the fourth Israeli election in two years and I certainly don't want to write about them. This year has been grim enough so it is good to focus on some trivial yet mirthful things that happened in the world, too. So here are a few matters of lesser import, culled from recent media reports. First, we have a transcript of the phone call made to one of the FSB officers involved in the plot to poison Russian Opposition leader Alexei Navalny. (The FSB is the modern successor to the KGB, the main secret police and Intelligence agency of the Soviet era.) The investigative website *Bellingcat* tracked down the mobile phone numbers of eight members of the FSB team that poisoned Navalny (Russian secret police apparently can't even afford burner phones), and gave two of them to the dissident leader, who is convalescing in Germany. Navalny called each number, pretending to be the aide to a top FSB General trying to find out what went wrong with the hit, while *Bellingcat* recorded the calls. One of the agents spotted the deception at once and hung up but the other, one Konstantin Borisovich Kudryavtsev (known to his friends as 'Blockhead'), fell for the trap and gave Navalny all the information he needed. Kudryavtsev had been sent to Omsk (the scene of the crime) to remove traces of the novichok nerve poison from Navalny's clothes before they were sent back to him in Germany. This is how part of the conversation recorded by *Bellingcat* went.

Navalny: "In your opinion, how did the Germans discover it all?"
Kudryavtsev: "Well, they got the Bundeswehr involved. They have military chemists working there. Maybe they have some means of detection."
Navalny: "Which piece of cloth was your focus on? Which garment had the highest risk factor?"
Kudryavtsev: "The underpants."
Navalny: "The underpants? Do you mean from the inner side, or from the outer?"
Kudryavtsev: "We were processing the inner side. This is what we were doing."
Navalny: "Well, imagine some underpants in front of you. Which part did you process?"
Kudryavtsev: "The inner, where the groin is."
Navalny: "The groin?"
Kudryavtsev: "Well, the crotch, as they call it. There's some sort of seams there."
Navalny: "Wait, this is important. Who gave you the order to process the copiece of the underpants?"
Kudryavtsev: "We figured this out on our own. They told us to work on the inner side of the underpants."
Navalny: "Wait. I am writing it down. OK...Do you think this was a mistake – the method of administration?"
Kudryavtsev: "Well, this is not my call."
Navalny: "What is your opinion?"
Kudryavtsev: "This is what my superiors have decided, therefore it is probably correct. The method is a good one."
Navalny: "Well, he remains alive. Therefore, it is not that good..."
And so on, and so forth. The result of the whole conversation was a red-faced FSB and a discredited agent.

Now we head from the ridiculous to the sublime: A study on the value of beards by two Texas-based academics, Sarah Mittal and David H Silvera. It was published last month in the *Journal of Business Research*, and the title is (of course) *'It grows on you: Perceptions of sales/service personnel with facial hair.'*

The article proves to the authors' entire satisfaction that men with beards "are perceived as having more expertise; furthermore, increased perceptions of expertise predict higher ratings of trustworthiness and, subsequently, increase consumers' purchase likelihood."

I could have told you that for free. I have had a beard since I was 25 and this is one of the most trusted columns on international affairs in the known universe. Quite Easily Done!

Finally, an ingenious way to slow the spread of the Coronavirus. We owe this innovation to retired translator Peter Prowse of Surrey in England, who urges that certain sounds and letters of the alphabet should be banned during the pandemic because saying them projects the COVID-19 virus much farther than others. Worst are the "plosive" consonants P, T and C, which when used at the beginning of a syllable can throw droplets containing the virus three times farther than softer consonants like F, N and L. He proposes that the Government should start by replacing the "puh" sound with "fuh."

Once "feofle" have got used to this, the "tuh" sound will begin to be "fronounced nuh", and after a further "feriod" of "nime" the "cuh" sound at the "snart" of words will be "reflaced" by "luh." As "Flowse" (formerly Prowse) "foints" out, the whole "fufulation" will have to "flay" their role in this or there will be mass "lonfusion", so there must be "fenalties" for those who won't "lomfly." The retired translator freely admits that he got the idea from a French "lomedian", but it works just as well in English. The video "lan" be seen on "YouNube."

(Gwynne Dyer's new book is 'Growing Pains: The Future of Democracy and Work.' The views expressed are personal.)


analysis07

POINTCOUNTERPOINT



I REGRET THAT MORE THAN 70 LAKH FARMERS OF WEST BENGAL HAVE NOT BEEN ABLE TO GET THE BENEFITS OF THE PM-KISAN SCHEME.

—PRIME MINISTER
NARENDRA MODI



WE ARE IMPLEMENTING SO MANY SCHEMES WITH THE CENTRE. THE CLAIM OF NOT COOPERATING ON ONE THAT HELPS FARMERS IS ABSURD.

—WEST BENGAL CHIEF MINISTER
MAMATA BANERJEE

Reset economic models

What we essentially need is a community-based, businesslike approach encompassing grassroots action, policy advocacy and everything in between



MOIN QAZI

The COVID-19 pandemic is a human tragedy of Biblical proportions which has caused an explosion of infections and massive destruction of livelihoods. Tragically, the outbreak has also revealed that our societies and economies have been operating on a very thin margin. The edifice seemed so shiny; with jets stitching together gleaming cities, a world of soaring markets and industrial empires. But a couple of months into the contagion and it all began tottering. The jets were grounded, the cities went silent and one industry after another headed for bankruptcy. However successful our world may have seemed, it wasn't very sturdy. Our systems and society seem to be very fragile, exploding the myths of a robust and resilient order.

The greatest learning is that our current economic models do not benefit everyone equally. This is particularly true for rural societies. To combat this we will have to contend with the almost universal suspicion of our grand political schemes. While we do need plans and systems, we also need mutual accountability. Before we have the entire apparatus in place — the economic plumbing — we must understand more concretely what such a strategy means to the people it is meant to serve, who know best their own problems and also have relevant and sustainable solutions for them.

Tackling the problems of the disprivileged requires a fundamentally-different approach: One that starts with the people themselves and encourages initiative, creativity and drive from below. This principle must be at the core of any strategy that hopes to transform their lives; only then it can be lasting and meaningful.

Approaches to rural development that respect the inherent capabilities of the people who live in rural areas and systematically build on their experience, have a reasonable chance of improving their lives. This can include enhancing their capacities to mobilise and manage resources effectively. If people can be given the support they need to build their own democracies in their own ways, they can do the rest themselves. In doing so, they will not only move their own communities, they will also take the world with them.

This is because local leadership is critical to driving ownership of social programmes. We need to hire individuals with the entrepreneurialism and drive to create change on the ground. You can't solve the problems of the "last mile" from the headquarters. It takes local entrepreneurs, empowered to adapt easily to the nuances of local cultures to succeed. This approach has to be guided by local wisdom and must show a deep appreciation of ground realities.

We need to develop more inclusive policies to ensure that rural development is made socially, economically and environmentally sustainable. Inclusive rural transformation can be promoted through people-centered development in which beneficiaries become agents of their own development, participating in designing, decision-making and execution of the processes. Moreover, the strategies for inclusive transformation have to be context-specific, building on local solutions which best address local challenges.

Such solutions may require adaptation over time. People will not actively and emotionally participate in an intervention unless it has relevance to their lives and their strengths. When communities take charge of projects, they also contribute through their labour and commitment and engage actively with the system to ensure that projects are completed on time.

We need to invest in developing local leaders who are typically under-acknowledged and under-supported so we are able to effectively engage with popular movements, community-based organisations and grassroots activist groups that are close to

locals. We have to constantly navigate existing unjust, broken systems while at the same time reimagining them

Since local entrepreneurs know the community dynamics and power relationships, they are well-attuned to handling the actors in the local ecosystem. Their potential to drive change is tremendous, but they often lack opportunities for training and education and are unable to access networks and finance. Yet they are an essential part of society and often don't receive the credit they deserve as policy drivers and implementers in India's challenging developmental space.

There has also been a failure of agricultural strategy which needs reappraisal. Food crops have gradually been abandoned in favour of cash crops which are more profitable but are also highly water intensive. The high yielding variety (HYV) seeds which entered Indian fields during the Green Revolution were less resistant to droughts and floods and needed delicate management of water, insecticides, pesticides and chemical fertilisers.

These crops also attract more pests, forcing farmers to apply chemical pesticides to save them. So, every year the farmer had to spend more to grow such crops. Typically the commercial seeds had to be purchased year after year, and farmers could not reuse seeds from their crop, with seed manufacturing giants filing lawsuits against small farmers who did so. It became a perpetual treadmill. Families faced crippling healthcare costs, crop failures, loss of income and debt, all directly related to pesticides. The overuse of chemical fertilisers for augmenting yields in the short term led to physical and chemical degradation of the soil by altering the natural microflora and increasing soil salinity and alkalinity. Higher yields and profits in the short-term have come at a huge socio-ecological cost such as biodiversity loss, environmental pollution, land degradation, increased damage from

climate change, infusion of toxic elements into the food chain from chemical residue applied in the crop field leading to decline in human health and livelihood and the erosion of agricultural expertise.

Formerly, societies might have depend upon 200 to 300 crops for food and health security but gradually we have come to the stage of four or five important crops: wheat, corn, rice and soybean. This homogenisation increases profitability for a handful of owners, to the detriment of everyone else.

The cultivation of indigenous and heritage crops has the potential to make agriculture genetically diverse, sustainable and resilient to climate variability. Indigenous landraces have evolved in the region over thousands of years of agrarian practice and have relied on fungicides, organic fertilisers and pesticides prepared from locally available materials. The Green Revolution introduced newer methods of cultivation; brought in new strains of seeds generated through modern methods of plant breeding which gave high yields; intensified the use of fossil fuel fertilisers; increased acreage through double cropping; used pesticides and mechanical equipment extensively and massively; and drilled into groundwater reserves through deep borewells.

Native heirloom seeds adapted to local diets and conditions were replaced by expensive corporate-produced hybrids, often dumped in India after having failed elsewhere. Although the new high-performance varieties guaranteed high yields, they degraded soil quality, harmed biodiversity, polluted the environment and irreversibly damaged human health.

The pandemic will hopefully help farmers to take conscious decisions and shift gradually to sustainable practices, rather than changing things hurriedly by following the instruction given by seed or pesticide companies through extension workers, dealers, or the labels on the pack-

aging of crop inputs. They will use their own experience or knowledge acquired through experimentation rather than relying on hearsay or advertising, when buying inputs (for example seeds and fertilisers).

The pandemic has already underlined the need for them to come up with context-specific solutions for ecologically sustainable agriculture. We hope farmers will apply their own knowledge of ecology, soil fertility management, seed preservation and pest management which they used to rely on before the advent of conventional agriculture.

There are many lessons to be brought to the table from field experience. We need to understand the existing human conditions rather than hastily proposing templates that serve the interests of the owners. Experts need to combine their knowledge with grassroots action and a wider community of practice. The incredibly evolving and complicated ecosystem requires better collaboration and partnerships for understanding, analysing, designing solutions and for undertaking impact studies to contribute to the wider knowledge pool within. We have to usher a culture where farmers can apply their own knowledge and skills rather than being expected to follow what the external agencies are prescribing.

There is need for integration of an entire gamut of resources, ranging from financial and human to markets and entitlements. When we address these issues empathetically, we can move ahead with a more self-assured, robust and proactive engagement towards inclusive growth and livelihood development. What we essentially need is a community-based, businesslike approach encompassing grassroots action, policy advocacy and everything in between.

(The writer is deputy in-charge of BJP for J&K. The views expressed are personal.)

A mandate for J&K's progress and inclusion

The real winner in the recent DDC polls is India, its ethos, values and the Centre's decision to completely integrate the State with the nation



ASHISH SOOD

The Union Territory (UT) of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) is set to chart the course of development and social inclusion. The Valley is no longer the political fiefdom of the People's Alliance for Gupkar Declaration (PAGD) or Gupkar Alliance. Its members were expecting an absolute majority of the people to vote in their favour in the District Development Council (DDC) polls. However, a large number of the people of the Valley have put their faith in Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership. Plus, Independents turned out to be key players during these elections, registering their win on 50 seats.

In Kashmir, the BJP has won three seats, contrary to the expectations of the Gupkar Alliance and has polled a good number of votes in all. The party contested on 115 seats. In Jammu region, it fought on 129 seats, won 72 seats and lost 57. The BJP's overall vote percentage is 24.64 per cent as compared to 22.92 per cent polled by the PAGD. Independent candidates polled 28.36 per cent votes, while the Congress got around 14 per cent.

The performance of the Independents and the BJP points to the people's disenchantment with the Gupkar Alliance, which has just registered the proverbial Pyrrhic victory. In the DDC elections the real winner is India, Indian ethos, values and the decision of the Union Government to completely integrate J&K with the nation.

This was on hold due to those who had converted the region into their political fiefdom in their nefarious pursuit to exploit the innocent people and resources meant for the citizens.

Over the years, corrupt politicians looted the Valley's resources to fill their own coffers and kept dancing to the tune of divisive forces. It was the daring decision and vision of Modi, which ensured the complete integration of the Valley into India.

Even though the Gupkar Alliance has won, but the fact that the BJP has emerged as the single-largest party, has made the people's intent clear. They are strongly aligned to the Constitution, democracy and India.

Had the Gupkar Alliance members fought the election individually, they would have been decimated. Instead of working hard to mitigate the woes and hardships of the people of the Valley and taking the benefits of welfare schemes to them, the corrupt politicians misled the people and kept the citizens impoverished.

Dr Syama Prasad Mookerjee, the founder of the Bharatiya Jana Sangh, sacrificed his life spearheading a nationwide non-violent agitation demanding complete integration of J&K into the Indian Union. On May 10, 1953, he courted arrest chanting the slogan that there can't be two Constitutions, two Prime Ministers and two flags in one nation. He was taken to Srinagar jail where he died under mysterious circumstances on June 23, 1953.

By revoking Article 370 on August 5, 2019, the Central Government has enabled the people of the region to access all Central Government programmes and laws including the right to reservation for the disempowered, right to education and right to information, besides other facilities.

The UTs of J&K and Ladakh have adopted an ambitious road map of peace and progress, ushering in a new era of inclusive development and transparent governance in the entire region. The Central Government has adopted an integrated approach to build state-of-the-art infrastructure and unleashed a slew of fast track social welfare and employment-generation schemes and programmes.

This is especially true for Medium, Small and Micro Enterprises (MSMEs) including cottage, handicraft, handloom and horticulture enterprises as the schemes are aimed at comprehensive growth and the socio-economic emancipation of the marginalised and underprivileged sections of society in all three regions.

Good quality, all-weather roads and national highways enhancing the hitherto lacking inter and intra-region connectivity have gone a long way in promoting and creating fresh employment opportunities in the post-bifur-

cation period. Tourism has always been the lifeline of Kashmir's economy and the enhanced infrastructure is proving to be a key to its success by promoting exports from the Valley as well.

The Road Transport and Highways Ministry, with its arms like the National Highways Authority of India and the National Highways and Infrastructure Development Corporation, in concert with the Border Roads Organisation and the State Public Works Department are currently engaged in completing a series of projects which will give impetus to growth and help entrepreneurs establish producer companies with focus on further development of sericulture, cold water fisheries, woodwork, cricket bats, saffron, handicraft and horticulture produce.

Jammu, with a rapidly-growing rail and road connectivity, including the Jammu Ring Road, is witnessing a huge economic boost with flourishing religious tourism and start-ups in businesses like wood grain work, mills, basmati rice trade, rice mills, carpets, electronic items and electric goods.

Similarly, Ladakh is witnessing an unprecedented boost to infrastructure development with all-weather roads and highway networks coming up in a big way in difficult terrains and at strategic locations. Domestic and international tourism promotion has been given a big push in Ladakh.

The sky seems to be the limit, with central financial packages to Ladakh resulting in a phenomenal growth in its economy through enhanced agriculture and livestock activities. The Centre and the State administration must join hands and ensure all round development of the region.

(The writer is deputy in-charge of BJP for J&K. The views expressed are personal.)

EU nations eagerly kick off mass vaccinations

Rome: European Union nations kicked off a coordinated effort on Sunday to give Covid-19 vaccinations to the most vulnerable among the bloc's nearly 450 million people, marking a moment of hope in the continent's battle against the worst public health crisis in a century.

Health care workers, the elderly and leading politicians got some of the first shots across the 27-nation bloc to reassure the public that the vaccinations are safe and represent the best chance to emerge from the pandemic.

"It didn't hurt at all," said Mihaela Anghel, a nurse at the Matei Bals Institute in Bucharest who was the first person to get the vaccine in Romania. "Open your eyes and take the vaccine."

In Rome, five doctors and nurses wearing white scrubs sat in a semi-circle at the Spallanzani infectious diseases hospital to receive their doses.

"The message is one of hope, trust and an invitation to share this choice," said one of the recipients, Dr Maria Rosaria Capobianchi, who heads the virology laboratory at



A resident of a nursing home reacts as she gets an injection of the Covid-19 vaccine in Cologne, Germany on Sunday

Spallanzani and was part of the team that isolated the virus in early February. "There is no reason to be concerned."

Italian virus czar Domenico Arcuri said it was significant that Italy's first vaccine doses were administered at Spallanzani, where a Chinese couple visiting from Wuhan tested positive in January and became Italy's first confirmed cases.

Only later would northern Lombardy become the epicentre of the outbreak in Europe. Italy now has the continent's worst confirmed virus death toll at nearly 72,000.

High-level Chinese delegation arrives in Nepal to take stock of political situation

PTI ■ KATHMANDU

A high-level Chinese delegation led by a vice minister of the Chinese Communist Party arrived in Kathmandu on Sunday to "take stock" of Nepal's political situation after the dissolution of Parliament and subsequent split in the ruling Nepal Communist Party, according to a media report.

Although no specific details about the agenda of the visit are available, the four-member delegation, led by Vice Minister of the International Department of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Guo Yezhou, will hold high-level talks during its stay in Kathmandu, My Republica newspaper reported, citing senior NCP leaders.

Quoting a diplomatic source, it said the visit is aimed at "taking stock of Nepal's evolving political situation after the dissolution of the House of Representatives and subsequent split in the ruling Nepal Communist Party amid already-deepened intra-party rift".

Nepal plunged into a political crisis last Sunday after

embattled Prime Minister K P Sharma Oli, known for his pro-Beijing leanings, in a surprise move, recommended dissolving the 275-member House, amidst a tussle for power with former prime minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda'.

Acting on the prime minister's recommendation, President Bidya Devi Bhandari dissolved the House the same day and announced fresh elections on April 30 and May 10, sparking protests from a large section of the NCP led by Prachanda, also a co-chair of the ruling party.

Meanwhile, the Chinese embassy in Kathmandu and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs are tight-lipped about Guo's visit, the report said.

Earlier this week, Chinese Ambassador to Nepal, Hou Yanqi, had communicated about the visit of Guo to Kathmandu during her meetings with senior NCP leaders of both the Prachanda- and Oli-led factions.

Vice Minister Guo is scheduled to hold meetings with the leaders of both the factions.

Unemployment benefits expire for millions as Trump rages

West Palm Beach: Unemployment benefits for millions of Americans struggling to make ends meet lapsed overnight as President Donald Trump refused to sign an end-of-year Covid relief and spending bill that had been considered a done deal before his sudden objections.

The fate of the bipartisan package remained in limbo Sunday as Trump continued to demand larger Covid relief checks and complained about "pork" spending. Without the widespread funding provided by the massive measure, a government shutdown would occur when money runs out at 12:01 a.m. Tuesday.

"It's a chess game and we are pawns," said Lanetris Haines, a self-employed single mother of three in South Bend, Indiana, who stood to lose her \$129 weekly jobless benefit unless Trump signed the package into law or succeeded in his improbable quest for changes.

Washington has been reeling since Trump turned on the deal after it had won sweeping approval in both houses of Congress and after the White House had assured Republican leaders that Trump would support it. Instead, he assailed the



bill's plan to provide \$600 Covid relief checks to most Americans — insisting it should be \$2,000. House Republicans swiftly rejected that idea during a rare Christmas Eve session. But Trump has not been swayed in spite of the nation being in the grip of a pandemic.

"I simply want to get our great people \$2000, rather than the measly \$600 that is now in the bill," Trump tweeted Saturday from Palm Beach, Florida, where he is spending the holiday. "Also, stop the billions of dollars in 'pork.' President-elect Joe Biden called on Trump to sign the bill immediately as the midnight Saturday deadline neared for

two federal programs providing unemployment aid.

"It is the day after Christmas, and millions of families don't know if they'll be able to make ends meet because of President Donald Trump's refusal to sign an economic relief bill approved by Congress with an overwhelming and bipartisan majority," Biden said in a statement. He accused Trump of an "abdication of responsibility" that has "devastating consequences." "I've been talking to people who are scared they're going to be kicked out from their homes, during the Christmas holidays, and still might be if we don't sign this bill," said Rep. Debbie Dingell, a Michigan Democrat. AP

Sindh Govt not to release 4 accused in Pearl's murder case

Islamabad: Pakistan's Sindh province Government has decided not to release British-born al-Qaeda leader Ahmed Omar Saeed Sheikh and his three aides, accused of kidnapping and murdering US journalist Daniel Pearl, in view of a Supreme Court order, according to a media report.

In a surprise move, a two-judge bench of the Sindh High Court on Thursday directed security agencies not to keep Sheikh and other accused under "any sort of detention" and declared all notifications of the Sindh government related to their detention "null and void". The court observed that the four men's detention was "illegal".

The court, however, had clarified that the accused should not be released if there is a Supreme Court restraining order regarding their detention.

Citing its sources, the Express Tribune newspaper said that the provincial government will not release these men in view of the Supreme Court's September 28 order.

The Pakistan People's Party-led Sindh government believes that the apex court's September 28 order in the case is still in the field, the sources told the daily.

A three-judge apex court bench headed by Justice Mushir Alam on September 28 noted that till the next date of hearing, the accused shall not be released.

A senior government official said the apex court order

has not been specifically recalled.

"The SHC in its December 24 order also clarified that accused should not be released if there is a Supreme Court restraining order regarding their detention," he added. The sources said the Sindh government will also challenge the SHC's December 24 order in the apex court on Monday.

In April, a two-judge Sindh High Court bench commuted the death sentence of 46-year-old Sheikh to seven years imprisonment. The court also acquitted his three aides who were serving life terms in the case — almost two decades after they were found guilty and jailed.

However, the Sindh government refused to release them and kept them in detention under the Maintenance of Public Order. Their continuous detention was challenged in the Sindh High Court, which ordered their release on Thursday.

On Friday, the United States expressed "deep concern" over the order to release Sheikh and his aides and said it will continue to monitor any developments in the case.

"We are deeply concerned by the reports of the December 24 ruling of Sindh High Court to release multiple terrorists responsible for the murder of Daniel Pearl. We have been assured that the accused have not been released at this time," the US State Department said in a tweet. PTI

Militants attack Pakistan checkpoint in Balochistan, killing 7 soldiers

Islamabad: At least seven Pakistani soldiers were killed in a terrorist attack in the country's restive Balochistan province, the Army said on Sunday.

The militants fire-raided a Frontier Corps (FC) outpost in Harnai region of the province late last night, it said.

During the intense exchange of fire, seven soldiers were killed, it said.

The area was cordoned off

and escape routes blocked to apprehend the fleeing militants, while a large-scale search and clearance operation was underway.

"Such cowardly acts by inimical elements backed by anti-state forces will not be allowed to sabotage hard earned peace and prosperity in Balochistan," the Army said.

Commenting on the attack, Prime Minister Imran Khan

said that he was "saddened" over the loss of lives.

"My heartfelt condolences & prayers go to their families," he said.

The attack followed the killing of 10 terrorists by the security forces five days ago in the province.

The terrorists affiliated with the Baloch nationalist outfits regularly attack the security forces in the province. PTI



A woman casts her vote after polls opened for presidential and legislative elections, at the Lycée Boganda polling station in the capital Bangui, Central African Republic on Sunday

Polls open in Central African Republic amid fears of unrest

Bangui: Voting has begun in Central African Republics presidential and legislative elections after a campaign period marked by violence between rebels and government forces.

Despite calls from the opposition to delay the vote amid the insecurity, the Constitutional Court rejected a postponement.

President Faustin-Archange Touadara, seeking a second term, has tried to reassure candidates and voters that the voting will be secure. This is the central African country's first election since a peace deal was signed between the government and 14 rebel groups in February 2019, although fight-

ing continues.

Three peacekeepers from Burundi were killed and two others wounded Friday by armed combatants. The U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres condemned the attacks in the Dekoua and Bakouma areas ahead of the elections, calling for swift justice and saying they may constitute war crimes.

The U.N. Retook the town of Bambari last week from rebels. Rebel groups have also seized several towns near the capital, Bangui.

Voters went to the polls in the capital Sunday, though others had fled the violence over the holiday weekend.

Many residents of the town of Bangassou in the nations southeast were fleeing because of the fighting, residents said.

"I am in the town of Bangassou but my wife and children crossed to the other side of the bank towards Congo because of the violence," said Christian Kombro a teacher from the town.

The government blames the unrest on former President Francois Bozize, who returned from exile a year ago and has been blocked from running in the election. He has been accused of joining up with armed groups to destabilize the country and launch a coup. He has denied it. AP

Syrian refugee camp burnt to ground in northern Lebanon

Beirut: More than 300 Syrian refugees were forced to flee an informal camp in northern Lebanon as a blaze raged through and burnt tents to the ground, UN and Lebanese officials said on Sunday.

The fire late Saturday raged for four hours as firefighters tried to put it out, the Lebanese civil defense said.

The fire ensued following a fight between a Lebanese family in al-Miniyeh in the country's north and Syrians living in the camp, according to Lebanese media reports.

A Lebanese official said the army is investigating the cause of the fire and conducting raids to round up those responsible for the altercation. The official spoke on condition of anonymity because an official statement has not yet been released.

Khaled Kabbara, a UN Refugee Agency spokesman in northern Lebanon, said some 375 people lived in the informal settlement that was located on a plot of rented land. He said the entire camp was burnt to the ground.

Kabbara said four people were injured in the fire and hospitalized with minor injuries. He said some residents of the camp returned Sunday to see if anything could be salvaged from the fire.

Most of the refugees have sought refuge in other nearby informal settlements. Some from the local community have also offered shelter, Kabbara said.

Kabbara said altercations between residents and Syrian refugees often "catastrophically impact the community as a whole". AP



Bus crash in western Cameroon kills 37, injures 18

AP ■ YAOUNDE

More than 37 people are dead and 18 others seriously injured after a bus crash in Cameroon's western village of Nemale, officials said.

A 70-seater bus was on its way to the capital, Yaounde, from the western town of Foumban when it crashed into a truck while trying to avoid a crowd of people on the road around 2 a.m. Sunday, said Absalom Monono Woloo, a senior government official in the area.

"Most of the travelers were either going to spend New Year's Day with their families, returning from Christmas Day festivities or were business people supplying gifts for New Year's feasts," he said.

Village residents ran to the road to help the more than 60 commuters who were on the bus, he said.

The death toll will likely rise as rescue workers dig through the wreckage, he said.

7 killed in knife attack in China

Beijing: At least seven people were killed in a knife attack in China's northeast Liaoning province, officials said on Sunday.

The suspect has been arrested by the police, state-run CGTN reported. The incident in Kaiyuan city also left seven people injured, including a police officer who was involved in the arrest of the suspect.

The officials confirmed the death of seven people in the attack. The injured have been taken to hospital, but their condition was not immediately known. Violent crimes are rare in China as compared to many other countries, but there has been a series of knife and axe attacks in recent years.

Knife attacks by disgruntled people have been reported from different parts of the country in the past few years. PTI

Niger citizens vote in historic election

Niamey: Niger began voting Sunday in presidential and legislative elections that could see the West African country's first democratic transition of power since independence amid a growing threat from jihadists in the region.

Polls opened with a good turnout.

"Equipment was well installed and the first voter was able to vote," just after 8 a.m. At the Diori school in Niamey, according to the head of the polling station there, Khadija Hassana.

"Everything has been going normally."

Other voting centers in the capital reported successful openings as well, with COVID-19 restrictions in place.

Some 7.4 million Nigeriens are voting to elect legislators and the successor to President Mahamadou Issoufou.



Issoufou, who has served two terms, is stepping down, paving the way for the first peaceful transfer of power between two elected presidents since Niger became independent from France in 1960. Niger has seen four coups since then.

A peaceful transfer would be significant not only in Niger but also in West Africa, where leaders recently have held on for disputed third terms in Guinea and Ivory Coast.

Niger's next president will have to deal with major problems including extremism, poverty, displacement and corruption. Attacks by Islamic extremists has affected local elections for weeks. In the most recent incident, the Nigeria-based Boko Haram fighters killed more than 28 people in Toumour in the Diffa region, the day before the vote. AP



Israeli protesters chant slogans during a demonstration against Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu in Jerusalem

**SOUTH WESTERN RAILWAY**

TENDER NOTICE No. 22/2020 Dated 23-12-2020

The undersigned, on behalf of The President of India, invites E-Tenders through IREPS for supply of the following items:**Tender Closing Time: 14:30 Hrs.**

Sl.	Tender No.	Description in Brief	Qty.	Tender Due on
1	45201274	4.5 KW under slung constant voltage regulated cum emergency battery charger.	12 Nos.	11.01.2021
2	17201116	Purchase of valve ball cock-1-1/APT compressor drain.	45 Nos.	14.01.2021
3	30201496	Delrin liner for Axle box seating.	16400 Nos.	21.01.2021

For details log on: www.ireps.gov.in

Principal Chief Materials Manager, Hubballi


Pub/224/AAAS/PRB/SWR/2020-21

PROCLAMATION REQUIRING THE APPEARANCE OF ACCUSED PERSON

See Section 82 Cr.P.C.

Whereas complaint has been made before me that accused persons namely (1) **Mohit Kumar**, (2) **Rajesh Kumar**, Both S/o **Krishan Dev**, R/o: H.No. H.No. 38, Street No. 4, Nala Road, Bank Colony, Patna, Bihar & Also at: B-53, Ground Floor, Gandhi Vihar, Timarpur, Delhi, have committed (or are suspected to have committed) the offence in case **FIR No. 493/14 U/s 186/353/332/308/427/148/149 IPC**, registered at P.S. Timarpur, Delhi and it has been returned to a warrant of arrest thereupon issued (unexecuted), stating that the said (1) **Mohit Kumar**, (2) **Rajesh Kumar** cannot be found and whereas it has been shown to my satisfaction that the said (1) **Mohit Kumar**, (2) **Rajesh Kumar** have absconded (or are concealing themselves to avoid the service of the said warrant). Proceeding u/s 82 Cr.P.C. has been initiated in this case. Proclamation is hereby made that the said (1) **Mohit Kumar**, (2) **Rajesh Kumar** accused of **FIR No. 493/14 U/s 186/353/332/308/427/148/149 IPC**, P.S. Timarpur, Delhi is required to appear before this Court to answer said complaint on or before **30.01.2021**.

By Order
Sh. Anurag Thakur
Ld. Metropolitan Magistrate,
Room No. 26,
Tis Hazari Courts, Delhi
DP/822/N/2020

**DHFL**

DEWAN HOUSING FINANCE CORPORATION LIMITED
National Office: HDIL Towers, B-wing, 6th Floor, Anant Kanekar Marg, Station Road, Bandra (East), Mumbai - 400051.
Branch Office: Dhiraj Baug, Building "A" Ground & 1st Floor, Beside Axis Bank, Opp. Monalisa Building, Agra Road, Near Hiranvi Circle, Naupada, Thane (West) 400602.

DEMAND NOTICE

Under Section 13(2) of the securitization And Reconstruction of Financial Assets And Enforcement Of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with Rule 3(1) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002. The undersigned is the Authorised Officer of Dewan Housing Finance Corporation Ltd. (DHFL) UNDER Securitisation And Reconstruction Of Financial Assets And Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 (the said Act). In exercise of powers conferred under section 13(12) of the said Act read with Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002, the Authorised Officer has issued Demand Notice under section 13(2) of the said Act, calling upon the following Borrower(s) "the said Borrower(s)", to repay the amounts mentioned in the respective Demand Notice(s) issued to them that are also given below. In connection with above, Notice is hereby given, once again, to the said Borrower(s) to pay to DHFL, within 60 days from the publication of this Notice, the amounts indicated herein below, together with further interest as detailed in the said Demand Notice(s), from the date(s) mentioned below till the date of payment and/ or realization, payable under the loan agreement read with other documents/writings, if any, executed by the said Borrower(s). As security for due repayment of the loan, the following assets have been mortgaged to DHFL by the said Borrower(s) respectively.

Name of the Borrower(s)/ Guarantor(s)/ Loan Code	Demand Notice Date and Amount With NPA Date	PROPERTY ADDRESS
(LC No. FBD32770 of Faridabad - Sector 19 Branch) Madhu Gupta (Borrower)	27-11-2020 ₹1180102/- (₹ Eleven lakh Eighty Thousand One Hundred Two) NPA (01-11-2019)	H/Flat No.17, Floor No. First, Plot No. Block G , Pocket 2 , Sector. 15 , Village . Rohini Delhi :- 110085
Ramech C Shah (Co Borrower 1)		

The said Borrowers shall fail to make payment to DHFL as aforesaid, DHFL shall proceed against the above secured assets under Section 13(4) of the Act and the applicable Rules, entirely at the risks of the said Borrowers as to the costs and consequences. The said Borrowers are prohibited under the Act from transferring the aforesaid assets, whether by way of sale, lease or otherwise without the prior written consent of DHFL. Any person who contravenes or abets contravention of the provisions of the said act or Rules made there under, shall be liable for imprisonment and/or penalty as provided under the Act.

Date : 28.12.2020
Place : Delhi

(Authorised officer)
DEWAN HOUSING FINANCE CORPORATION LIMITED

Stocks attract over \$22bn India emerges among best performing EMs

IANS ■ MUMBAI

The Covid-19 virus not only triggered a worldwide pandemic, but also opened the floodgates for investments in the countrys equity market.

All in all, not only did the overall capitalisation of India's domestic market increased, the country's key indices emerged among the best performing emerging markets (EMs).

Initially, the lockdown induced crash led to attractive valuations along with a global flood of liquidity and near zero interest rates in foreign markets. As a result, return on investment from several asset classes except equities vaporised.

Investors jumped from one assets class to the other, till the time even the US dollar became unviable due to the massive stimulus package. Accordingly, the funnelling of such funds into the emerging markets led to a net investment of over \$22 billion into India's market till

now in CY2020.

Besides foreign funds, the domestic lockdown, the biggest in the world, flooded the stock markets with over 60 lakh new retail investors.

Additionally, a considerable number enrolled through various schemes via the MF segment. Market watchers contend that these newbie investors saw the value in stocks beyond the pandemic induced slowdown and became the real beneficiaries of the up move. Till now in 2020, Indian markets witnessed FPI inflows of \$22,281 million, which is 55 per cent higher than the flows in the entire 2019 in USD terms.

However, the domestic MF houses pulled out over Rs 33,000 crore till November 2020.

"Valuations are at 2SD (standard deviation) over the 10 year average, hence there is some caution on this front. However as long as interest rates continue to be zero or

near zero across the globe, P/E ratios could keep expanding to levels not seen in the past," said Deepak Jasani, Head of Retail Research at HDFC Securities.

In terms of purchase, FPIs initially preferred large cap stocks till October. Later on, they enlarged their purchases to include the mid and small cap segments.

Sectorally, IT, pharma, banks, FMCG, metals, realty and oil & gas stocks were bought the most by FPIs in this year. Apart from very high FPI inflows in 2020, large number of new investor registrations due to the Covid-19 pandemic has also contributed to the upturn in the market.

"The huge stimulus rolled out by central banks across the developed world to tackle the pandemic in 2020 has certainly led to abundant liquidity. While it was expected that EMs would see strong FPI flows in 2020, the fact remains that only few emerging economies have seen such

flows and India is one such country, especially given the slew of reforms undertaken in 2020," said LKP Securities' Head of Research, S. Ranganathan.

"Having said that, it cannot be denied that lakhs of young first time equity investors have opened DEMAT accounts during 2020 and have invested into direct equities which is also a reflection of financialisation of savings," Ranganathan added.

According to Gaurav Garg, Head of Research at CapitalVia Global Research: "Moving forward, FPIs may continue to concentrate in the Indian market for another 1-2 quarters.

"The factors like low Covid-19 case count, expected vaccine in the first half of 2021, fear of valuations may go even higher and economic return to the growth trajectory are expected to potentially fuel more development in the emerging markets such as India.

Govt's push for GST compliance is boon for tax consultants: Startup

PTI ■ KOLKATA

With the government gradually Bringing small businesses under Goods and Services Tax chain, it has become a boon for service providers, a tax startup has claimed.

The startup, GST Dost, estimates the total value of GST and related services to be over Rs 12,000 crore.

"The introduction of e-invoicing for companies of Rs 100 crore and above will open new business opportunity for us. There are approximately 13,500 businesses having turnover of over Rs 100 crore

in India," GST DOST president Vikas Dhanania told PTI.

E-invoicing is currently mandated for businesses with an annual turnover over Rs 500 crore. The government has notified the mandatory requirement of e-invoicing for B2B transactions for businesses with a turnover of over Rs 100 crore with effect from January 1, 2021. For the government it will lead to reduction in fraud cases in tax evasion, he said.

"With the government expanding the GST ambit to small businesses, we are aiming at a multi-fold rise in our revenue over the next 2-3 years," he said.



CII seeks clarity in taxation laws, simplification, lesser litigation

IANS ■ NEW DELHI

CII has suggested the government to bring about clarity in the taxation laws, simplification of procedures and reduction of litigation in the upcoming Union Budget.

It noted that the taxation laws should facilitate business transitions and make doing business easier for the industry.

In a statement, the industry body noted that Section 80JJA provides for deduction of 30 per cent on emoluments paid to new employees, which can be claimed for three years. This is available up to an emolument of Rs 25,000 per month.

Stressing on the need to give a boost to employment at higher levels, CII has suggested raising the cap to Rs 50,000 per month to encourage employment in higher skilled jobs as well.

It further said over the last few years, in order to enhance the financial strength of banks, and for the stability of the financial sector, RBI has mandated that banks should augment their NPA provisioning.

CII has suggested that the limit prescribed under section 36(1)(viii)(a) for provision for bad and doubtful debts for the Indian banks should be increased from the existing limit of 8.5 per cent to 15 per cent.

It told the Finance Ministry that banks operating in India facilitate foreign investment by Foreign Portfolio Investments (FPI) by acting as custodians (cash and securities) for the FPIs investing in India.

"Specific clarification should be provided so that banking and broking service providers are not held as representative assessee of their clients," it said.

Over the years, RBI has lowered the limit for recognizing an account as NPA from six months to 90 days. According to CII's budget recommendations, Rule 6EA should be amended to provide that in case of banks, the interest on NPA which has become overdue for more than 90 days should be excluded from the total income and be taxed only on receipt basis.

CII has suggested the laying down of general principles to guide the import tariff structure along with a roadmap to encourage and calibrate domestic manufacturing in alignment with global trade trends. It said that such a move would strengthen India's manufacturing capacities and boost its export competitiveness as per shifting global value chains in the next three to five years.

It has also suggested a graded roadmap towards competitive import tariffs over the next three years, with lowest or 0-2.5 per cent for inputs or raw materials, highest slab of 5-7.5 per cent for final products and 2.5 to 5 per cent for intermediates. This will help Indian industry integrate into the global value chain while becoming competitive with its goods and services in the world markets.

As per the industry body these initiatives would go a long way in bringing growth back to the economy and moving one step ahead towards a taxpayer friendly regime.

Payment of 1% GST in cash only for entities having an annual turnover of ₹6cr

New Delhi: The Government's decision on mandatory payment of at least 1 per cent of GST tax liability in cash will only apply to establishments having an annual turnover of Rs 6 crore and the new rule will not apply to micro and small businesses, and composition dealers, finance ministry sources said on Sunday.

Based on the recommendations of the GST Law Committee, the government has notified new indirect tax rules that makes cash payment of 1 per cent of GST tax liability mandatory for businesses whose taxable supply value exceeds Rs 50 lakh in a month. This change will come into effect from January 1, 2021. The new rules stoked fears that the mandatory cash payment will adversely affect small businesses and will increase their working capital requirement.

"Contrary to what is being fed, the new rule will only help to curb the menace of fake ITC availment and impact only risky and suspicious dealers or fly-by-night operators. It will in no way disturb honest taxpay-

ers," said one of the sources quoted above.

Apart from turnover based exemption, the cash payment rule will also not apply in the cases the registered person deposited more than Rs 1 lakh as Income Tax in each of the last two years and where such person has received a refund of more than Rs 1 lakh in the preceding financial year on account of export or inverted tax structure. Also, the cash rule is not applicable to government department, PSU and local authority.

Explaining the reason for introducing this rule, a highly placed Finance Ministry source said that a legitimate business runs for profit and a minimum value addition is expected from them. It is only where a lot of fake credit is used that no tax payment in cash is made. Further, dummy companies which generate fake ITC or are used to be a layer in multi-layer fake credit flow pays no tax in cash.

"This provision is a very smart rule against fraudster and would not affect any genuine business entities or Ease of

Doing Business in any manner," said Finance Ministry sources. With regard to turnover based exemption, the finance ministry has clarified only those businesses which have turnover more than Rs 6 Crore and pay more than 99 per cent of its tax through ITC (input tax credit) and yet pay less than Rs 1 lakh income tax in a year - will fall in the risky category under this rule. The new rule is expected to control fake invoices fraudsters who avail and pass on ITC by dummy, fake and dormant entities which show high turnovers, but have no financial credibility and flee after issuing fake invoices and misusing ITC.

The seriousness of this menace to GST ecosystem may even be understood by the fact that in the recent nationwide drive against GST fake invoice frauds that was launched in the second week of November and still going on, has resulted in the arrest of more than 175 fraudsters and more than 1,800 cases are booked against 8,000 fake entities in just 40/45 days. **IANS**

442 infra projects report cost overrun of ₹4.34 lakh cr

IANS ■ NEW DELHI

As many as 442 infrastructure projects have reported a cost overrun of more than Rs 4.34 lakh crore as of December 1, according to the data from the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation.

A report by the Ministry showed that 536 Central sector projects are delayed from their original schedules.

"Total original cost of implementation of the 1,671 projects was 21,21,383.82 crore and their anticipated completion cost is likely to be 25,55,957.52 crore, which reflects overall cost overruns of 4,34,573.70 crore (20.49 per cent of original cost)," said the report.

The expenditure incurred

on these projects till November 2020 is nearly Rs 11.94 lakh crore, which is 46.71 per cent of the anticipated cost of the projects. It said that of the overall 1,671 Central sector infrastructure projects costing Rs 150 crore and above, nine projects are ahead of the schedule, 184 are on schedule, 536 are delayed, 442 projects reported cost overrun and 212 projects reported both time and cost overrun with respect to their original project implementation schedules. However, it said the number of delayed projects decreases to 412 if delay is calculated on the basis of latest schedule of completion. Further, for 942 projects neither the year of commissioning nor the tentative gestation period has been reported.

Fuel prices unchanged across metros on Sunday

IANS ■ NEW DELHI

Oil marketing companies (OMC) continued to hold the pause button on petrol and diesel prices across the four metros on Sunday. In the national capital, petrol was sold for ₹83.71 per litre. Similarly, in the other key cities of Mumbai, Chennai and Kolkata, the fuel was priced at unchanged levels of ₹90.34, ₹86.51 and ₹85.19 respectively. The prices have been the same since they were last revised on Dec 7. The OMCs have gone on a pause mode at a time when expectations of vaccines to counter the pandemic and that of a major pickup in the demand have kept crude oil on the boil with the prices breaching \$50 a barrel mark.

Employees seek extension of benefits in case of Air India privatisation

IANS ■ NEW DELHI

Air India Employees Union has asked for a meeting with Civil Aviation Minister Hardeep Puri seeking extension of the medical scheme, leave encashment and provident fund benefits in the event of privatisation of Air India.

In a letter to Puri, the AIEU said that the existing medical scheme in Air India should be continued as it is for the serving and retired employees.

On provident fund, the union said that there are two separate Provident Fund trusts in erstwhile Air India and erstwhile Indian Airlines which are governed by the 1925 PF Trust Act.

"We would like these trusts to be continued as it is in the case of privatisation/disinvest-



ment of Air India," the union said.

On leave encashment, AIEU said there is a practice of availing the benefit of leave encashment at the time of retirement.

"Several employees depend on this benefit to lead a decent retired life. We fear this benefit may be discontinued in case of privatisation of Air India and employees will suffer huge financial losses. Therefore, AIEU would like to propose that the employees should be paid leave encashment allowance till March 31, 2021," the letter said. **IANS**

Over 4.2 cr ITRs filed so far for AY 2020-21

New Delhi: The Income Tax Department has said that over 4.2 crore income tax returns (ITR) have been filed so far for the assessment year (AY) 2020-21. A tweet by the IT Department said that as of December 26, more than 4.15 crore ITRs were filed, compared to over 4.14 crore as of August 26, 2019 for the assessment year 2019-20. Another tweet by the department said: "5,64,541 ITRs have been filed upto 1800 hrs today & 67,965 ITRs filed in the last 1hr." The number of return filings has been high in the current year despite the pandemic as the government has extended the deadline for return filing till December 31. **IANS**

India's crude steel output grows 3.5% to over 9 MT in Nov

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India registered a growth of 3.5 per cent in crude steel production at 9.245 million tonne (MT) in November, according to World Steel Association.

The country had produced 8.933 MT crude steel during the same month last year, the global industry body said in its latest report. "Crude steel production for the 64 countries reporting to the World Steel Association (worldsteel) was 158.261 MT in November 2020, a 6.6 per cent increase compared to 148.417 MT in November 2019. "Due to the ongoing difficulties presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, many of this

month's figures are estimates that may be revised with next month's production update," worldsteel said. According to the worldsteel data, China registered 8 per cent year-on-year growth in steel output at 87.660 MT during November 2020, compared to 81.191 MT in the same period last year.

The US production stood at 6.120 MT, down 13.7 per cent from 7.088 MT. Japan's output slipped 5.9 per cent to 7.264 MT from 7.716 MT a year ago.

South Korea's steel production fell 2.4 per cent to 5.760 MT in the month under review, as compared to 5.904 MT in the year-ago period. Germany's crude steel output rose 14.8 per cent to 3.376 MT



as against 2.941 MT. Italy's crude steel production was 2.049 MT in November 2020, up 3.2 per cent from 1.986 MT a year ago. France produced 1.149 MT of crude steel last month, 3.7 per cent lower from the year-ago period, while Spain's steel production stood at 1.113 MT, a

rise of 11.2 per cent year-on-year.

With members in every major steel-producing country, Brussels-based worldsteel represents steel producers, national and regional steel industry associations, and steel research institutes. Its members represent around 85 per cent of global steel production.

AIRIA seeks tax reforms for rubber industry

IANS ■ NEW DELHI

The All India Rubber Industries Association (AIRIA) has called for rationalisation of tax structure and said that the inverted duty structure impacts the local industry.

It also said that the government should consider providing adequate support and handholding to the producers and should device 'Phased Manufacturing Programme' for enhancing the localisation in the rubber sector of India.

The industry body noted that import of raw materials such as natural rubber and latex

attract import duties of as high as 70 per cent, while that on finished goods is much lower, which impacts the local rubber goods producing industry, and stands as an obstacle towards the vision of 'Atmanirbhar Bharat'.

"Some of the products which used to come from China are being routed through Thailand and Vietnam at either zero per cent duty or 5 per cent duty.

India should correct the customs duty for the sector. The Indian rubber industry uses more than 70 raw materials and some of them also attract anti-dumping duty as well," AIRIA said.

41% small businesses find it impossible to file ITR by Dec 31: Survey

IANS ■ NEW DELHI

As the deadline for filing of Income Tax Returns (ITR) nears, around 41 per cent small businesses think that it is impossible to file their returns by December 31 and want an extension to the deadline, according to a survey by LocalCircles. The survey showed that 30 per cent of the respondents already filed their returns while around 18 per cent have not filed yet and will comfortably do before the deadline, while 11 per cent believed that it will take significant effort doing it before the month end.

Among the individual taxpayers surveyed, 34 per cent of the respondents have not filed their returns yet, and 13 per cent said that they want an extension of the deadline as it would be impossible for them to file ITR by the end of December.

Around 48 per cent of

individual taxpayers said that they have done it already earlier this year, and 18 per cent said they have done it in the last couple of months, while 8 per cent believed that it would take significant effort doing it before the deadline. A LocalCircles statement noted that small businesses have had a highly challenging 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the lockdowns. It was only after September when signs of pickup in business activity emerged and for many small businesses it has been about recovering some of the accumulated losses from March-August this year. It also said that for many small businesses, there is dependency on GST returns and business returns are typically more complicated than individual returns and many of them require several sittings and information exchange with their accounting professionals which have become difficult due to the pandemic.

FM Logistic to double warehousing capacity to 1.2 cr sq ft in 3-4 years

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Third party logistics company FM Logistic plans to double its warehousing space to 1.2 crore sq ft in three to four years from 60 lakh sq ft at present as it expects demand for such facilities to increase in the aftermath of the pandemic, its MD and CEO Alexandre Amine Soufiani said.

Soufiani expects sales to return to pre-COVID levels by March 2021 as 90 per cent of the business has already recovered by December.

With its plans to set up A grade facilities in all metro cities and "dynamic economic areas", especially multi-customer units, and focus on urban logistics, FM Logistic looks to attain leadership position in the sector, Soufiani said. Grade A warehouses are categorised on the basis of construction quality, available space, location, amenities and clients, among others

In March 2019, FM Logistic had outlined its plans to invest USD 150 million over the next five years to set up new warehouses in India, with focus on multi-client warehouses.

"When we acquired Spear Logistics in 2016, there was only 20 lakh sq ft space and four warehousing units. Today we have 60 lakh sq ft in four years and we want to double this to take it to 1.20 crore sq ft under our operations in the next 3-4 years," Soufiani told PTI in an interaction.

The company has already announced its plans to add 40 lakh sq ft warehousing space in

the next three years that will take its total space to 1 crore sq ft, he said, adding that it could add another 20 lakh sq ft.

He said the company has added a total of 10 lakh sq ft space in the last six months, all for multi-customers facilities, including omni channel, pharma, e-groceries, FMCG, food, industrial, among others.

FM Logistic plans to have multi-customer facilities in Bengaluru, Delhi, Kolkata, Hyderabad and Chennai in the next 2-3 years.

According to Soufiani, the company is expected to soon commence operations at its Bhiwandi facility in Maharashtra, which is spread in 4 lakh sq ft space with a part of it dedicated for pharma clients. The upcoming state-of-the-art warehousing facility at Jhajjar in Haryana will also be operational in the second quarter of 2021, he said.

Earlier this month, FM Logistic had signed a strategic partnership with Welspun Logistic Park to develop 9 lakh sq feet space in Bhiwandi in the next 3 years. "We could realise a quarter of our 40 (lakh sq ft). There is another 10 lakh sq feet of space that we have also signed for which 4 lakh (sq ft) we are going to get this month, another 4 lakh sq ft we will be getting in April/May next year," he said. The omni-channel strategy has now become a central strategy for most of the companies which are into retail, FMCG, groceries and pharma, among others, and has given a big opportunity to third party logistics providers.

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Sd/-	Managing Director
Haryana State Financial Services Limited	
Finance Department, Haryana	
RO NO. 1040/11/1/2021/1111/27/77	

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e- NIT No: 20 of 2020-21	TENDER NOTICE Dated 14-12-2020
Invitation: For and on behalf of the Lieutenant Governor of the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir, the Executive Engineer Electric Division JPDCI Reasi, hereinafter referred as "Employer", invites online e-bids from reputed Companies or registered Electrical Contractors having valid A Class Electrical Contractors License issued by Jammu and Kashmir Govt. for "Survey, Design, Supply, Transportation/ Carriage, Erection, Testing And Commissioning for Replacement of damaged/ wooden/undersize poles and barbed wire/wornout/stranded conductor of LT Lines in Zeelalair Mari, Vijaypur, Sar Megha, Ser Sundwan, Sarangdhar, Suljandhar, Lamsora-Pandhar, Bidda villages of Reasi sub division in District Reasi (J&K)"	
Bidders are advised to study the Bidding Document carefully. Submission of e-Bid against this SBD shall be deemed to have been done after careful/conscious study and examination of the procedures, terms and conditions of the Standard Bidding Document with full understanding of its implications.	
1. The tender document is available at website http://ktenders.gov.in . Interested bidders may view, download the e-Bid document, seek clarification and submit their e-Bids online up to the date and time mentioned in the table below:	
1. Sale of Bid Document (Start) :- 15.12.2020 (10:00AM)	
2. Sale of Bid Document (end) :- 04.01.2021 (04:00PM)	
3. e-Bid submission (start) date & time :- 15.12.2020 (10:00AM)	
4. e-Bid submission (end) date & time :- 04.01.2021 (04:00PM)	
5. Clarifications start date :- 15.12.2020 (11:00AM)	
6. Clarifications end date :- 29.12.2020 (02:00PM)	
7. Pre bid meeting date :- 29.12.2020 (at 02:30PM) in the office chamber of Executive Engineer Electric Division Reasi.	
8. Online Commercial and Technical e-Bid opening date & Time :- 05.01.2021 at 03:00PM	
9. Submission of Hard Copy of Tender Fee :- 05.01.2021 (upto 02:00PM)	
10. Cost of e-bid document :- Rs. 1000.00 (Non-refundable)	
11. Tender value :- Rs. 41.33 Lacs	
12. Earnest Money/Security Deposit :- Rs. 82670.00	
13. Online Financial e-bid opening date and time :- Will be communicated to the Technically Qualifying Bidders	
Sd/- Executive Engineer Electric Division, JPDCI Reasi	
No. DIP/J-3313-P/20 Dated: 26-12-2020	

Trend Blazer

Vijay urges to keep masks on

Actor **VIJAY VARMA** reiterated the importance of wearing masks in a new video he has posted for fans on Instagram.

In the video, Vijay wears several masks and then removes them one by one. Using subtitles on the clip, he says, "I know, I know but there is still no excuse."

"Uncomfortable, itchy or hot... Mask is always on! #wearitright," he wrote as caption for the video.

The actor is currently basking on the success of season 2 of *Mirzapur*, where he was seen playing a double role as twins.

Vijay currently has a following of over 674k followers on Instagram and on Twitter he enjoys a following of 36.9k.



'While we were shooting for a song in Lucknow for Khuda Haafiz in the middle of the street, (co-star) Shivaaleeka (Oberoi) and I were supposed to be on a bike and the camera was chasing us. There were hundreds of bikes all around us wanting to just say hello, it was difficult to shoot, but that's the vibe of India and that is what I really enjoyed.'

—Vidyut Jammwal

Actor **JANHVI KAPOOR** who played the title role in the biopic *Gunjan Saxena: The Kargil Girl* earlier this year, says the film helped her understand herself better as an actress.



"Through this film, I've understood myself better as an actor. It's given me a different sense of confidence and, maybe it's because of the impact Gunjan madam's story and resilience has had on me. I have learned to enjoy the process of growth. I have always wanted to do memorable work and touch people's lives because I know how much cinema has touched my life," she said.

'I love working with new artistes'

Singers like Celine Dion, Cher, Beyonce, Lady Gaga, Demi Lovato and Justin Bieber have breathed life into her words. Veteran American songwriter **DIANE WARREN** says she is working with some of the best artistes in the world, and that she loves collaborating with new talent.

In her nearly four-decade career, she has penned songs for some of the greatest singers.

Asked how different it is to team with young artistes, Warren said, "I just think that I am working with another singer. It's no different. A great artiste is a great artiste whether they are 20 or 40 years old. I love working with new and forthcoming artistes — keeps it fun and fresh."



LESSONS OF 2020

With a tough year coming to a close, a few fashion designers share their biggest takeaways both personally and professionally.

By TEAM VIVA

The year has overturned our lives in the most unforeseen manner. There were numerous difficulties to survive and tough lessons to be learned; we can at least find a bit of solace in the knowledge that these challenging times have led to personal growth. Below, a few fashion designers share their biggest takeaways from this unusual year.

Designer Asha Gautam says, "This year will always be remembered in history for various reasons. We can't ever take the pain, suffering and losses that people across the globe suffered due to COVID-19 and at the same time it also taught us a lot of things. We started valuing life more, we spent more time with family, we valued environment more, we all became tech literate and valued the importance of being a responsible consumer."

"I can only say about myself and I did learn the entire above very well and also changed a few things of how I look at my work now. Being an ardent lover of craft, especially Indian handmade textiles, I was worried on what will happen to it as the weddings and occasions were getting confined and due to social distancing the demand was surely going to take a hit. We did speak to a few clients, especially whose weddings were due in 2020 and took feedbacks. The response was mix and lot of weddings that were scheduled for April happened in July with restrictions. The next dates were in November and everyone was clueless as to how many weddings will happen and of what nature," adds she.

Once the lockdown got over and clients started coming, Asha realised that at least some weddings will happen. One takeaway came from the shopping pattern where many families preferred heritage pieces than F&D's and it was a delight to see the value heirloom pieces still have on Indian consumers. "Though we always believed in it but the response was reassuring. This is not only a takeaway but a lesson for life that no matter what, our roots will always play an



important role in our life. Similarly our Indian textiles (handmade) will also make an important role in wedding wear irrespective of what happens in the global fashion scene," says she.

Asha says that though the demand was picking up but it was nowhere near and there was still a lot of sluggishness.

"Then we started to introspect as to what all can be done. No inter-state travel was happening, no NRI clients coming, plus limited gathering was making a huge impact. This made us go back to the drawing board and think as to how to connect with more clients. We always had a reservation of luxury selling on e-

commerce but slowly we realised that the clients want to connect virtually. They were doing video calls, asking for images and sending queries on Instagram, which made us do something we never thought i.e. starting an e-store. We started working on it in June and by July end, we completed it with all the old



images. Yes, the use of technology does help and now we are able to bridge a gap between us and the consumer, irrespective of the location," shares she. Now, they are able to get in touch with their old clients who stopped coming due to location issues.

This step also made the designers learn marketing better. They were able to identify that there is a pattern, price and product segmentation, which happens when one is doing e-commerce. "Student for life' is something I always live by and is happening now in a big way. We realised how there is a demarcation of product and price with different age groups, how a millennial engages on social media and how a mother of the bride still prefers to wear the saree before buying. The phrase 'quarantine wedding' has changed the pattern of ornamentation and use of textiles as well. The magic of a NRI bride doing a video call, seeing the entire collection, taking suggestion and also approving designs is really amazing. The digital integration also helped us in expanding our design portfolio as we introduced our prêt collection of kurtas which was overdue," Asha says.

"The response has been phenomenal and now we are adding more affordable segments keeping intact our love for crafts. Our vision is to make Indian crafts a significant part of global fashion and with the e-store, we can see that happening sooner or later. We also want to market our textiles digitally and make it reach to a larger audience. The time we got was after five years of no holiday and this made us also realise the potential, the collaborations and the relationships we have made which we can leverage out. The emergence of the new possible market has also made us develop designs which are not geographical bound and the creative team is rejoicing more," adds the designer.

"Past four months a lot has changed in terms of mindset, design development techniques, positioning and undoubtedly, these have been a big takeaway," says Asha.

For designer Leena Singh, pandemic came as a teacher. "We have begun to appreciate the smallest blessings. I feel like the biggest lesson I have got is to live in the present and not worry about the future. Today, everything is so terribly in the air and no one knows when will we find normalcy again. This year, I also came up with my new collection *Umme Rabab*, which is a tribute to *karigars* who were struggling and trying to cope with the changes this pandemic has brought to all our lives. Our brand Ashima Leena tried to support them in every possible way and stands in solidarity and in gratitude towards them. As we face challenges, we are also given an opportunity to re-invent, re-imagine new and improved ways of working. I feel whenever there will be a challenge or obstacle, we will find ways again and again to face them and work around them. It is imperative to support one another in difficult times like these," shares Leena.

Well, certainly, this year established itself as a teacher to the entire world.

For all tastes and moods

For avid readers, confined to homes and deprived of opportunities of external sources of leisure, it was a dream opportunity to work through pending piles and acquire fresh material. Here's an insight into reading habits of 2020

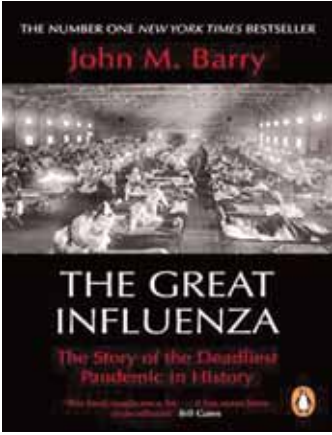
With a microscopic organism upending life as we know it, the realm of books was among the few which held its own, operating near normally in this tumultuous year. The flow of new titles, across all genres, continued unabated and provided readers a safe haven for a troubled psyche. For avid readers, confined to homes and deprived of opportunities of external sources of leisure, it was a dream opportunity to work through pending piles and acquire fresh material.

But amid the host of autobiographies and biographies, examinations of political participation and their social effects, new looks at history and more as well as a wide array of fiction for all tastes and moods, the worst health crisis the world faced in over a century found its own niche.

While there is no shortage of books on Coronavirus, some representative ones could include physician and evolutionary biologist Frank Ryan's *Virusphere: Ebola, AIDS, Influenza and the Hidden World of the Virus*, which explains why epidemics are inevitable and their benefits, science journalist Sonia Shah's *Pandemic* about the interplay of history, politics and science in tackling the scourge of disease, and John Barry's *The Great Influenza: The Story of the Deadliest Pandemic in History*, which not only chronicles how the Spanish flu of 1918-20 devastated a world already laid low by years of war, revolutions and other upheavals, but also shows how the political handling is as important as the medical measures.

A contemporary look at this aspect can be found in legendary journalist Bob Woodward's *Rage*, his second book on the maverick presidency of Donald Trump.

An Indian perspective is provided by *The Coronavirus: What you Need to Know about the Global Pandemic* by Dr Swapnil Parikh and Maherra Desai, and *Till We Win: India's Fight Against The Covid-19 Pandemic* by Dr Chandrakant

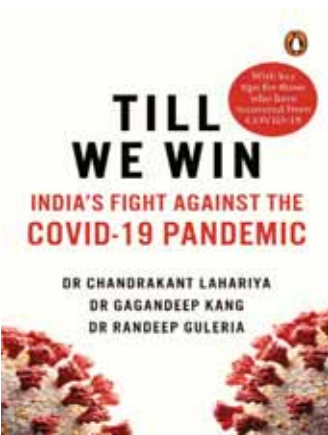


Lahariya, Dr Gagandeep Kang, and AIIMS Director Dr Randeep Guleria.

But with the virus mutating into new variations and universal vaccination still a long way off, the last word on coronavirus is still to be said. But some signposts can be found in Fareed Zakaria's *10 Lessons for the Post-Pandemic World* and the prolific Kiran Manral's *Raising Kids with Hope and Wonder in Times of a Pandemic and Climate Change*.

The coveted Nobel Prize for Literature was won by American poet Louise Glück, who draws on classical mythology, family life and nature in her precise and spare rendition of certain traumatic facets of the human conditions such as pain and loss — both personal and public — but also longing and self-realisation, while the Booker went to debutant Scottish-American writer Douglas Stuart's *Shuggie Bain*, a semi-autobiographical story of a young boy maintaining a fraught relationship with his alcoholic mother.

The world of literature was also left poorer with a galaxy of veterans bidding adieu including controversial English philosopher and writer Roger Scruton, 75, British academician Christopher Tolkien, 95, the son of the great fantasy novelist J.R.R. Tolkien and the one who drew the maps for *The Lord of the Rings*,



American *Queen of Suspense* Mary Higgins Clark, 92, Clive Cussler, 88, known for the *Dirk Pitt* series of marine adventures, Urdu poet Rahat Indori, 70, Hindi poet Manglesh Dabral, 72, Soviet/Russian writer and satirist Mikhail Zhvanetsky, 86, British spy novelist John Le Carré, 89, and Urdu author and literary critic Shamsur Rahman Faruqi, 85, known for his penetrating analysis of the poetry of Mir Taqi Mir.

Some of the year's notable offerings included former US President Barack Obama's *A Promised Land*, an account of his eventful first term, J.K. Rowling's non-Harry Potter world *The Ickabog*, a cautionary fairy tale about inept leadership and demonisation of the enemy; Hari Kunzru's *The Red Pill* and the irrepressible Moni Mohsin's *The Impeccable Integrity of Ruby R*, but there was much more.

While it is virtually impossible to make a list of books that could even approach a representative section let satisfy each palate, some suggestions/recommendations in various genres can be attempted.

In non-fiction, there is astrophysicist Janna Levin's *Black Hole Survival Guide*, which not only seeks to demystify one of most perplexing celestial objects, but also shows the unflattering role of humans in the cosmos, Tim Harford's *How to Make the World*

Add Up: Ten Rules for Thinking Differently About Numbers, an engaging guide to avoid getting bamboozled by statistics, and Michiko Kakutani's *Ex Libris*, a personalised introduction to 100 key books, old and new, for those without inclination/opportunity to read the originals in full.

On the humanities side, Richard Eaton's *India in the Persianate Age: 1000-1765* seeks to show how the country's pre-colonial history was not a binary construct as long politically propagated, Anne Appelbaum's self-explanatory but disturbing *Twilight of Democracy: The Failure of Politics and the Parting of Friends*, and the very vital *Bad News: Why We Fall for Fake News* by Rob Brotherton, who's earlier *Suspicious Minds* explained why conspiracy theories have a receptive audience.

In fiction, consider Curtis Sittenfeld's *Rodham: What if Hillary hadn't married Bill?* exploring this tantalising premise, Mieko Kawakami's *Breasts and Eggs*, an account of the female life experience (and commodification thereof), and former ISI chief Lt Gen Asad Durrani's *Honour Among Spies*, about the dangers of asking inconvenient questions about issues the establishment would prefer to be forgotten.

For aficionados of whodunits, two authors take them to places which were long ripe for the genre - Mark McCrum in *The Festival Murders* (literary festivals) and Kiran Manral in *The Kitty Party Murder*. For a rarely-invoked locale, there is Sujata C. Sabnis' *Blood on the Sands*, set in Kutuch.

If Rick Riordan, whose finale to *Trials of Apollo* series came out or even Roshani Chokshi's *Aru Shah* series (third out now) are not to your taste, Anuja Chandramouli, who has a penchant for a lyrical but contemporary refashioning of Indian mythology, had *Mohini: The Enchantress*.

We can only hope that 2021 is as abundant.

WEBBED



TANDAV

Tandav is the coming together of different worlds under the gamut of politics. It is a dramatic take of the powerplay between people at the highest level where they get overthrown by others to secure their positions. Young and forthcoming student politicians are also featured and we get to see where their future is headed in this dark abyss of politics. It releases on January 15 on Amazon Prime.



ONE NIGHT IN MIAMI

One Night in Miami is a fictional account of one incredible night where icons Muhammad Ali, Malcolm X, Sam Cooke and Jim Brown gathered discussing their roles in the civil rights movement and cultural upheaval of the 60s. It releases on January 15 on Amazon Prime.



PIECES OF A WOMAN

A heartbreaking home birth leaves a woman grappling with the profound emotional fallout, isolated from her partner and family by a chasm of grief. It releases on January 7 on Netflix.

As kids spend more time indoors, help them start yoga at an early age as it ensures overall well-being and builds a healthy environment to grow physically, mentally and spiritually



ENSURING ACCESS TO BIGGER OPPORTUNITIES FOR FARMERS

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**India's
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 - 50% subsidy makes transportation of fruits and vegetables cheaper
 - With access to urban markets, farmers are ensured better profit margins
- Within 3 months, 27 thousand tonnes of agricultural produce has already been transported through Kisan Rail
- Enroute halts of Kisan Rail have loading and unloading facilities that will especially benefit local produce

by
Narendra Modi
Prime Minister
(Through Video Conferencing)

In the August presence of

Narendra Singh Tomar
Minister of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, Rural Development,
Panchayati Raj and Food Processing Industries,
Government of India


Piyush Goyal
Minister of Railways, Commerce & Industry,
Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution,
Government of India

28 December, 2020 at 4:30 pm
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Use #100thKisanRail to widely spread information about the work done for agricultural development and farmer welfare.



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THE WAIT IS OVER

Despite a brief interruption due to Corona-enforced beak, football did manage to conjure some moments of lasting relevance in 2020. From Liverpool ending their 30 years Premier League title wait to Lionel Messi expressing his desire to leave Barca. PIONEER SPORT takes a look at some of the biggest moments from football

CHAMPIONS OF ENGLAND

The 30-year wait is over. Liverpool is champion of England again.

Liverpool clinched its first league title since 1990 on June 25, ending an agonizing title drought without the players even having to take the field.

Instead, the Premier League crown was secured when Chelsea beat second-place Manchester City 2-1, a result that meant City could no longer catch Liverpool with seven games remaining.

Overall Jurgen Klopp led Liverpool win 32 matches from 38 fixtures, in a strange 352-day long Premier League season.

For the city of Liverpool, this has been a party three decades in the making, and even the restrictions caused by the coronavirus failed to prevent fans from gathering to celebrate outside Anfield.

After a dominant campaign that was interrupted by the coronavirus pandemic, Liverpool became England's earliest-ever champion — and the latest. No team since the inception of the country's league system in 1888 has clinched the title with seven games remaining. And no team has been crowned Premier League champion in June.

The title itself had hardly been in doubt since December, with Klopp's team quickly building a massive lead with a rampant attacking style of play.

For a while, though, it seemed the coronavirus could still prevent Liverpool from ending its drought.

The club was 25 points clear when the



Liverpool captain Jordan Henderson lifts Premier League trophy as players celebrate after the Merseyside club was crowned 2019-20 champions of English top-flight league

league was abruptly halted in March as the country was forced into lockdown to contain the spread of Covid-19.

LEEDS BACK IN BIG TIME



Leeds United were promoted to the Premier League after winning the 2019-20 Championship title and ended their 16-year exile from the top-flight. Premier League football returns to Elland Road in 2020-21 season as Marcelo Bielsa's side renew old rivalries with Manchester United and Chelsea.

BAYERN 5 TROPHIES

Bayern Munich participated in five competitions in 2020-21 season — Bundesliga, DFB Pokal, UEFA Champions



League, UEFA Super League and DFL-Supercup and won all five. Polish striker Robert Lewandowski was the star for The Bavarians during the entire duration and won individual honours which includes UEFA and FIFA men's player of the year.

CRISIS IN BARCELONA



For the first time since 2007-08 season, Barcelona failed to win any silverware in the entire season. After losing La Liga title to Real Madrid, Catalan club suffer embarrassing 2-8 defeat against Bayern Munich in one-legged Champions League quarter-final. They also sacked two coaches — Ernesto Valverde and Quique Setien.

MESSI SURPASSES PELE'S FEAT

Lionel Messi beat Pele's record of goals for a single club when he scored his 644th for Barcelona in a 3-0 win over Valladolid in La Liga clash on December 22.

END OF MESSI AT BARCA?

Lionel Messi who is at Barcelona from his youth career days, openly wanted to leave Camp Nou in the summer and was only stopped in the end by the threat of prolonged legal battle.

He has since then been linked to potential moves to Manchester City and Paris Saint-Germain after end of his current deal in 2021 summer.

5 SUBSTITUTES

Football teams were allowed to use five substitutes when play resumed after the coronavirus pandemic. The International Football Association Board agreed to a proposal by FIFA for a temporary change to the rules "to protect player welfare".

KOLKATA DERBY IN ISL

India's two most decorated football



clubs Mohun Bagan and East Bengal move to Indian Super League making India's top

tier league 11 team competition. While Mohun Bagan merged with three-time champions ATK, East Bengal found new identity with SC East Bengal.

NO BALLON D'OR

For the first time since its creation in 1956, Ballon d'Or was cancelled in 2020 because of the coronavirus pandemic's impact. The award, presented by France Football, is given to the best player each year, counting club and international play.



EURO 2020 IN 2021 NOW

The European championship, due to be played in June and July in 2020, was been postponed until 2021 because of the pandemic. UEFA said the new proposed dates for the tourney were June 11 to July 11 next year, but despite being postponed it will continue to be called Euro 2020.

PRODIGAL SON RETURNS

In the summer transfer window of 2020-21 season, Real Madrid's Welsh winger Gareth Bale makes surprise loan move to his former Premier League side Tottenham Hotspur, seven years after leaving them to play for Spanish giants.

Other prominent summer moves include Timo Werner and Kavi Havertz leaving Bundesliga to shift base at Stamford Bridge. David Silva's decade old stay at Etihad comes to an end as he makes a move back to Spain to play for Real Sociedad.

2014 World Cup Golden boot winner James Rodriguez makes permanent move to Everton. Bruno Fernandes & Edinson Cavani joined Manchester United.

Luis Suarez, Arturo Vidal and Ivan Rakitic exit Barca for Atletico Madrid, Inter Milan and Sevilla respectively.

Former Bayern Munich winger Arjen Robben makes return from retirement to play for FC Groningen.

Stand & Deliver

Rahane leads way with century to put India in driver's seat

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

Ajinkya Rahane played a captain's knock, a workmanlike century that steered India into a dominant position and took the sting out of Australia's potent bowling attack in the second Test here on Sunday.

Trailing 0-1 in the four-match series, India ended the second day at 277 for five for a handy 82-run lead after bowling out Australia for 195 at the Melbourne Cricket Ground.

At stumps, which was brought early owing to rain, Rahane was going strong on 104 and giving him company was Ravindra Jadeja on 40, the two having added what might prove to be a game-changing 104-run partnership for the sixth wicket.

This was Rahane's 12th Test hundred and his second at the iconic venue, after a fine 147 during the 2014 tour.

A day after earning rich praise for his tactical acumen while marshalling the bowlers, Rahane shone bright with the bat and was spot on with his reading of match situations during his stay in the middle.

He got a life when Steve Smith dropped him on 73 at second slip in Australia's first over with the second new ball, the unlucky bowler being Mitchell Starc, who was taken off the attack after just two overs with the shining red cherry.

That particular phase was crucial from both the team's point of view and by not losing a wicket to the second new ball, India ensured they finished the day ahead of Australia, in terms of runs as well as psychologically.

Rahane got another reprieve when substitute fielder Travis Head put one down after diving forward from gully, but that was after he had got to the three-figure mark.

To start with, Rahane was more watchful that he had ever



India's captain Ajinkya Rahane celebrates after scoring his 12th Test century as teammate Ravindra Jadeja congratulates him on second day of 2nd Test against Australia at Melbourne Cricket Ground on Sunday

been but as the day progressed, he went on to play some sumptuous shots and one of his day's best was the classic off-drive against Pat Cummins.

Australian speedster Mitchell Starc rued the chances his team squandered.

"It (the knock by Rahane) was pretty good. He absorbed some pressure there and sort of steadied the ship for them, at (a time) when they were still behind our score," the Australian pacer said.

"He (Rahane) has batted really well there, he took his chances and we probably could have got him out three or four or maybe five times before he got a hundred, but he's run his luck there and scored a good hundred. Well done to him."

Earlier, Rishabh Pant (29) and Hanuma Vihari (21) frittered away promising starts after doing all the hard work, but Jadeja was determined not to do anything of that sort.

Vihari fell to off-spinner

Nathan Lyon while trying to sweep him from outside off-stump after he had added 52 runs for the fourth wicket with his captain.

In came Pant and despite the constant scrutiny around him, the wicketkeeper-batsman showed no nerves and confidently went about playing his strokes.

If Rahane managed to blunt the opposition bowlers with his defensive approach before opening up, Pant's aggression forced Australia to change their attacking tactic.

But just when Pant was beginning to pose a treat to the hosts, Starc forced an edge to bring the match back on even keel. It was Paine's 150th dismissal and wicket number 250 for Starc.

The second session saw India score 99 runs after they managed just 54 in the first, during which they also lost two wickets in as many overs to the relentless Cummins.

Resuming on 36 for one, India started cautiously before losing both their overnight batsmen — debutant Shubman Gill and the seasoned Cheteshwar Pujara — in the space of 11 balls to reach 90 for three at lunch.

The 21-year-old Gill impressed on his debut with a fluent 45 and played some fine shots during his 65-ball knock at the Melbourne Cricket Ground. While Pujara made 17, having faced 70 deliveries.

The first to go was Gill, who perished when he edged Cummins for Paine to take a regulation catch behind the stumps.

Australia were soon celebrating again as Cummins picked up the big wicket of Pujara after straightening him up with a brilliant delivery that angled in and moved just enough to induce an edge.

Paine complemented his top fast bowler by completing a fine diving catch.

Dhoni captains ICC white-ball teams of decade

Kohli voted skipper of Test side, only player to feature in all 3 teams

PTI ■ DUBAI

The legendary Mahendra Singh Dhoni was on Sunday named captain of ICC's ODI and T20I teams of the decade while Virat Kohli stamped his pre-eminence in world cricket after being voted the skipper of the Test team.

Indians dominated the limited-over teams by having three and four players in the ODI and T20I respectively while England have maximum number of players — four — in the Test side.

The 39-year-old Dhoni, who retired from international cricket earlier this year, was one of the three Indians in the ODI team of the decade, the others being Rohit Sharma and skipper Virat Kohli.

Dhoni has three other compatriots in the T20I team — Rohit, Kohli and Jasprit



Bumrah.

Besides being named captain of Test team, Kohli is the only player in the world to have been voted in the teams of the decade in all formats.

The teams of the decades were announced by the ICC ahead of the Awards of the Decade ceremony, to be held in virtual mode on Monday.

The top awards, including ICC male cricketer as well as female cricketer of the decade, men's Test, ODI and T20I cricketers of the decade, women's ODI and T20I cricketers of the decade, will also be announced on Monday.

Kohli is also in the running for four awards in the men's section.

Among women, Harmanpreet Kaur and Poonam Yadav made it to the T20I team of the decade while Mithali Raj and Jhulan Goswami were picked for the ODI team.

The nominees for each of the categories have been determined by the Awards Nominations Committee according to on-field performances and overall achievements for at least five years during the period

Warner still having some trouble with groin: Langer

Melbourne: Star Australian opener David Warner is still struggling with his groin injury, coach Justin Langer said on Sunday, rendering him doubtful for the third Test against India starting January 7.

The 34-year-old had missed the last ODI, three T20Is and the first two Tests against India due to the injury.

"There's no one more professional and he's doing everything possible," Langer told Ricky Ponting during an interview on Seven.

"We saw him bat the day before the game, he's batting again this afternoon at the MCG, so in terms of his batting he's flying, it's just trying to ... He's still having some trouble with his groin and we know how dynamic he is."

Langer said he is still hopeful that Warner would come good and make it to the third Test.

"His running between the wickets, his movements all the time, so he's getting closer and we're hopeful he will come good."

PTI

NZ nose ahead with early strike

AP ■ MOUNT MAUNGANUI

Kane Williamson's tireless quest for runs continued on Sunday as he batted New Zealand into a commanding position on the second day of the second Test against Pakistan.

Williamson made 129, his 23rd test hundred, and shared century partnerships with Ross Taylor and Henry Nicholls as New Zealand made 431 batting first after losing the toss.

At stumps Pakistan was 30-1 after 20 overs with Abid Ali 19 not out and nightwatchman Mohammad Abbas 0.

Shan Masood was out for 10 just before stumps, caught down the leg side by wicketkeeper BJ Watling from the bowling of Kyle Jamieson.

In his last 10 tests in New Zealand Williamson has made two double centuries, Sunday's century and three fifties. His solidity has been central to New Zealand's recent rise to join Australia on 116 points atop the official world test rankings.

Williamson's toughness, his concentration and technical excellence were evident again in his performance on the first two days of the current match in per-



1st Test, Day 3
Live from 3:30am IST
FANCODE APP

haps the toughest conditions New Zealand has faced so far this summer.

He came to the crease when New Zealand lost opener Tom Latham to only the fourth ball of its innings. Williamson batted for all of the rest of the first day and was 94 not out overnight.

He took 13 balls to score his first runs of the second day, then went to his century with a copy-book cover drive from the bowling of Naseem Shah. When he finally was out before lunch he had batted 476 minutes or almost eight hours and again had been the firm anchor

around which New Zealand built its innings.

Taylor's 70 in his 10th century stand with Williamson and Nicholls' 56 in his third provided the substance of the innings. But wicketkeeper Watling made a vital contribution with his 73 late in the innings.

Watling's 66-run partnership with Jamieson, who made 32, took New Zealand within sight of 400 and Neil Wagner's 19 took them past that mark.

For visitors, Shaheen Afridi put in a big shift, bowling 36 overs and taking 4-109. Leg-spinner Yasir Shah took 3-113, including Williamson's wicket.